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# Communication across Intercultural and Interpersonal Differences

การสื่อสารข้ามความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรม  
และทางปัจเจกบุคคล

Second edition



Nuchada Dumrongsiri

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ถนนพระจันทร์ กรุงเทพฯ 10200 โทร. 0-2223-9232

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# Preface

*Communication across Intercultural and Interpersonal Differences* is written as a textbook for a course related to intercultural communication that underlines how culture, communication, and language are interrelated. This text is aimed to increase students' awareness, knowledge, and understandings of cultural and individual differences as a strategy to communicate appropriately and effectively in intercultural interactions. Throughout the text, students are reinforced with a neutral mindset through a communication perspective that helps prepare them to overcome difficulties resulting from global diversity.

This book consists of six chapters, with the first three chapters focusing on basic theoretical concepts and definitions of key terms and the last three chapters emphasizing communication between several cultural groups. Chapter 1 presents how culture is redefined in this text based on a communication approach and how the three terms of culture, communication, and language are bound together as intercultural communication. Chapter 2 explains communication process, barriers, and multiculturalism strategy while Chapter 3 discusses cultural influences on use and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal communication. Chapters 4 and 5 address an awareness of and how to bridge differences in gender and other characteristics, including disabilities and stigmatized identities. Lastly, Chapter 6 describes individual and generation differences via an interpersonal communication approach as a practice for effective intercultural communication. All six chapters stem from the synthesis of academic and non-academic resources from language, communication, culture, and psychology fields to provide a well-rounded perspective to better understand group and individual differences for a fruitful communication in intercultural context.

Lastly, the author would like to express appreciation to Thammasat University and Faculty of Liberal Arts for their support, to the reviewers for their suggestions, making this text better, and to my family and loved ones for their encouragement. Without full support from them, this text would not be possible.

**Nuchada Dumrongsiri**

*Department of English and Linguistics  
Faculty of Liberal Arts  
September 2019*



**Chapter**

# 1

## **Culture, Communication, and Language**

### **Objectives:**

1. To define culture, communication, and language
2. To understand how culture, communication, and language are connected as intercultural communication
3. To describe cultural dimensions
4. To explain how culture influences attitudes, values, and behaviors

### **Contents:**

- Definitions and Components
- The interrelationships among communication, language, and culture
- Cultural Dimensions
- Culture, Attitudes, and Values

# Chapter 1

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## **Culture, Communication, and Language**

### **Chapter Focus**

In Chapter 1, key terms, which include culture, communication, and language, are defined and then explained how they are connected as intercultural communication. Also, another focus of this chapter is on what culture is – to be defined commonly and re-defined in this textbook – and how culture is classified in dimensions to understand people's behavior. Lastly, this chapter discusses how culture, attitudes, and values influence people with different cultural background to behave differently.

### **Definitions and Components of Intercultural Communication**

#### **Understanding Key Terms**

*Culture, communication, and language.* When people meet someone from different culture, language and communications skills are the first thing that plays an important role in initial conversation. Language refers to systems of meaning (Lim, 2003) and reflects thoughts and social reality of its speakers

(Sapir, 1924/1949; Whorf, 1956). Communication is a process to exchange verbal and non-verbal messages to build mutual understanding. The two terms are closely related, but the unit of study is different. Language is medium; communication is interaction. Language scholars study what people said – text and meaning. Communication scholars study how and why people said things – behavior and perception.

Another term that comes to play in intercultural setting is culture. Culture refers to “an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol system” (Neuliep, 2015, p. 470). When considering this definition, the key concepts are twofold: (1) things that are shared by cultural group members and (2) symbol system or language. In other words, culture and language are related. Culture is in language; culture is shared through language. Language serves as culture in itself and as a tool to transfer culture.

The statement “culture is in language” means that, when using the host language, people can learn the culture that is embedded in it. For example, when speaking Thai language, people use polite words to respect older people, using “mai saab” (ไม่ทราบ) instead of “mai ru” (ไม่รู้) to mean “I don’t know.” Thus, it reflects Thai culture that values seniority. However, people can partially learn the host culture in its language. They cannot fully understand the new culture from using the language only. For example, non-Thais are aware to value seniority when speaking Thai language, but they may not learn all Thai values and beliefs that are not reflected in the linguistic aspects such as social manners.

