Section four: intercultural communication

4.1. Intercultural communication defined

Intercultural communication is a process whereby individuals from different cultural backgrounds attempt to share meanings. It is the exchange of information between individuals who are unlike culturally.

Intercultural communication occurs when a member of one culture produces a message for consumption by a member of another culture. It is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are different enough to influence the communication event (Samovar, Porter & Stefani, 2000).

4.2. The need for studying intercultural communication in the context of globalization

The process commonly referred to as "globalization" has entered its third decade and continues to accelerate. It is obvious that fewer and fewer people live in only a local, regional, or even national societal border. Advances in technology, modern transportation facilities, telecommunications, and international business transactions make it much easier for people to travel, work, and live in another country. More than ever before, the world is now characterized by an interrelated, interdependent global community. The seamless movement of capital, labor, people, and data across national borders has become commonplace. Increased domestic diversity resulting from immigration and shifting birth patterns has made intercultural activities a daily event for a large percentage of the world's population, which now surpasses seven billion.

Communication between people from different cultures is not new. It has been occurring for thousands of years as cultural groups waged war, conducted commercial activities, and engaged in social exchanges with each other. Now, we have reached a point in history where the latter two interactions have become not only ordinary but are necessities, creating an interdependent global community. In the commercial arena, this interdependence was seen in the aftermath of the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which disrupted the supply of Japanese manufactured products to businesses around the globe, resulting in worldwide production slowdowns. Another example of economic interconnectedness is the negative impact on world financial markets stemming from the European Union nations' sovereign debt crisis in 2011.The growth of international tourism is also bringing people from varying cultures into contact with each other. In 2010 there were some 940 million international tourist arrivals worldwide.

Globalization has internationalized the workforce. Competition for jobs, especially those requiring technological skills or advanced degrees, is now worldwide. Today, growing affluence and the emergence of a new group of skilled or educated people have fuelled a global movement of migrants who are in search of better economic opportunities, an enhanced quality of life, greater freedom, and higher expectations. Those people form an integral part of the immigrant population today – skilled migrants. Even low-skilled labor is being outsourced. For instance, approximately 10 percent of the Filipino labor force work outside their homeland, with over a million employed in Saudi Arabia.

Relocated into the legal and political institutions of the host culture, migrants aspire to a higher quality of life, good education for themselves or their children, the freedom to be their own boss, autonomy in their choice of work, and prosperity.

The field of education is also experiencing the influences of globalization. Between 1980 and 2010 the number of students studying at higher education institutions outside their home country tripled to approximately three million. This trend is likely to increase and Higher education is going to become more global. Recent studies by International Institutes of Education reported that joint- and dual-degree programs between universities from different nations were becoming common as a way to further the internationalization of their campuses and raise their global profile.

Advances in information technology (IT) are bringing about changes in contemporary society that pose new situations requiring intercultural communication expertise. The scope of the extensive interconnectivity now available around the world is highlighted by Friedman (2011):

It starts with the fact that globalization and the information technology revolution have gone to a whole new level. Thanks to cloud computing, robotics, 3G wireless connectivity, Skype, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Twitter, the iPad, and cheap Internet-enabled smartphones, the world has gone from connected to hyper-connected.

Given the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of contemporary society, as the foregoing discussion reveals, it is unsurprising that there should be a strong interest in the study of intercultural communication. This means that people of varied nationalities, cultural and ethnic origins, sometimes speaking other languages and holding different, possibly divergent

convictions, must learn to live together despite the likelihood of conflict. The need for intercultural communication is more important today than ever before.

There are many reasons why we need to study intercultural communication living in a multicultural society within a global village. Among other things, studying intercultural communication offers the following advantages.

- It enables you expand your understanding and awareness of others with diverse cultural background and thereby give you the opportunity for a greater appreciation and tolerance of diversity.
- It enables you comprehend what kind of communication is needed by a pluralistic society to be both culturally diverse and unified in common goals
- It enables you understand both the cultural barriers to effective communication as well as the various ways those barriers can be overcome.
- Studying intercultural communication helps you develop invaluable intercultural communication skills and understandings that will not only benefit you personally but also enhance your future careers. For instance, intercultural knowledge can enhance your future employability, as you will possess the skills and flexibility to work effectively both overseas and/or with those from other cultures in your home country.

