

Unit 1

Imperatives for Intercultural Communication

Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous systems itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned.

—Marshall McLuhan

历史告诉我们：文明在开放中发展，民族在融合中共存。

——习近平





Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- Appreciate the importance of studying intercultural communication.
- Define such terms as *globalization*, *global village* and *ethnocentrism*.
- Understand how a community is formed.
- Understand the historical background and significance of the Belt and Road Initiative.



Lead-in

The Roads Linking the East with the West

Reference to the “Silk Road” often conjures up (联想到) a Hollywood-based romantic image of caravans (旅行队) transporting exotic goods across Central Asia between China and the West. In actuality, however, there were numerous roads, or routes, linking China with the West, beginning late in the first millennium (千年) B.C. and lasting until the fifteenth century A.D. These tracks passed through Central Asia, South Asia, along the coast of the Arabian Peninsula (阿拉伯半岛), and through today’s Middle East. In addition to the many tradesmen, the routes were traveled by explorers, religious prelates (教士), philosophers, warriors, and foreign emissaries. New products, art works, technologies, innovations, and philosophical ideas traveled in both directions to consumers in the East and West, as well as those in between. These overland conduits (通道) passed through the domains (疆域) of many different cultures. Thus, a successful transit (通行) requires the knowledge and ability to effectively interact with peoples instilled with contrasting worldviews, possessing varied cultural values, and speaking a multiplicity of languages.

(Source: Larry A. Samovar et al., *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*)

Questions for Intercultural Understanding

1. Who traveled the routes of the “Silk Road”? What made the roads prosperous?
2. What difficulties or challenges might those travelers encounter while interacting with people from different cultures? How could they overcome these problems and difficulties?



Why Study Intercultural Communication?

1 With rapid changes in the global economy, technology, transportation systems, and **immigration** policies, the world is becoming a small, **intersecting community**. We find ourselves having increased contact with people who are culturally different. In a global workforce, people bring with them different work habits and cultural practices. For example, cultural strangers may **approach** problem-solving tasks or **nonverbal** emotional expression **issues** differently. They may develop friendships and romantic relationships with different expectations and rhythms. They may also have different communication desires, end goals, and **emphases** in an intercultural **encounter**. In this twenty-first century global world, people are **constantly** moving across borders, into and out of a country. Neighborhoods and communities are changing. In what was once a **homogeneous** community, we may now find more **diversity** and cultural values **in flux**.

2 The study of intercultural communication is about the study of communication that **involves**, at least in part, cultural group membership differences. It is about **acquiring** the necessary knowledge and dynamic skills to manage such differences appropriately and effectively. It is also about developing a creative **mindset** to see things from different angles without **rigid** prejudgment. There are indeed many practical reasons for studying intercultural communication.

Fostering Global Peace

3 The need for global peace has never been more **apparent**. The key issue is

this: Can individuals of different sexes, ages, **ethnicities**, races, languages, and religions peacefully coexist on the planet? The history of humankind is hardly grounds for optimism. Contact among different national groups—from the earliest civilizations until today—often leads to **disharmony**.

4 To practice global peacemaking, we must hold a firm **commitment** that considerations of fairness should apply to all identity groups. We must be willing to consider sharing economic and social resources with **underprivileged** groups to **level** the fear and **resentment** factors. We must start practicing win-win **collaborative** dialogs with individuals or groups we may currently consider our enemies. We must **display** a *mindful listening*¹ attitude even if we do not like the individuals or agree with their ideas or viewpoints. In displaying our respect for other nations or groups of individuals, we may open doors for more dialogs and deeper contacts. Human respect is a **prerequisite** for any type or form of intercultural or interethnic communication.