The other statement “culture is shared through language” means that language is used as a medium to teach and learn culture among in-group members and between ingroup and outgroup. Culture is transferred through language and other symbols such as nonverbal behaviors, pictorial signs, and artifacts as well as via people’s interaction.



## Re-defining Key Terms

**Culture.** “One cannot not communicate” is a well-known axiom that raises how communication is important in human communication (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967, p.49). It underlines that people communicate all the time through their behavior. Behavior is informative, and then communicative. When one cannot not communicate, the next question is how one can communicate effectively across various kinds of differences between communicators. The differences include personal and cultural aspects as well as language.

Being a good communicator is to understand the statement “*a person is culture.*” Each person is full of differences in terms of internal and external layers. The internal layer includes individual differences such as personality, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and preferences. The external layer is tied to group belonging such as gender, language, ethnicity, community, and culture. When a person is treated as a total culture, a communicator constructs a message that is tailor-made for the person with an awareness of his/her various differences. What is said is similar to all, but how is said is particular for each person. Then, communication is more effective with “the person-oriented method.”

When a person is culture, a definition of culture goes beyond any boundaries. Culture is commonly perceived as a construct related to geographical or physical limits such as country, continent, race, and ethnicity. Scholars have studied Western culture, Asian culture, Chinese culture, Thai culture, and others that are defined to geography and physical aspects. In this way, culture is studied from the outside border to explain people’s behavior as a group member. For example, Thailand tends to be perceived as collectivist or group-oriented culture. However, a better way to understand culture is to look inside cultural members to explain people’s behavior as an individual who defines himself/herself as “a member of many groups simultaneously” – multiculturalism. For example, although Thailand values group-oriented behaviors, the caution is that each Thai is different in a degree to which collectivism is applied. Some are more collectivist; others are more individualist, depending on individual differences and personal background.



In other words, an alternative view to better define culture and communication across differences is to readjust a mindset when thinking of culture. Culture has been investigated as a group practice to explain a member's behavior. Instead, culture is in each person to reflect collective behaviors of each group to which he/she feels belonged. As our society is becoming a digital community, new communication technologies, especially social media, connect people across time and boundaries and creates a new society online where cultures are blended, but differences among people are maintained at the same time. Thus, to better understand culture that becomes more complex and explain human communication behavior is to shift a focus from collective to individual boundaries – from assigned grouping to self-identifying culture.

***Culture and communication as intercultural communication.*** The study of communication and culture is to look at the two terms – culture and communication – separately and how they are woven together. Communication is “the process by which verbal and nonverbal messages are used to create meaning” (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p.412). Culture serves as “the rules of living and functioning in society” (Quintanilla & Wahl, 2017, p.356). These rules include values, beliefs, and behaviors shared among members in a certain society. When the two terms are combined as cultural communication, several perspectives define them in different ways. Anthropology views cultural communication as “a process through which cultural difference is expressed and constructed” (Philipsen, 2003, p. 35). Literature perspective refers cultural communication as speech genres of a society that demonstrate public forms of communication interdependent with everyday speech habits of that society's members (Philipsen, 2003). Communication scholars define cultural communication as a process of activity to produce shared understandings, shared meaning, and coordination among members of a particular society (Philipsen, 2003).

Through a communication perspective, culture and communication are bounded as “intercultural communication.” The term ‘intercultural’ emphasizes an interaction between members of different groups. The interaction refers to ongoing communication activities enacted by each communicator to exchange messages and create shared meaning and mutual understanding. During the

interaction, language, which refers to abstract rules (i.e., phonological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic rules) (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Schmidt, 1989, p. 145), serves as a tool to communicate verbal, nonverbal, textual, and sign messages. The communicators encode and decode the messages based on the context where culture in each person comes to play for interpretation.