4.3. Major dimensions of cultural differences

It is an obvious fact that culture is not similar throughout the globe. It varies from society to society. Different societies have different values, norms, beliefs, symbols, language, and material culture. Intercultural communication scholars have identified several dimensions of cultural variability used to explain intercultural differences. The major dimensions of cultural differences provided by these scholars are discussed in this section as follows.

1. Individualistic versus collectivist culture

Individualism and collectivism have been two of the most extensively studied concepts in the field of intercultural communication (Hofstede 1983; Triandis 1986) and is the major dimension of cultural variability used to explain intercultural differences in behaviour.

Much of what is known about individualistic and collectivist cultures comes from a study by Hofsted(1980) that involved more than 100,000 managers from 40 countries. Although neither china nor Africa was included, the study is a classic in its comprehensiveness.

Individualistic cultures are societies that value individual freedom, choice, uniqueness, and independence. These cultures place "I" before "we" and value competition over cooperation, private property over public or state-owned property, personal behaviour over group behaviour, and individual opinion over what anyone else might think. In an individualistic society people are likely to leave the family home or the geographic area in which they were raised to pursue their dreams; their loyalty to an organization has qualifications; they move from job to job; and they may change churches that no longer meet their needs. Loyalty to other people has limits: individualistic cultures have high level of divorce and illegitimacy.

According to Hofstede(1980) study, the top ranking individualistic cultures are the united states, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, value the group over the individual. These cultures place "we" before "I" and value commitment to family, tribe, and clan; their people tend to be loyal to spouse, employer, community, and country. Collectivist cultures place a higher value on cooperation than on competition and on group- defined social norms and duties than on personal opinion. An ancient Confucian saying captures the spirit of collectivist culture: "if one wants to establish himself, he should help others to establish themselves first."

A male student from a collectivist culture may study in the United States and earn a PhD, teach at a distinguished university, and publish important books, but when he returns to home, people to whom he is introduced will want to know to whom he is related. They want to know which family the student comes from because that places the student in society much more so than his individual accomplishments.

According to Hofstede(1980), The highest ranking collectivist cultures are Venezuela, Pakistan, Peru, Taiwan, Thailand, Guatemala, Ecuador, Panama, Colombia, and Indonesia.

While cultures tend to be predominantly either individualistic or collectivistic, both exist in all cultures. That is, diversity within each country is very possible. In the US, for instance, Hispanics and Asians tend to be more collectivist than other ethnic groups (Triandis 1990), and in Britain, Asians and African Caribbeans tend to be more collectivistic than white people.

2. Low- Context versus High-Context Cultures

Hall (1976, 1983) enriched our understanding of collectivist and individualistic cultures when he defined low- context and high-context systems of communication. In low-context (LC) cultures, found most frequently in individualistic countries like the United States and Scandinavia, communication tends to be centered on the source (``I``), with intentions stated overtly (``I want you to consider buying this …``), and with a direct verbal style (`` Get over here now ! ). As Hall explained: `` Most of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context`` (1976, p. 101). In low context cultures, meaning of messages are directly and explicitly expressed in verbal communication. People communicate with each other trying to make their messages as clear as possible. Individual pride and self-esteem, personal autonomy and power, and individual ego- based emotions enter the picture in LC communication patterns (Ting-Toomey, 1997).

High-context (HC) cultures are more common in the Asian countries of the Pacific Rim as well as Central and South America, where ``only minimal information (is) in the transmitted message`` (Hall, 1976, p.111). Instead, in HC communication much of the meaning is ``preprogrammed information`` understood by the receiver and transmitted also by the setting in which the transaction occurs. In high context communication most information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicated transmitted part of the message. High context communication is that style in which people rely on indirect ways to convey messages to others. In high context culture people need to guess highly contextual meanings of intended messages. People are expected to read “atmosphere” – contextualized and indirect meaning of messages in communication.