Adjusting to Globalization of Economy

5 You may want to know more about intercultural communication because you **foresee** tremendous changes in the workplace. This is one important reason to know about other cultures and communication patterns. In addition, knowing about intercultural communication is **strategically** important for a nation's businesses in the emerging transnational economy. As noted by writer Carol Hymowitz of *The Wall Street Journal*², "If companies are going to sell products and services globally, then they will need a rich mix of employees with varied **perspectives** and experiences. They will need top **executives** who understand different countries and cultures."

A. Global Economy

6 Businesses all around the world are continually expanding into overseas markets in a process of *globalization*³. The world economy has become globally interdependent. This trend towards a global economy brings people and products together from around the world.

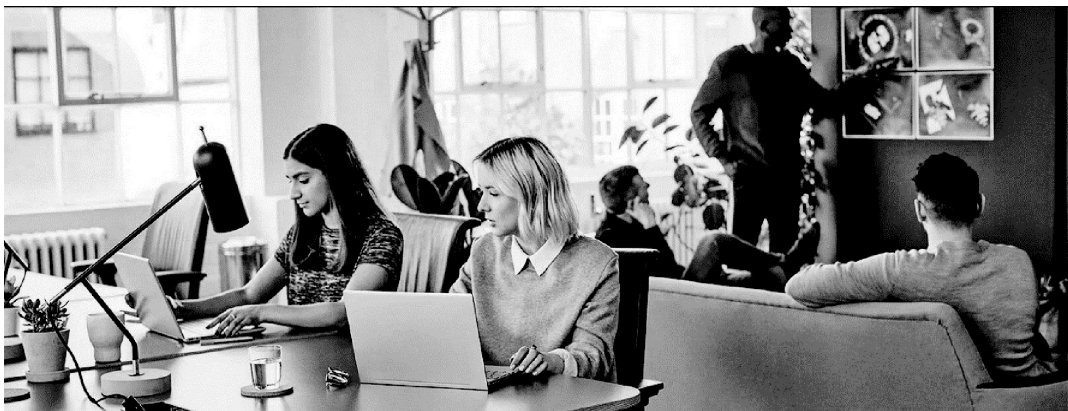
7 In the face of economic globalization, nations must determine how to remain competitive and must find ways to **promote** products and services in the international market. This interdependence between economies of different nations increases the need for effective intercultural communication and **calls**

for ever more skillful interaction in the future across linguistic and national boundaries.

B. Workforce Heterogeneity

8 In this global age, it is **inevitable** that employees and customers from dissimilar cultures are in constant contact with one another—whether it is through face-to-face, cellular phone, Skype, smartphone, or e-mail contacts. Workplace **heterogeneity** on the global level represents both opportunities and challenges to individuals and organizations.

9 Global managers and employees, international human resource groups, global product development teams, multiethnic customer service groups, and international marketing and sales teams can all benefit from mastering intercultural communication competencies. Any groups or individuals that must communicate **on a daily basis** with culturally diverse coworkers, clients, or customers can **reap the rewards** of acquiring the awareness, knowledge, and skills of **flexible** intercultural communication. Intercultural communication knowledge and skills are needed to solve problems, manage **conflicts**, and **forge** new **visions** on both global and **domestic** levels.



Multicultural work environments are becoming increasingly common. Given this trend, workers need to learn to deal with cultural differences.

Engaging in Creative Multicultural Problem Solving

10 Our ability to value different approaches to problem solving and mindfully move away from traditional “either/or” **binary** thinking can expand diverse options in managing team intercultural problems. We learn more from people who are different from us than from those who are similar to us.

11 Research findings indicate the quality of ideas produced in ethnically diverse groups has been **rated** significantly higher by experts than that in ethnically homogeneous groups. Of course, culturally heterogeneous teams also have more conflicts or communication struggles than homogeneous work teams. However, if such conflicts are managed **competently** and flexibly, the outcome of heterogeneous team **negotiations** often results in a better-quality product than that produced by a homogeneous team. Losing a **vital** employee with significant ties to a multicultural or diverse community can cost many missed business opportunities and fruitful outcomes.