Accordingly, intercultural communication is comprised of three constructs that are activated during the interaction: culture, communication, and language. Thus, in this text, intercultural communication is defined as “an interaction between two ends using verbal and nonverbal language to exchange messages and build mutual understanding based on an awareness of individual and cultural differences” (see Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1** Summary of Three Components in Intercultural Communication

Key Terms	Language	Communication	Culture
<b>Definition</b>	System of meaning	Process of message exchange	Self-identifying group belonging
<b>Function</b>	Medium	Interaction	Interpretation
<b>Unit of analysis</b>	What people said (text and meaning)	How people said (behavior and perception)	What, how, and why people said (symbol system, behavior, and perception)
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Intercultural Communication:</b></p> <p>an interaction between two ends using verbal and nonverbal language to exchange messages and build mutual understanding based on an awareness of individual and cultural differences</p>			

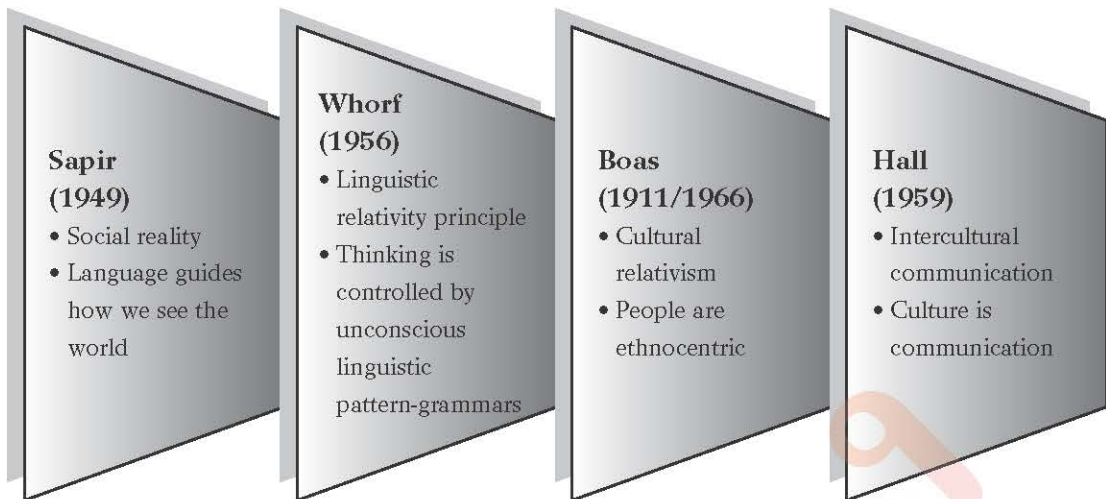
In summary, a traditional approach defines culture by typically using characteristics such as race, nationality, ethnicity, or geographic region to operationalize culture. An alternative approach defines culture as a learned set of shared interpretations about beliefs, values, and norms that affect the behavior of a group of people. With the shift of focus, culture is not tied to where members are born or what they appear physically such as skin color and language use. Instead, culture reflects in “the commonalities in and interpretations of members’ behaviors” (Wiseman, 2003, p. 192). Thus, the alternative approach, as a framework of this textbook, includes more subculture/subpopulation in intercultural communication where dominant members interact with those in non-dominant groups such as elderly people, people with physical disabilities, people who are deaf, people who differ in sexual orientations, or people who design their own genders.

## **The Interrelationships among Culture, Communication, and Language**

### **History of the Study of Intercultural Communication**

The three constructs – culture, communication, and language – are interrelated to each other as a new term “intercultural communication.” The study of intercultural communication was started as an academic discipline when Hall (1959) firstly introduced the term “intercultural communication” with the belief that culture is communication. He suggested that studying culture alone is not enough to understand people’s behavior across cultures. Rather, it is better to look at the interaction – how people from different culture interact with one another. Although Hall was an anthropologist, his view of studying culture is consistent with scholars in communication field. Hall is recognized as the founder of intercultural communication (Neuliep, 2015) (see Picture 1.1).





