Cultural Influences on Interpersonal Communication

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Abstract. The establishment of cultural was driven from the past cultural activity which inherited from generation to generation. An individual perception of a culture meaning might vary depending on what they are experiencing. However, the need of good communication skills is important to survive especially in dealing with the new unfamiliar environment particularly in a higher education setting. To minimize any types of communication risk and to avoid misunderstanding, the high level of communication skill is important. Accordingly, the study explores the connection of cultural influences and interpersonal communication among higher education institution students where's a quantitative method using questionnaire were applied in the study, and distributed among 320 students in Kuala Lumpur. The finding showed a positive relationship between the influences of cultural with interpersonal communication among the students. The results also shown a different stage of the influences of culture and respondent interpersonal communication. Therefore, the finding is able to enhance the establishment of an extensive communication in interpersonal communication together and broaden the explanation of Social Penetration Theory.

Keywords: Cultural influences · interpersonal communication · Social Penetration Theory · higher education institution

1 Introduction

Culture encompasses human learning process of daily life since the beginning. An individual learned and create a derivative experience in cultural development [2, 37]. [39] listed a few factors involved in intervention and assessment of culture such as family, historical and geographical factor. In line with that, [15] also found the same factors as a main element which differentiate individual mind setting. The fundamental of cultural components as mention by [22, 38] are transmitted heredity which technically assist the people in maintaining the common values and preserved the uniqueness of culture.

The process of cultural development involves a communication as a culture transportation where's the information was transmitted from one individual to another individual. Hence, [19] also mention the involvement of communication in cultural development. The importance of communication in developing human culture helped the cultural to expend and establish [2, 37]. While [34] found the interaction process as a main

method to learn culture. In line with it, [11] even mentioned the relationship between cultural influences and interpersonal relationship especially on the factors affects each other variables.

Interpersonal and communication skill are an important aspect which can be learned and taught to be better [12, 20]. As one of main method in learning culture, interpersonal communication being identified as a most effective tools in shaping a culture. In the context of individual, the process of cultural learning being influence by the way cultural being learned and perceived through a different behaviour, attitudes, beliefs and values shared as mention by [21].

1.1 Cultural Influences

Culture will influence a person's personality or behaviour. Culture has a strong influence on a person's personality, speech, and behaviour [18]. Since childhood, an individual develops their social skills and conduct by engaging with the environment [17]. Depending on the speaker and the listener, cultural experience may affect how the message is sent and understood [28]. Whether the audience truly comprehends what the speaker is trying to convey depends on how they received and processed the communicated information. However, each person's experience is different, and unintentional cultural interference will occur [31]. This makes it possible for the message to be misinterpreted.

To prevent misinterpretation or contentious issues, the process of cultural adaptation involves understanding and adjustment [8]. When a person fails to fit in with the new norms and culture, the interpersonal conflict will occur [24]. Culture does reflect the importance of one's origins, even influencing daily habits or conventions of behaviour. It demonstrates how cultural norms affect a person's psychological thinking and behaviour [27]. In the meantime, geographical factors were also identified by [27] as a feeder that led to individual psychological thinking into individualism or collectivism. Asians experience a greater cultural influence in their daily lives than do westerners, even in those locations where the level of culture is higher [31]. The context is also revealed through their ad choices, with Dutch people viewing advertisements as being much simpler than Belgians, whose low-context cultures do the opposite [16]. This demonstrates how culture affects people's perceptions of the world, their thoughts, and even their preferences for loving their commercials as in the [16] studies.

According to [36], culture has an impact on the whole person, including their emotional state. It has more to do with individualism and collectivism in terms of how people carry out their everyday tasks and even their socialization [33]. For instance, a person who leans toward collectivism is more likely to avoid complex emotions like the fear of leaving or losing out, whereas an individualist is more likely to feel superior to others.

1.2 Interpersonal Communication

The ability to interact with others effectively is essential for human personal growth and productivity. It is acknowledged as a crucial ability needed by people to interact effectively [4]. The process of people interaction with others was obtained through interpersonal communication concept. [10] focused on two fundamental components of interpersonal communication that are linked and dependent on one another. The idea

of connection, as mentioned by [10], revolves around a tiny, close-knit group (dyadic), while interdependence refers to the results that one party experiences as a result of another party's behaviour.

Interpersonal communication requires both verbal and nonverbal communication [4, 10]. As mention by [29], interpersonal communication can be explained through message, intent, outcomes, and the sender or recipient characteristics. Additionally, [29] also mentioned about the connection between interpersonal communication and the closeness of relationship between communicator with the recipient in the sociocultural makeup of their immediate environment. According to [22], those relationship will fully engage and growth when the communicator and recipient in the communication process shared the same cultural values or are members of relevant group cultures. The communicator can only describe the other person or draw conclusions about others when comparing the traits of non-interpersonal communicator's characteristics [32]. As a result, an interpersonal communication is routed in between communicator and receiver culture.

[32] proposed three main components of interpersonal communication to explain a deeper concept of interpersonal communication: i) the communicators' connection or relationship to one another; ii) the communication flows without the barriers, and iii) the communicators communication over the course of the relationship. It demonstrates how intentional interpersonal communication can be controlled by the communicator to suit their needs and plans [22].

