

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

WEEK 8

Intercultural Conflict and Negotiation

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Introduction

Key focus:

- ▶ Understanding conflict across cultures
- ▶ Causes of intercultural conflict
- ▶ Conflict management styles
- ▶ Negotiation across cultural boundaries

Lesson Objectives

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

- ▶ Define intercultural conflict and negotiation
- ▶ Explain causes of conflict in intercultural settings
- ▶ Identify cultural differences that shape conflict behaviour
- ▶ Describe different conflict management styles
- ▶ Explain how negotiation varies across cultures
- ▶ Apply intercultural competence in conflict resolution

Introduction to Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ Intercultural conflict occurs when people from different cultural backgrounds experience disagreement, misunderstanding, tension, or opposition.

It may arise because people have different:

- ▶ Values
- ▶ Communication styles
- ▶ Beliefs
- ▶ Social expectations
- ▶ Power relations
- ▶ Conflict resolution methods

Meaning of Conflict

- ▶ Conflict refers to a situation where individuals or groups perceive that their goals, interests, values, or needs are incompatible.
- ▶ Conflict does not always mean violence or hostility. It may simply involve:
- ▶ Disagreement
- ▶ Misunderstanding
- ▶ Competition
- ▶ Tension
- ▶ Emotional discomfort
- ▶ Opposing expectations

Meaning of Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ Intercultural conflict is a disagreement or tension between people from different cultural backgrounds, where cultural differences influence how the conflict begins, develops, and is resolved.

Example:

- ▶ A student from a direct communication culture may openly challenge a lecturer's idea, while another student from a culture that values respect for authority may see this as rude.

Why Intercultural Conflict Awareness Matters

- ▶ Intercultural conflict is important because people increasingly interact across cultures in:
 - ▶ Universities
 - ▶ Workplaces
 - ▶ Religious institutions
 - ▶ International organisations
 - ▶ Online spaces
 - ▶ Migration contexts
 - ▶ Business negotiations
 - ▶ Peacebuilding and diplomacy
- ▶ Without intercultural awareness, small misunderstandings can become serious conflicts.

Effects of Conflicts

- ▶ **Conflict Is Not Always Negative**

- ▶ Conflict can have positive outcomes when handled well.

- ▶ Positive effects include:

- ▶ Better understanding between cultures

- ▶ Clarification of expectations

- ▶ Improved relationships

- ▶ Innovation and problem-solving

- ▶ Social change

- ▶ Growth in intercultural competence

- ▶ The problem is not the conflict itself, but how it is managed.

Negative Effects of Conflicts

- Breakdown of communication
- Damaged relationships
- Loss of trust
- Emotional stress and anxiety
- Anger, fear, and frustration
- Reduced cooperation
- Poor teamwork
- Low morale
- Reduced productivity
- Poor academic or work performance
- Increased hostility
- Aggressive behaviour
- Blame and accusations
- Stereotyping and prejudice
- Discrimination and exclusion
- Division among individuals or groups

Common Causes of Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ Intercultural conflict may be caused by:
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Stereotypes and prejudice
- ▶ Ethnocentrism
- ▶ Different values
- ▶ Misinterpretation of nonverbal cues
- ▶ Power imbalance
- ▶ Religious or moral differences
- ▶ Different views of time
- ▶ Different attitudes toward authority

Values and Beliefs as Sources of Conflict

- ▶ Cultures differ in what they consider important.
- ▶ Conflict may arise from differences in:
 - ▶ Individualism versus collectivism
 - ▶ Equality versus hierarchy
 - ▶ Competition versus cooperation
 - ▶ Tradition versus modernity
 - ▶ Privacy versus community involvement
 - ▶ Religious beliefs
 - ▶ Gender roles
 - ▶

Ethnocentrism and Conflict

- ▶ Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's own culture is superior to others.
- ▶ It can cause conflict because people may:
 - ▶ Judge others unfairly
 - ▶ Reject different practices
 - ▶ Misinterpret behaviour
 - ▶ Refuse to learn from other cultures
 - ▶ Treat cultural difference as cultural inferiority
 - ▶ Intercultural communication requires cultural humility.

Stereotypes and Prejudice

- ▶ Stereotypes are fixed generalisations about a group.
- ▶ Prejudice is a negative attitude toward people based on group identity.
- ▶ They contribute to conflict by:
 - ▶ Creating suspicion
 - ▶ Reducing trust
 - ▶ Encouraging discrimination
 - ▶ Blocking genuine dialogue
 - ▶ Making people defensive

Power and Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ Power differences often influence intercultural conflict.
- ▶ Power may be based on:
 - ▶ Race
 - ▶ Ethnicity
 - ▶ Gender
 - ▶ Language
 - ▶ Nationality
 - ▶ Economic status
 - ▶ Education
 - ▶ Religion
 - ▶ Institutional position
- ▶ Those with more power may define whose culture is considered “normal” or “acceptable.”