**Picture 1.1: History of Intercultural Communication**

Source: Based on literature review by the author

Before Hall (1959) suggested the term intercultural communication, the study of culture and communication was prevalent during the World War II when military were sent overseas for services and needed training for communicating with others in different culture. Hall's works were influenced by Franz Boas, the famous anthropologist, who observed that people are ethnocentric – they perceive their own native culture as a preferred standard to judge behavior of other cultures (Neuliep, 2015). Thus, to understand people behavior and their interaction is to understand their language and cultural practices. This idea was termed later as “cultural relativism” (Boas, 1966).

## Intercultural Communication as a Complex Process

Intercultural communication is a process, and the process is complex. The intercultural communication is a process in which interactions are dynamic to exchange messages between communicators in intercultural setting. The process is complex as the communicators exchange not only messages, but also beliefs and values rooted in each to build an understanding shared between them. Those beliefs and values include personal, social, political, and cultural aspects that tend to be different between the communicators. Moreover, the



process becomes much more complex when the communicators use different languages.

In intercultural setting, which refers to an interaction between people who are members of different groups and hold different sets of shared beliefs and behaviors, the first barrier that comes to mind is language. People learn to speak other languages in addition to their own native language to communicate better in intercultural context. However, language is not enough. Although people speak the same language, misunderstandings are common. The next question is what is in the intercultural setting that makes the communication difficult to create shared understanding.

In addition to the language barrier, misunderstanding in intercultural interactions comes from a lack of knowledge of the other's culture. Thus, to be competent in intercultural communication, people need knowledge of another culture, motivation to communicate with those coming from different culture, and skills to actually perform communication behaviors in a real situation (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984).

Firstly, knowledge refers to awareness and understanding of the other's culture. Competent communicators know communication rules, context, and normative expectations when interacting with members of the other culture. To obtain the needed knowledge, people need a flexible cognitive system to be open-minded and sensitive to feedback of the other person.

The next component is motivation, which refers to feelings, intentions, needs, and drives to communicate or not to communicate with others from different cultures. Fears, dislikes, and anxieties when meeting strangers create negative motivation, and then avoid the intercultural interaction.

Lastly, skills refer to actual performance of behaviors to be effective and appropriate in the communication context. Skills include verbal, nonverbal, and role. They are goal-oriented and consistent. Communicators are perceived as competent when they can replicate the same behavior with the same effect expected. In short, to be competent in intercultural interactions, people need an awareness of cultural differences and language and communication skills.

## Cultural Dimensions

Scholars have offered a number of cultural typologies. This textbook focuses on cultural patterns that are frequently studied. Culture is categorized into five well-known primary dimensions to understand behavior of people with different cultural backgrounds. Cultural dimensions help explain why people from different cultures communicate and behave differently. The five cultural dimensions include Hall's (1976) one dimension and Hofstede's (1984) selected four dimensions.

### High-Low Context Culture

People consider the importance of context and its meaning differently. The degree to which importance is assigned to the context influences communication and language use. Hall (1976) suggested two categories of culture: high-context and low-context. When placing high importance on context, people interpret others' behavior depending on the contextual or situational cues such as social status, relationship, reputation, dress code, seniority, and nonverbal language. What is not said verbally (i.e. implicit/indirect messages) is meaningful and more important. High-context culture includes China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, and Arab and African cultures (Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015).

On the other hand, when placing low importance on context, people depend less on contextual or situational cues to give meaning to others' behavior and things around them. What is actually spoken or written (i.e., explicit/direct messages) is more meaningful than the cues. Low-context culture includes France, Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015).

Members of high-context and low-context cultures communicate and use language differently. Being competent in intercultural interactions between members of high- and low-context cultures requires an awareness of cultural and linguistic differences to avoid misunderstanding and false interpretation. For example, silence and talking are valued in different ways. In a high-context

culture such as Japanese and Native American cultures, silence and less talking are considered proper and comfortable as a way to show politeness (Petkova, 2015). Unlike in a low-context culture such as in the United States, small talk is considered more important and enjoyable as a way to initiate the conversation and engage strangers in communication (Jones, 1999).