Listening abilities are another aspect of the interpersonal communication context. Early researchers who discovered the connection between communicators' listening skills and interpersonal communication include [14]. There are two types of listeners who participate in interpersonal communication: good listeners and poor listeners [6]. Therefore, [3] investigation among employees in organisations discovered that employees' capacity for active listening, involved expressing gratitude to the speaker. The degree to which listening is used in interpersonal communication has a significant impact on the process's results.

A study by [10] focused on a family setting when describing the concept of interpersonal communication as a dyadic one that revolves around tiny circles of people (intimate relationships). According to [30], interpersonal communication within families has a small bearing on socioeconomic status. Meaning that, compared to a typical family, a family that is in a higher social class or standard tends to be more protective and norm-centred in its communication [11]. While families from higher social classes tend to focus more on discipline and standard compliance with their children [30]. As a result, it will influence how kids speak hereafter and help them in the process of learning in the perspective of interpersonal communication.

1.3   Social Penetration Theory (SPT)

Social Penetration Theory explain the flow of human attachment that drive a relationship from a surface level to deeper [1]. SPT explain the phenomenon on the process of exchanging information in building and breaking the walls of interpersonal relationships [7]. SPT also provide an explanation of the bonding process between speaker and listener

in different level of intimacy. Speaker and listener will involve with the personal infor-
mation sharing activities and how the activities are conducted to share the information.
Those situations can occur in different types of relationship whether formal or informal
types of relationship. Thus, the heart of SPT can be verified through the concept of self-
disclosure which this concept portrays the technique used in affirming an information
about oneself to others [9]. It has a power to increase the level of individual intimacy
with others at certain phase in relationship [7]. The application and concept of this the-
ory also applicable through online communication context such as online platform of
communication.

[1] listed five stages of SPT to describe the level of interpersonal relationship which
are orientation, exploratory affective exchange, affective exchange, stable exchange and
de-penetration. At the first stage (orientation), the most basic information normally
will share and people are cautious when disclosing information at this early stage [1].
The following stage which are exploratory affective exchange will engage when people
share a much deeper information and use less caution when self-disclosing. At this
level, the broadness of topics will be explored and it expend till the process of public
self-revealing [35]. The next level of social penetration theory is affective exchange. At
this stage, information shared are much more common which intervening an interaction
and less informal [35]. At this level, people tend to share some information which more
exclusive or more intimate. Hence, the process of disclosing happened spontaneously
and naturally which representing a higher level of commitment and intimacy.

In this study, the concept of SPT can be utilize and used to clarify the different stages
relationship. At the orientation stage, an individual is cautious about the information that
being shared. People tend to avoid any kind of information that might ruin the relationship
at first. Even the study being applied in the first stage of relationship, the outcome might
be varied since there's still the need of feedback due to the elements of collectivism
which prioritize others than oneself. Finally, the result demonstrates that an individual
social penetration in context of time might different with others. The finding also found
that some of the respondents is easy to deal with and willing to share their information
but some is vice versa.

2   Methodology

A quantitative method was used in this study through a distribution of questionnaire
among 320 respondents. The respondents were chosen randomly among a higher insti-
tution student in Kuala Lumpur There are total of 20 public institutions and 47 private
institutions in Malaysia as listed by Private Higher Educational Institutions Listing pub-
lished by Malaysian Qualification Agency. However, the focus of the study being done
among students in Kuala Lumpur. A total of 60 questions adopted by [19, 25] was mod-
ified based on study context to measure the relationship between culture influence and
interpersonal communication.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha for Pre-Test Analysi**s**

Variables	Items	α
Culture influences	20	.719
Interpersonal communication	40	.832

Table 2. Frequency of respondents

Gender	n	%
Male	134	41.9
Female	186	58.1

Table 3. Relationship between culture influence and interpersonal communication

Pearson Correlation	Value
r	.585**
n	160
p	.000

r significant at 0.01**

3 Results

The Cronbach's alpha values was done to measure the reliability and internal consistency of the instruments. The result was shown in the following table as a value of $α = .719$ for cultural influences and $α = .832$ for interpersonal communication (Table 1).

The result of respondent frequency participated was shown in Table 2 as 134 (41.9%) of the respondents were male while female is 186 (58.1%).

Table 3 shown a result in explaining the relationship of culture influence and interpersonal communication. ($r = .585$, $p < 0.01$) as the result shown a significant connection between cultural influences and interpersonal communication.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

As resulted from the study, it indicates the impact of cultural influences and interpersonal communication through the relationship of both variables. A strong connection was found in explaining the relationship whereas the degree of cultural influences will enhance an individual interpersonal communication. This relationship was found as its being influenced by the origin culture of the respondent (Asian) which most of the Asian implemented a high context culture [26, 30]. The study also examines the influences of religion among Asian in influencing the way a high context culture person implementing interpersonal communication. The Asians culture embedded politeness and tend to

avoid or hide especially in showing avoiding or hiding in showing their real emotions. A high context culture prone to focus on togetherness and collectivism as social focus on community. Meaning that Asian tend to socialize and prioritize on what others feel first rather than themself. Thus, this explain that the high level of individual cultural influence will increase their level of interpersonal communication skill.

However, to strengthen the finding, the future research can be done by widen the number of respondents that are needed for the study as it can assure the researcher that their findings can be more solid and reliable. Different studies approach also can be implemented through a different context of respondents to see the application. It is also advisable for future researchers to use a qualitative method (interview) to get a deeper understanding on culture influences and interpersonal communication study.

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