Culture and Face-Saving

- ▶ “Face” refers to a person’s public image, dignity, honour, or social respect.
- ▶ In many cultures, avoiding public embarrassment is very important.
- ▶ Conflict can worsen when someone feels:
 - ▶ Humiliated
 - ▶ Publicly corrected
 - ▶ Disrespected
 - ▶ Ignored
 - ▶ Shamed
- ▶ Face-saving is important in intercultural negotiation.

Direct and Indirect Conflict Styles

- ▶ Cultures differ in how openly they express disagreement.
- ▶ **Direct conflict style:**
- ▶ Openly states the problem
- ▶ Values honesty and clarity
- ▶ May use direct criticism
- ▶ **Indirect conflict style:**
- ▶ Avoids open confrontation
- ▶ Uses hints or silence
- ▶ Values harmony and relationship preservation

Individualistic and Collectivist Approaches

In individualistic cultures, conflict may be viewed as a matter between individuals.

- ▶ Common emphasis:
- ▶ Personal rights
- ▶ Individual opinion
- ▶ Direct negotiation
- ▶ Personal responsibility

In collectivist cultures, conflict may affect the whole group.

- ▶ Common emphasis:
- ▶ Group harmony
- ▶ Family or community reputation
- ▶ Mediation
- ▶ Respect for elders or leaders

High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

- ▶ In high-context cultures, meaning is often communicated indirectly through context, relationships, and nonverbal cues.
- ▶ In low-context cultures, meaning is often communicated directly through words.
- ▶ Conflict may arise when:
 - ▶ A low-context speaker expects direct answers
 - ▶ A high-context speaker expects sensitivity to context
 - ▶ Silence or indirectness is misread as dishonesty or avoidance

Time Orientation and Conflict

Cultures differ in their understanding of time.

- ▶ **Monochronic cultures:**

- ▶ Value punctuality
- ▶ Prefer schedules
- ▶ Handle one task at a time

- ▶ **Polychronic cultures:**

- ▶ Value relationships over strict schedules
- ▶ Handle multiple issues at once
- ▶ Time is more flexible
- ▶ Conflict can occur when one side sees the other as disrespectful or disorganised.

Emotional Expression in Conflict

Cultures differ in how emotions are expressed during conflict.

- ▶ Some cultures encourage open emotional expression.
- ▶ Others value emotional control and restraint.
- ▶ Misunderstandings may occur when:
 - ▶ Calmness is seen as a lack of concern
 - ▶ Emotional expression is seen as aggression
 - ▶ Silence is seen as agreement
 - ▶ Tears or anger are misinterpreted

Types of Intercultural Conflict

Intercultural conflict may include:

- ▶ Interpersonal conflict
- ▶ Family conflict
- ▶ Workplace conflict
- ▶ Religious conflict
- ▶ Ethnic conflict
- ▶ Gender-based cultural conflict
- ▶ Organisational conflict
- ▶ International conflict
- ▶ Online intercultural conflict

Interpersonal Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ This occurs between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

Example:

- ▶ A roommate conflict between students from different countries over noise, cleanliness, food practices, privacy or visitors.
- ▶ The conflict may appear personal, but cultural expectations may be involved.

Workplace Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ Workplace conflict may arise from differences in:
- ▶ Leadership expectations
- ▶ Communication styles
- ▶ Decision-making
- ▶ Gender roles
- ▶ Time management
- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Feedback styles
- ▶ Attitudes toward hierarchy

Example:

- ▶ An employee may expect participatory decision-making, while a manager expects obedience to authority.

Religious and Moral Conflict

- ▶ Religious and moral values can influence conflict in areas such as:
- ▶ Dress
- ▶ Food
- ▶ Gender interaction
- ▶ Worship practices
- ▶ Holidays
- ▶ Family roles
- ▶ Marriage
- ▶ Public behaviour
- ▶ Respectful dialogue is necessary when deeply held beliefs are involved.

Conflict Management Styles

Common conflict management styles include:

- ▶ Avoiding
- ▶ Accommodating
- ▶ Competing
- ▶ Compromising
- ▶ Collaborating
- ▶ Different cultures may prefer different styles depending on context, relationship, and power distance.

Avoiding Style

- ▶ Avoiding means withdrawing from conflict or refusing to address it directly.
- ▶ It may be used when:
 - ▶ The issue is sensitive
 - ▶ Open confrontation may damage relationships
 - ▶ A person wants time to think
 - ▶ Power differences make speaking risky
- ▶ However, avoiding can also allow problems to continue.