## Individualist-Collectivist Culture

Individualism and collectivism are placed along a continuum where individualism is on one end and collectivism is on the other end. As reflected in its term, individualist culture prefers independence over interdependence; it values personal interest, individual achievement, uniqueness, and equality (Hofstede, 1984). Behaviors of individualists are guided by personal goals over group goals. They believe that they are responsible for their own happiness and achievement. They communicate verbally and nonverbally to express personal freedom in thinking and acting. For example, individualists tend to use direct words to voice their opinion rather than remain silent to preserve relationships. Most individualist cultures include the United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, Netherlands, New Zealand, Italy, Belgium, and Denmark, respectively (Hecht, Andersen, & Ribeau, 1989).

Alternatively, collectivist culture values group interest and harmony over personal benefit (Hofstede, 1984). As they are group-oriented, group loyalty, relationships, and levels become more important than individual freedom. When communicate, they may suppress emotions especially if it is against the group mood or group maintenance. Behaviors of collectivists are guided by interdependent between group members. They rely on each other when doing things and follow social and relational role expectations. For example, a person with a higher status is expected to oversee lower-status people who are expected to respect and obey the higher-ranking one in return. Most collectivist cultures include Venezuela, Colombia, Pakistan, Peru, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Chile, and Hong Kong, respectively (Hecht et al., 1989).

Later, researchers believe that cultural patterns may not be completely classified as individualism or collectivism. Triandis (1995) suggested that



differences may exist within individualism or collectivism. He then further differentiated individualism and collectivism into horizontal and vertical aspects (Triandis, 1995). Horizontal pattern underlines equality in which its cultural members perceive themselves as the same as other members. Vertical pattern emphasizes hierarchy in which its cultural members see themselves as different from other members.

## **Uncertainty Avoidance Culture**

Berger and Calabrese's (1975) uncertainty reduction theory posits that "when strangers meet, their primary concern is one of uncertainty reduction or increasing predictability about the behavior of both themselves and others in the interaction" (p.100). This theory is based on communication perspective and can be applied theoretically to understand intercultural context (Gudykunst, 2003), where uncertainty is higher than intracultural interaction.

During interactions, uncertainty is reduced through an exchange of information that allows each person to predict the other's attitudes and behaviors (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). In a certain situation such as intercultural meeting, uncertainty is high as people do not know the other's culture well (e.g., language, greeting, social manners, and business practices). Then, anxiety is usually high.

People from different culture consider and manage uncertainty in different ways. Uncertainty refers to risk and ambiguity in which the degree of tolerance and avoidance is varied by culture (Hofstede, 1984). Members of high avoidance uncertainty culture have lower tolerance of ambiguity. When facing uncertainty, they express high level of anxiety and need formal rules and truth. They tend to be low-risk taking, fear of failure, and prefer rules of behavior as a way to help predict others. For example, in classroom, students in high-uncertainty avoidance culture may feel more comfortable with structured teaching and learning where teachers are expected to be knowledge providers.

Differently, members of low avoidance uncertainty culture have high tolerance of ambiguity and are more flexible to diversity and differences without excessive stress and anxiety. Uncertainty is a part of daily life and treated as it occurs. For example, in classroom, students in low-uncertainty avoidance culture



may be more comfortable with open teaching and learning where knowledge is shared through discussion among teacher and students.

An awareness of these cultural differences helps people to communicate in intercultural contexts better. High-uncertainty avoidance culture includes Japan, Mexico, Greece, France, Chile, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Argentina, and Egypt (Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015). Low-uncertainty avoidance culture includes Canada, New Zealand, Denmark, India, Jamaica, Great Britain, Sweden, South Africa, the United States (Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015). Thailand tends to be scored in high-uncertainty avoidance culture (Country comparison, n.d.).

## **Masculine-Feminine Culture**

Gender is culture and has been overlooked as one of cultural differences (Hecht et al., 1989). People's behaviors are influenced by its cultural view of gender role expectations. Hofstede (1984) underlined how gender roles are distributed in a culture, which is classified into masculine and feminine cultures.

Masculine culture follows traditional roles of males and females. Males place high value on competition, achievement, and assertiveness, whereas nurturance, affection, and emotionality are expected for females (Hofstede, 1984). Thus, masculine culture is a society in which social gender roles are clearly different. Men are tough and have material success; women are tender and take care of quality of life. For example, men are expected to be successful in profession as a provider for their family. Women are expected to nurture children and be responsible for household quality. Masculine culture includes Japan, Arab, Austria, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Great Britain, Switzerland, and the United States (Hecht et al., 1989; Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015).