Comprehending the Role of Technology in Global Communication

12 In the 1960s, media **guru** Marshall McLuhan⁴ **coined** the term *global village* to describe a world in which communication technology, such as TV, radio, and news services, brings news and information to the most remote parts of the world. Today people are connected through e-mails, websites, and social media on the Internet. The Internet is the central **hub**—the channel that offers us a wide-open space to communicate globally and to connect with individuals from **diverse walks of life**.

13 In this twenty-first century, both individualists⁵ and collectivists⁶, regardless of what cultures they are from, are at a crossroads of **redefining**, exploring, and reinventing their identities. On a global scale, new generations of individuals are attempting to create a third identity—a **hybrid** identity that **fuses** the global and local cultures together. This global connection is so **appealing**, and so persuasive, that it constantly shapes and makes us reexamine who we are or what we want to become. Technology allows us to develop relationships across the **barriers** of time, space, geography, and cultural ethnic boundaries.

Deepening Self-Awareness and Other-Awareness

14 One of the most important reasons for studying intercultural communication is to **gain an awareness of** one's own cultural identity and background. We acquire our cultural beliefs, values, and communication **norms** often on a very **unconscious** level. Without a comparative basis, we may never question the way we have been conditioned and socialized in our primary cultural system. Cultural socialization, in one sense, encourages the development of *ethnocentrism*.

Ethnocentrism means seeing our own culture as the center of the universe and seeing other cultures as insignificant or even **inferior**.

15 Without sound comparative cross-cultural knowledge, we may look at the world from only one **lens**—that is, our own cultural lens. With a **solid** intercultural knowledge base, we may begin to understand the possible value differences and similarities between our own cultural system and that of another cultural system. We may be able to explain why people behave the way they do from their culture's logic systems or value patterns.

(Source: Stella Ting-Toomey & Leeva C. Chung, *Understanding Intercultural Communication*, Chapter 1)



New Words

acquire	<i>v.</i> to gain sth. by your own efforts, ability or behavior 获得, 得到
apparent	<i>adj.</i> easy to see or understand 显而易见的
appealing	<i>adj.</i> attractive or interesting 有吸引力的, 有感染力的
approach	<i>v.</i> to start dealing with a problem, task, etc. in a particular way 着手处理
barrier	<i>n.</i> a problem, rule or situation that prevents sb. from doing sth., or that makes sth. impossible 障碍; 阻力; 关卡
binary	<i>adj.</i> consisting of two things or parts 二元的
coin	<i>v.</i> to invent a new word or phrase that other people then begin to use 创造
collaborative	<i>adj.</i> involving, or done by, several people or groups of people working together 合作的, 协作的, 协力的
commitment	<i>n.</i> a promise to do sth. or to behave in a particular way; a promise to support sb./sth.; the fact of committing oneself 承诺, 许诺, 允诺

community	<i>n.</i>	all the people who live in a particular area, country, etc. 社团, 社群
competently	<i>adv.</i>	a way that shows enough skill or knowledge to do something well or to the necessary standard 足以胜任地, 有能力地, 称职地
conflict	<i>n.</i>	a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument 冲突; 争执, 争论
constantly	<i>adv.</i>	all the time; repeatedly 一直; 重复不断地
disharmony	<i>n.</i>	a lack of agreement about important things, which causes bad feelings between people or groups of people 不协调; 不和谐
display	<i>v.</i>	to put sth. in a place where people can see it easily; to show sth. to people 陈列, 展出, 展示
diversity	<i>n.</i>	a range of many people or things that are very different from each other 差异(性), 不同(点)
domestic	<i>adj.</i>	relating to a person's own country 国内的, 本土的
emphases	<i>n.</i>	(<i>pl.</i> of emphasis) special importance that is given to sth. 重点
encounter	<i>n.</i>	a meeting, especially one that is sudden, unexpected or violent (意外、突然或暴力的) 相遇, 邂逅, 遭遇
ethnicity	<i>n.</i>	the fact of belonging to a particular race 种族渊源, 种族特点
executive	<i>n.</i>	a person who has an important job as a manager of a company or an organization (公司或机构的) 经理, 主管领导, 管理人员
flexible	<i>adj.</i>	able to change to suit new conditions or situations 能适应新情况的, 灵活的, 可变动的
foresee	<i>v.</i>	to think sth. is going to happen in the future; to know about sth. before it happens 预料, 预见, 预知

