**CHAPTER 2**

**What Is Intercultural Communication Flexibility?**

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**Chapter 2: Learning Objectives**

As a result of reading Chapter 2 and participating in related class discussions and activities, you should be able to

1. Define the term *intercultural communication*, explaining each of its components in detail, including its meaning-centered characteristics.

2. Discuss three content components of intercultural communication flexibility and internalize the three criteria or standards in assessing your own or others’ intercultural communication flexibility.

3. Describe and use examples to illustrate the four stages of developing intercultural communication competence (or flexibility) along the staircase model.

4. Identify the essential qualities of becoming a mindful intercultural communicator.

5. Explain the core process principles of intercultural communication and make productive movements to practice flexible interactional skill sets and attain adaptability in reaching intercultural outcome goals.

**Chapter 2: Brief Outline**

1. **Defining Intercultural Communication: A Process Model**

Intercultural communication occurs when cultural group membership factors affect communication process (NOTE: This is a brief description; see textbook for complete definitions of all terms.)

* 1. Intercultural Communication Process: Overall Characteristics

Intercultural communication - see definition in text, which includes the following 6 characteristics:

* + 1. **Symbolic exchange**: verbal and nonverbal symbols to accomplish shared meanings
			1. *Digital* aspects: content information that we convey
			2. *Analogical* aspects: affective aspect; involves nonverbal cues
		2. **Process**: interdependent nature of the intercultural encounter
			1. *Transactional*: simultaneous encoding and decoding
			2. *Irreversible:* same message can’t be exactly repeated, or withdrawn
		3. **Cultural communities:** bound unit of individuals who uphold shared traditions and way of life
	1. Intercultural Communication: Meaning Characteristics
		1. **Negotiate shared meanings:** interpretive process. Three layers of meaning: *content*, *relational*, and *identity*
		2. **Interactive situation**: occurs in relational, psychological, and physical contexts
		3. **Societal embedded system**: has multilayered contexts
1. **Cultivating Intercultural Communication Flexibility**
	1. Flexible and inflexible intercultural communication.
		1. **Flexible intercultural communication** (or *intercultural communication competence*): integrate knowledge and open attitude into adaptive practice
		2. **Inflexible intercultural communication**:use our own cultural values, judgments, and routines
		3. **Ethnocentric mindset**: stuck in our own cultural worldviews and value to evaluate others’ behaviors
		4. **Ethnorelative mindset:** understanding behaviors from others’ cultural frames of reference. *Ethnorelativism*: optimal state.
	2. Three Content Components
		1. **Knowledge**: through formal studying and informal learning
		2. **Attitude**: includes both cognitive and affective layers
			1. **Cognitive**: suspend ethnocentrism, be open-minded
			2. **Affective**: emotional commitment to perspective-taking and cultivation of an empathetic heart
			3. Intentional consciousness switching:
		3. Skills: operational abilities
	3. Three Criteria
		1. **Appropriateness**: degree to which behaviors match expectations of cultural insiders
		2. **Effectiveness**: degree to which communicators achieve mutually shared meaning and integrative goal-related outcomes
		3. **Communication adaptability**: ability to change our interaction behaviors and goals to meet needs of situation
2. **Practicing Intercultural Communication Competence**
	1. A Staircase Model: Four Stages Of Flexible Intercultural Communication
		1. **Unconscious incompetence**: blissfully ignorant stage
		2. **Conscious incompetence**: semi-awareness stage
		3. **Conscious competence**: full mindfulness stage
		4. **Unconscious competence**: mindlessly mindful Zen-like stage
	2. An Essential Hook: A Mindful Perspective - includes:
		1. Mindful intercultural communicators observe their own internal assumptions
		2. Must also learn to see things from other’s cultural frame of values, reasons for behavior, identity issues
3. **Deepening Intercultural Process Thinking and Outcome Goals**
	1. Process Consciousness: Underlying Principles: Intercultural communication involves:

Principle 1: Mismatched expectations stem from group differences, may be deep-level differences

Principle 2: Varying degrees of biased intergroup perceptions; stereotypes involved

Principle 3: Simultaneous encoding and decoding of verbal and nonverbal messages

Principle 4: Involves multiple goals: *instrumental, socioemotional,* *identity*

Principle 5: Understanding and acceptance of diverse communication approaches and styles

Principle 6: Involves *culture bumps* and *well-meaning clashes*.

Principle 7: Always takes place in a context (physical setting, expected roles, etc.)

Principle 8: Always takes place in an embedded societal system

* 1. Movements Toward Outcome Goals
		1. Internal outcomes of developing intercultural flexibility, ethnorelative mindset
		2. External outcomes – achievements of goals
1. **Intercultural Reality Check: Doables**

A flexible intercultural communicator:

* 1. Emphasizes a process-focused approach
	2. Recognizes separate, ethnocentric realities that divide us
	3. Is willing to suspend evaluative snap judgments concerning differences
	4. Can deal with ambiguity and paradox
	5. Can communicate appropriately, effectively, and adaptively

**Chapter 2: Check-Up**

**Go online to check out the following quiz questions related to figures in Chapter 2:**

[**Figure 2.1**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-figure-table-quiz-2-1?previousFilter=tag_chapter-02) Quiz

To see the other elements in the process model of intercultural communication, check out Figure 2.1 in the text.