On the other hand, feminine culture is a society in which social gender roles can be overlapped. Male and female roles tend to be flexible – not to follow traditional ones. For example, women are accepted to have professional success rather than to nurture their family as a major responsibility. Feminine culture includes Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Netherland, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, and Thailand (Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015).

## **Power Distance Culture**

The last cultural dimension focuses on power that is distributed unequally in different cultures (Hofstede, 1984). Some cultures value classes and status; others prefer equality among cultural members. Members of high power distance culture accept power as part of society. Conversely, members of low power distance culture believe power should be minimized and used only when it is necessary.

Power distance can be observed in family, organizations, and personal and social relationships. For examples, in a high power distance culture, family members differ in hierarchy. Parents and older members such as a father and the oldest child have more power over other members. In school, teachers have a higher status and are more powerful than students. In a low power distance culture, family members have equal roles to make decision on important issues. In school, teachers and students differ in roles, but not in status and power.

High power distance culture includes Malaysia, Guatemala, the Philippines, Mexico, Venezuela, Indonesia, India, and Brazil (Neuliep, 2015). Low power distance culture includes Austria, Denmark, New Zealand, Ireland, Germany, Sweden, Great Britain, and the United States (Lussier, 2010; Neuliep, 2015). Thailand tends to be scored in high power distance culture (Country comparison, n.d.).

## **Culture, Attitudes, and Values**

Culture is represented in tangible and intangible forms. Tangible forms are products such as art, architecture, television programs, movies, clothes, foods, buildings, and houses. Intangible forms are attitudes, beliefs, values, norms, and practices. People take time to learn their own and others' cultures from these tangible and intangible ways.

Culture guides how people perceive the world, interact with others, and react to the surroundings in daily life. When culture is absorbed in a person, it influences his/her decisions on how to think, believe, and behave. This cultural influence on decisions could be from small things, such as what to wear to

class and how to greet others, to complicated things, such as whether abortion should be legal, whether same-sex marriage should be permitted, and what democracy means.

Culture links to a person's attitudes, which refer to a learned response to persons, objects, or ideas (Borchers, 2005). People learn to respond to others and things around them differently as guided by their culture. For example, in conflict situations, collectivist cultures tend to use avoidance and are less direct, whereas individualist cultures are more assertive and competing (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2003). Another example is how people hold attitudes toward age across cultures. Although growing old comes with respect in Thailand and in other Asian cultures, it is also associated with certain limitations perceived by cultural members such as retirement when reaching a certain age and recruitment for candidates with a specified age. In other cultures such as the United States, aging is not tied to profession (e.g., hiring, job performance, and career advancement).

Generally, attitudes guide behavior, but they do not guarantee actual behavior (Ajzen, 1985). People may intend to behave, but not all their behavioral intentions are acted out in action. In the same vein, culture serves as a shared guideline for its members to think and act as they see proper, but whether people carry out those behaviors depends not only on cultural attitudes but also on other factors such as personality, identity, individual differences, and situation.

Moreover, culture is related to values held by each person and shared among members of a culture. Values are what people consider important in life and are learned since childhood (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2013). People absorb values through a variety of sources such as family, friends, school, media, history, political system, and national crises. Values help people define what is desirable or undesirable, right or wrong, good or bad, correct or incorrect, proper or improper for themselves and for their society (Samovar et al., 2013). For example, in Thailand, where collectivism is prevalent, taking care of parents when they are old is expected and desirable. Those who violate this expectation are not valued. In the United States, where individualism is predominant, being able to stand on one's own is valued. Parents do not expect



their adult children to look after them when they are old. The same behavior is valued differently by culture. Then, values shape social expectations and norms in a certain culture.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter presents an alternative view to re-define culture in a way that is not limited to any boundaries. Instead, culture is in a person who carries multiple cultures at the same time. To be effective in intercultural communication is to look at the person as a culture rather than to generalize his/her beliefs and behaviors according to group membership. People are different even though they come from the same cultural group. Then, the person-oriented method should be promoted to produce messages tailor made particularly for the person.