Interestingly, all cultures have some concept of face, which reflects people`s need for a sense of self-respect in a communication situation (Ting Toomey, 1997). But the concept of face appears to be even more important in collectivist cultures where ``we`` looms larger than ``I``. Cohen (1991) points out the importance of face in collectivist, HC cultures. He writes: ``given the importance of face, the members of collectivist cultures are highly sensitive to the effect of what they say on others`` (p.26.). He adds, `` Language is a social instrument- a device for preserving and promoting social interests as much as a means for transmitting information`` (p.26). Americans observe that people from HC cultures are almost excessive in their praise for their

receivers; exuberant in their courtesy; devoid of conflict, contradiction, and even directness; and practically never say a direct ``no`` to even an unreasonable request.

3. Uncertainty- Accepting versus Uncertainty- Rejecting Cultures

Uncertainty- accepting cultures tolerate ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity. Some of these cultures already have a mixture of ethnic groups, religions, and races. They are more likely to accept political refugees, immigrants, and new citizens from other places. They are less likely to have a rule for everything and more likely to tolerate general principles. Uncertainty – accepting cultures include the United States, Great Britain, Denmark, Sweden, Singapore, Hong Kong, Ireland, and India (Hosfstede, 1980). Interestingly, Singapore is a country that is more tolerant of uncertainty and diversity but has many rules, including one prohibiting chewing gum. This oddity should serve as a reminder that these characteristics are generalizations and therefore are not found consistently in every culture.

Uncertainty- rejecting cultures have difficulty with ambiguity, uncertainty, and diversity. These cultures are more likely to have lots of rules; and more likely to reject outsiders such as immigrants, refugees, and migrants who look and act differently than they do. Among the most common uncertainty- rejecting cultures are Japan, France, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Belgium, Peru, Chile, and Argentina (Samovar, porter,& Stefani, 1998).

4. Implicit- Rule versus Explicit- Rule Cultures

An implicit-rule culture is one in which information and cultural rules are implied and already known to the participants. For example, a traditional Arab woman knows one of the rules of her culture is that she is to walk a few paces behind her husband. People from an implicit-rule culture tend to be more polite, less aggressive, and more accommodating. Some implicit-rule cultures include the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America (Dodd, 1998).

An explicit- rule culture is one in which information and cultural rules are explicit, procedures are explained, and expectations are discussed. For example, in U.S. families, parents often discuss beforehand with their small children how the children are to act during a visit from someone of importance. People from an explicit- rule culture tend to be more combative, less

willing to please, and less concerned about offending others. Some explicit-rule cultures are northern and western Europe and the United States (Dodd, 1998).

You might think about the difference between an implicit- rule culture and an explicit-rule culture in this way: In an implicit-rule culture the social rules are part of who and what you are. They are learned over time from others and are no more discussed. In an explicit-rule country, rules are often developed, discussed, and negotiated as you go along.

5. M- Time versus p- Time cultures

M- Time, or monochromic time schedule, compartmentalizes time to meet personal needs, separates task and social dimensions, and points to the future. M-time is dominant in Canada, America, Northern Europe, and among German cultures. These cultures see time as something that can be compartmentalized, wasted, or saved. Americans might schedule times to work out, to meet individual appointments, to go to meetings, and to take the family to fast-food restaurant. Time is segmented, dedicated to work or social experience (but usually not both), and plotted toward future events and activities. Within this scheme, getting to any appointment on time is treated with considerable importance.

Hall's (1983) concept of p-time is an abbreviation for polychromic time schedule, where a culture views time as contextually based and relationally oriented. For p-time culture time is not saved or wasted; instead time is one factor in a much larger and more complicated context. Why halt a conversation with an old friend to hurry off to an appointment on a relatively unimportant issue? Relationships in some contexts trump time considerations. P-time cultures orchestrate their relational and task obligations with the fluid movement of jazz, whereas M-time cultures strive mainly to stay on schedule, be efficient, and value task over relationships. Typical P- time cultures are Latin American, Middle Eastern, Asian, French, African, and Greek.

6. Masculinity versus Femininity

The masculinity–femininity value is two-dimensional (Hofstede, 1998). It refers to (1) the degree to which gender-specific roles are valued and (2) the degree to which cultural groups value so-called masculine values (achievement, ambition, acquisition of material goods) or so-called feminine values (quality of life, service to others, nurturance, support for the unfortunate).