Accommodating Style

- ▶ Accommodating means giving in to the other person's wishes to preserve peace.
- ▶ It may be useful when:
 - ▶ The relationship is more important than the issue
 - ▶ One person recognises they are wrong
 - ▶ Harmony is culturally valued
 - ▶ Respect for authority is expected
 - ▶ But it can cause resentment if one side always sacrifices.

Competing Style

- ▶ Competing means pursuing one's own goals strongly, sometimes at the expense of others.
- ▶ It may be common in cultures or situations that value:
 - ▶ Assertiveness
 - ▶ Debate
 - ▶ Winning
 - ▶ Legal rights
 - ▶ Strong leadership
- ▶ It can be effective in emergencies but may damage relationships.

Compromising Style

- ▶ Compromising means each side gives up something to reach a middle ground.
- ▶ It is useful when:
 - ▶ Time is limited
 - ▶ Both sides have equal power
 - ▶ A temporary solution is needed
 - ▶ The issue is important but not deeply value-based
 - ▶ However, compromise may not fully satisfy either side.

Collaborating Style

- ▶ Collaborating means working together to find a solution that meets the needs of both sides.
- ▶ It requires:
- ▶ Listening
- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Patience
- ▶ Creativity
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Open dialogue
- ▶ This is often the best approach for long-term intercultural relationships

Introduction to Negotiation

- ▶ Negotiation is a communication process in which two or more parties discuss their differences and try to reach an agreement.

In intercultural negotiation, culture affects:

- ▶ How people speak
- ▶ How they build trust
- ▶ How they make decisions
- ▶ How they view agreements
- ▶ How they handle disagreement

Intercultural Negotiation Defined

- ▶ Intercultural negotiation is the process of reaching an agreement between people or groups from different cultural backgrounds.
- ▶ It involves both substantive issues and relational issues.

Substantive issues include:

- ▶ Price
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Roles
- ▶ Responsibilities
- ▶ Conditions

Relational issues include:

- ▶ Trust
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Honour
- ▶ Long-term cooperation

Culture and Negotiation Goals

- ▶ Different cultures may enter negotiation with different goals.
- ▶ Some focus on:
 - ▶ Getting the best deal
 - ▶ Solving the immediate problem
 - ▶ Protecting personal rights
 - ▶ Winning clearly
- ▶ Others focus on:
 - ▶ Building long-term relationships
 - ▶ Maintaining harmony
 - ▶ Protecting group dignity
 - ▶ Avoiding public embarrassment

Relationship-Building in Negotiation

- ▶ In some cultures, negotiation begins with relationship-building before business discussion.
- ▶ This may involve:
 - ▶ Greetings
 - ▶ Sharing meals
 - ▶ Informal conversation
 - ▶ Learning about family or community
 - ▶ Showing respect for elders or leaders
- ▶ In other cultures, people may prefer to move directly to the agenda.

Decision-Making in Negotiation

- ▶ Cultures differ in how decisions are made.
- ▶ Some cultures value individual decision-making, where one person has the authority to decide.
- ▶ Others value collective decision-making, where consultation with family, elders, managers, or community members is necessary.
- ▶ Negotiators must understand who has the authority to make final decisions.

Communication Strategies for Intercultural Negotiation

Effective intercultural negotiation requires:

- ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Clear but respectful language
- ▶ Avoiding assumptions
- ▶ Asking clarifying questions
- ▶ Observing nonverbal cues
- ▶ Being patient
- ▶ Managing emotions
- ▶ Respecting silence
- ▶ Checking understanding regularly

Role of Mediation in Intercultural Conflict

- ▶ Mediation involves a neutral third party helping conflicting groups reach an understanding or an agreement.
- ▶ Mediators may be:
 - ▶ Elders
 - ▶ Religious leaders
 - ▶ Community leaders
 - ▶ Professional mediators
 - ▶ Teachers
 - ▶ Managers
 - ▶ Diplomats
- ▶ Mediation is especially useful in cultures that prefer indirect conflict resolution.

Skills for Managing Intercultural Conflict

Important skills include:

- ▶ Cultural self-awareness
- ▶ Empathy
- ▶ Tolerance
- ▶ Emotional intelligence
- ▶ Respectful questioning
- ▶ Perspective-taking
- ▶ Patience
- ▶ Flexibility
- ▶ Face-saving communication
- ▶ Ability to separate people from the problem

Lesson Summary

- ▶ Intercultural conflict is a normal part of communication across cultures.

Key points:

- ▶ Conflict is shaped by culture, language, values, identity, power and communication styles.
- ▶ Different cultures manage disagreement differently.
- ▶ Negotiation requires both problem-solving and relationship-building.
- ▶ Effective intercultural conflict resolution requires respect, patience, empathy, and cultural awareness.
- ▶ The goal is not to eliminate differences, but to manage them constructively.

References

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The End

▶ Thank You