Also, this chapter describes how the three terms of language, communication, and culture are interrelated as intercultural communication. The history of intercultural communication underlines that a better understanding of people's behaviors in different culture is to study culture, language, communication, and interaction altogether rather than to look at language or culture alone.

Cultural typologies by Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1984) provide a better explanation of behaviors in various dimensions – context, independence, gender, uncertainty, and power. Moreover, culture influences attitudes and values that guide how people respond to things around them and how they consider things more or less important in life. People of different culture may react to the same issue differently such as abortion, same-sex-marriage, and domestic violence as they are guided by their cultural values.

Overall, in intercultural interaction, a rule of thumb is to admire cultural differences rather than to make judgment and comparison of the differences. First, misunderstandings often occur when people apply their own cultural values to judge the other's attitudes and behavior. Being aware of differences in cultural values held in each culture or subculture helps minimize misinterpretation of the other's behavior and maximize effectiveness of intercultural communication.



Second, misunderstandings also happen when people apply their existing knowledge of another culture to explaining all members' attitude and behavior. Some may have past experiences in interacting with a person from a certain culture and use the knowledge gained from those experiences to make assumption about others coming from the same culture. In fact, culture is multiple – people are members of multiple groups and then carry multiple subcultures (Borchers, 2005). Therefore, not everyone in a certain culture thinks and behaves exactly in the same way. Each person has multiple cultures. A person, as a member of the same culture, shares something in common. However, he/she, as a member of multiple cultures, may differ from other members. In short, a person is culture. An alternative way to avoid misunderstandings is to use *the person-oriented method* – to interact with a person as an individual who possesses all kinds of differences, including culture as one kind.

## Discussion Questions

1. Based on the definition of culture as re-defined in this chapter, what are examples of intercultural interactions that go beyond traditional boundaries? Explain the reasons to support your answer.
2. Apply some of the cultural dimensions to explain misunderstandings in any intercultural interactions from your past experiences. Discuss in group.
3. What are major values in your culture? How do they influence your attitudes and behavior? Explain your answer with examples.
4. Select a media message about products or services that you have seen in daily life (e.g., clips, poster, magazine, brochure, and social media) and analyze cultural values/issues that you observe in the message. The media message is not limited to Thai culture; it can represent any culture that you prefer. Apply the concept of cultural dimensions to your analysis and share it to the class.



# Communication across Intercultural and Interpersonal Differences

การสื่อสารข้ามความแตกต่างทางวัฒนธรรมและทางปัจเจกบุคคล

This textbook offers an alternative perspective to look at intercultural communication through the lens of interpersonal communication to address that “a person is culture” – a definition of culture that goes beyond geographical or physical boundaries such as country, continent, race, and ethnicity. The core concepts of this textbook are *multiculturalism* and *the person-oriented method*. These concepts underline the way to understand people of different cultures better. Instead of framing group characteristics, multiculturalism is to look inside cultural members to explain people’s behavior as an individual who defines himself/herself as a member of many groups simultaneously. The person-oriented method is to interact with a person as an individual who possesses all kinds of differences, including culture as one kind.

New communication technologies make the world smaller, but bring greater distance between people at the same time. Individual differences become more and more important, calling for an attention along with language and cultural differences in intercultural communication. This textbook is aimed to build awareness, knowledge, and understandings of cultural and individual differences as a strategy to communicate appropriately and effectively in intercultural interactions. Throughout the text, a neutral mindset is reinforced through a communication perspective that guides readers to overcome difficulties resulting from global diversity.

**Nuchada Dumrongsiri**

**นุชชฎา ดำรงศิริ**

Ph.D. in Communication Studies, Kent State University, Ohio, U.S.A.

M.A. in Communication, University of Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A.

B.A. in History (Honors) Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand

Currently, she is an Assistant Professor working as a fulltime lecturer at Department of English, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University. Her academic publications are available at <https://thammasat.academia.edu/nuchadadumrongsiri>.

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