Cultures high on masculinity are associated with the greatest degree of sex differences. Culture with masculine value orientation have a general preference for gender-specific roles, with some roles (e.g., main wage earner) better filled by men and other roles (e.g., homemaker,) by women. Cultures with feminine cultural orientation have the fewest differences between the sexes. These cultures reflect more gender equality and a stronger belief in the importance of quality of life for all.

Cultures that place high values on masculine traits stress the desire for extrinsic rewards and material success, the importance of money and things, aggressiveness and being ambitious, competitive and dominant. Cultures that place high value on feminine traits stress caring for others, the importance of people and relationships, non-material values, helpfulness, conscientiousness, and a tendency to be receptive to intrinsic rewards.

Examples of masculine cultures are Japan, Austria, Venezuela, Italy, Switzerland, and Mexico. Examples of feminine cultures are Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Denmark, Costa Rica, and Yugoslavia. Jandt (2007) points out that the Nordic countries also rank highest on the United Nations Gender-Related Development Index, which reflects health, education, and income and the Gender Empowerment Measure, which reflects the political and economic advancement of women. The Nordic countries have the highest percentage of parliament seats held by women and have adopted gender equality and women's empowerment as national policies. They have legislated equal rights, inexpensive child care, free contraception and abortions, and parental leave policies.

7. Power-Distance

Each culture, and all people within cultures, develops ways of interacting with different people according to the status differential that exists between the individual and the person with whom he or she is interacting. Power-distance (PD) refers to the degree to which different cultures encourage or maintain power and status differences among members of society.

Cultures high on PD develop rules, mechanisms and rituals that serve to maintain and strengthen the status relationships among their members. Cultures low on PD, however, minimizes those rules and customs, eliminating, if not ignoring, the status differences that exist between people.

Cultures with high power distance have power and influence concentrated in the hands of a few rather than distributed throughout the population. These countries tend to be more authoritarian and may communicate in a way to limit interaction and reinforce the differences between people. Children are expected to be obedient toward parents and display respect for those of higher status.

High-power-distance countries include Malaysia, Guatemala, Panama, Philippines, Mexico, and Venezuela. Low-power-distance countries include Sweden, Ireland, New Zealand, Denmark, Israel, and Austria.

8. Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation

This dimension relates to the degree to which a culture teaches an orientation that promotes the importance of future rewards (long-term orientation) versus cultures that emphasize the importance of immediate rewards (short-term orientation).

Short-term orientation cultures tend to cultivate environments where quick results are expected with a focus on profit. Leisure time is valued and smaller proportion of income is saved. Long term orientation is found in cultural contexts where persistence and a focus on long term rewards are valued. Leisure time is less important and a larger proportion of income is saved. Long term orientation is consistent with thrift, perseverance toward results, and a willingness to subordinate oneself for a purpose

Countries that are high in long-term orientation are China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil. Countries with short-term orientation include Pakistan, Nigeria, the Philippines, and Zimbabwe.

4.4. Barriers to Intercultural Communication

LaRay M. Barna (1997) has developed an approach to examine barriers to intercultural communication on a general level. In his list he has developed six barriers: anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal communication, and language. His categories of barriers will be used when discussing problems that can arise in intercultural encounters. Taking these common barriers into account can help you improve your inter-cultural communication skills.

1. Anxiety

The first barrier is high anxiety. When you are anxious because of not knowing what you are expected to do, it is only natural to focus on that feeling and not be totally present in the

communication transaction. For example, you may have experienced anxiety on your very first day on a new college campus or in a new job. You may be so conscious of being new and out of place and focus so much of your attention on that feeling that you make common mistakes and appear awkward to others.

Language can also be source of anxiety in the context of intercultural communication. For example, speakers of English as a second language may experience anxiety over their English language skills and focus so much on how they are pronouncing words that they limit their interactions with English speakers.