Unit 1 Imperatives for Intercultural Communication

forge	<i>v.</i> to form or bring into being especially by an expenditure of efforts 努力建成, 形成
foster	<i>v.</i> to encourage sth. to develop 促进; 助长; 培养
fuse	<i>v.</i> to combine or be combined together (使) 融合
guru	<i>n.</i> a person who is an expert on a particular subject or who is very good at doing sth. 专家, 权威, 大师
heterogeneity	<i>n.</i> the quality of being diverse and not comparable in kind 异质性
homogeneous	<i>adj.</i> consisting of things or people that are all the same or all of the same type 由相同 (或同类型) 事物 (或人) 组成的, 同种类的
hub	<i>n.</i> the central and most important part of a particular place or activity (某地或活动的) 中心, 核心
hybrid	<i>adj.</i> made up of different aspects or components 混合的
immigration	<i>n.</i> the process of coming to live permanently in a country that is not your own; the number of people who do this 移民; 移居
inevitable	<i>adj.</i> certain to happen and unable to be avoided or prevented 不可避免的, 不能防止的
inferior	<i>adj.</i> not good or not as good as sb./sth. else 较差的, 次的
intersecting	<i>adj.</i> meeting or crossing each other 相交的, 交叉的
involve	<i>v.</i> to have or include as a necessary part, element, or circumstance 包含; 需要
issue	<i>n.</i> a problem or worry that sb. has with sth. (有关某事的) 问题, 担忧
lens	<i>n.</i> a curved piece of glass or plastic that makes things look larger, smaller or clearer when you look through it 透镜; 镜片
level	<i>v.</i> to make sth. equal or similar 使相等, 使平等, 使相似

mindset	<i>n.</i> a set of attitudes or fixed ideas that sb. has and that are often difficult to change 观念模式, 思维倾向
negotiation	<i>n.</i> formal discussion between people who are trying to reach an agreement 谈判, 磋商, 协商
nonverbal	<i>adj.</i> things such as the expression on your face, your arm movements, or your tone of voice, which show how you feel about sth. without using words 不用语言表达的
norm	<i>n.</i> standards of behavior that are typical of or accepted within a particular group or society 规范, 行为标准
perspective	<i>n.</i> a particular attitude towards sth.; a way of thinking about sth. 态度, 观点, 思考方法
prerequisite	<i>n.</i> sth. that must exist or happen before sth. else can happen or be done 先决条件, 前提, 必备条件
promote	<i>v.</i> to help sth. to happen or develop 促进, 提升
rate	<i>v.</i> to have or think that sb./sth. has a particular level of quality, value, etc. 评估, 评价, 估价
redefine	<i>v.</i> to change the nature or limits of sth.; to make people consider sth. in a new way 改变……的本质(或界限); 重新定义; 使重新考虑
resentment	<i>n.</i> a feeling of anger or unhappiness about sth. that you think is unfair 愤恨, 怨恨
rigid	<i>adj.</i> very strict and difficult to change 死板的; 僵硬的
solid	<i>adj.</i> having a strong basis 可靠的, 可信赖的
strategically	<i>adv.</i> in a way that is meant to achieve a particular purpose or to gain an advantage 根据全局而安排地, 战略性地
unconscious	<i>adj.</i> (of feelings, thoughts, etc.) existing or happening without your realizing or being aware; not deliberate or controlled 无意识的; 自然流露的