[**Figure 2.2**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-figure-table-quiz-2-2?previousFilter=tag_chapter-02)Quiz

To see the other levels in the staircase model, check out Figure 2.2 in the text.

**Chapter 2: Critical Incident Analysis**

**Check out the following intercultural scenarios:**

(NOTE: See “Chapter 2 Class Handouts” for printable versions.)

**First Scenario: Decoding Intercultural Dialogues**

Decoding a Swiss-Asian Indian Intercultural Dialogue:

A Dialogue Between Mr. Weisheit and Mr. Patel

Mr. Weisheit: Well Sanjay, it looks like we’ll need to wrap up the final project with an intense meeting of nonstop work on Saturday. At least we will be able to get a couple of beers when it’s over! See you then!

Mr. Patel: I see. Well…

Mr. Weisheit: Ok, see you!

Mr. Patel: Well, yes. I think… um… Mr. Weisheit,.maybe ...

Mr. Weisheit: Yes, just think! The project that has been driving us crazy will be out of our office on Saturday. I Can’t wait to celebrate!

Mr. Patel: Yes, well, this coming Saturday is a very special day in our family. It is my grandfather's 80th birthday. It is a big day, and many relatives will be coming from out of town.

Mr. Weisheit: I see.

Mr. Patel: So… you understand my situation?

Mr. Weisheit: Of course! I also like to get away from my relatives and in-laws when they come to visit. Now you have a great excuse to get out of it. See you on Saturday, Sanjay!

Mr. Patel: But Mr. Weisheit, perhaps we can talk about this later? Mr. Weisheit?

**Interactive Probes**

**(Ask yourself and probe your classmates’ reactions)**

(NOTE: See “Chapter 2 Exercise Handouts” for a printable form containing these questions.)

1. Do you perceive any communication problems with the above dialogue between Mr. Weisheit and Mr. Patel?

2. What are the specific communication problems?

3. Can you infer some cultural assumptions and expectations that Mr. Weisheit has concerning communication?

4. Can you infer some cultural assumptions and expectations that Mr. Patel has concerning communication?

**Second Scenario: Decoding Intercultural Dialogues**

Decoding a Brazilian-British Intercultural Dialogue:

A Dialogue Between Kouadio and Maggie in a Studio Design Engineering Office

Kouadio: What did you think of the New Millennium Design project?

Maggie: Very nice. I am quite pleased.

Kouadio: So it’s good, then? We thought it was a tremendous project, a superbly designed project that will bring the company great rewards due to its amazing details and engineering feats.

Maggie: Yes. There is one drawing that needs to be changed. Other than that, the design will work fine.

Kouadio: Hmm. I see.

Maggie: What about that other assignment you were working on? The Gallactica Project? Any chance I could take a look at it?

Kouadio: Well, we can make it a priority, if you want. My group of designers is the best in the business, and we work night and day to come up with such projects as the Gallactica--which is a stupendous design, a tremendous effort for all my employees.

Maggie: Good going. You're a good sport. Thanks, Kouadio.

Kouadio: So, you want my team to scrap the Millennium design?

Maggie: Pardon me?

**Interactive Probes**

**(Ask yourself and probe your classmates’ reactions)**

(NOTE: See “Chapter 2 Exercise Handouts” for a printable form containing these questions.)

1. Do you perceive any communication problems with the above dialogue between Kouadio and Maggie?

2. What are the specific communication problems?

3. Can you infer some cultural assumptions and expectations that Kouadio has concerning communication?

4. Can you infer some cultural assumptions and expectations that Ian has concerning communication?

**Chapter 2 Glossary-Matching Quizzes**

**Click for** [**Matching Quiz 2.1**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-glossary-matching-quiz-2-1?previousFilter=tag_chapter-02)

**Click for** [**Matching Quiz 2.2**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-glossary-matching-quiz-2-2?previousFilter=tag_chapter-02)

**Chapter 2: Practice Quiz**

**Click here for** [**Chapter 2 Review Practice Quiz**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-chapter-2-review-prep-quiz?previousFilter=tag_chapter-02)

**Chapter 2: Exercise Handouts**

**Note: Your instructor may ask you to** [**download,**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/ting-toomey3e-student-resources#tag_chapter-02) **print out, and/or e-mail the following class handouts for this chapter:**

 **Reflecting on Intercultural Communication Competence**

 **Reflections on *Outsourced* (Part I) Film Clip**

**Scenario 1: Decoding an Intercultural Dialogue**

 **Scenario 2: Decoding an Intercultural Dialogue**

 **Interactive Probes for “Decoding an Intercultural Dialogue”**