Sugawara (1993) surveyed 168 Japanese employees of Japanese companies working in the United States and 135 of their U.S. coworkers. Only 8% of the U.S. coworkers felt impatient with the Japanese coworker's English. While 19% of the Japanese employees felt that their spoken English was poor or very poor and 20% reported feeling nervous when speaking English with U.S. coworkers, 30% of the Japanese employees felt the U.S. coworkers were impatient with their accent, and almost 60% believed that language was the problem in communicating with the U.S. coworkers. For some, anxiety over speaking English properly contributed to avoiding interactions with the U.S. coworkers and limiting interactions both on and off the job to other Japanese only.

2. Assuming Similarity Instead of Difference

The second barrier is assuming similarity instead of difference. When you assume similarity between cultures you can be caught unaware of important differences. When you have no information about a new culture, it might make sense to assume there are no differences, to behave as you would in your home culture. In 1997, a Danish woman left her 14-month-old baby girl in a stroller outside a Manhattan restaurant while she was inside. Other diners at the restaurant became concerned and called New York City Police. The woman was charged with endangering a child and was jailed for two nights. Her child was placed in foster care. The woman and the Danish consulate explained that leaving children unattended outside café's is common in Denmark. Pictures were wired to the police showing numerous strollers parked outside cafes while parents were eating inside. The Danish woman had assumed that Copenhagen is similar to New York, that what is commonly done in Copenhagen is also commonly done in New York.

The inverse can be a barrier as well. Assuming difference instead of similarity can lead to your not recognizing important things that cultures share in common. It's important to assume nothing. It is better to ask, "What are the customs?" Rather than assuming they are the same or different everywhere.

3. Ethnocentrism

The third barrier to effective intercultural communication is ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism refers to negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own culture. We are ethnocentric when we believe that our culture is superior and not understand that whatever exists in one culture makes sense if we understand that culture. If the average summer temperature was 43 degrees Celcius (109 degrees Fahrenheit), it would be logical to adjust school and business hours into evening hours to conserve energy. Long lunches and afternoon siestas make sense. It would be ethnocentric to attribute those long lunches and afternoon siestas to laziness.

In his model, Bennett (1993) refers to three stages of ethnocentrism. The first stage is denial, in which a person confronted with cultural difference avoids or denies the existence of any difference. This can happen through isolation or separation. The second stage of ethnocentrism is defense. This strategy occurs as a way to counter the impact of cultural differences which are perceived as threatening. A person does this as a way of maintaining the integrity of their own world view. Minimizing is the third stage of ethnocentrism. In this stage, people will seek to hide difference under cultural similarities. Part of minimization is an assumption of universal characteristics shared by all humanity. However this assumption is usually made by the dominant culture. Bennett suggests that people tend to use their own world view to interpret other's behaviors and that the idea of universal truth is usually based on one's on values.

An opposite concept to ethnocentrism is the anthropological concept of cultural relativism. It is the view that we must try to understand other people's behaviour in the context of their culture before we judge it. It also means that we recognize the arbitrary nature of our own cultural behaviors and be willing to reexamine them by learning about behaviors in other cultures.

4. Stereotypes and prejudice

Stereotypes are perceptions and beliefs we hold about groups or individuals based on our previously formed opinions or attitudes (Samovar& Porter, 1991). Stereotypes do not develop suddenly but are formed over a period of time by our culture. They are made up of bits and pieces of information that we store and use to make sense of what goes on around us. Stereotypes

may be positive or negative. As Barna (1997) points out, they help us make sense of the world by categorizing and classifying people and situations we encounter.

While stereotyping may reduce the threat of the unknown, it interferes with our perceptions and understanding of the world. When applied to individuals or groups, often stereotypes are problematic because they are oversimplified, over generalized and/ or exaggerated. Statements like 'blacks are…', 'athletes are not……..', 'women should….' Are stereotypes because their contents are beliefs based on half-truths or distortions about a group of people.

There are a number of ways in which stereotypes are harmful (Jandt, 2001): first, stereotypes can cause us to assume that a widely held belief is true, when it may not be. Second, the continual use of stereotypes reinforces our beliefs and can also cause us to assume a widely held belief is true of any one of the individual in the group. If a group is stereotyped as dishonest, for example, we tend to apply that stereotype to all members of that group, regardless of individual differences. Third, when we use negative stereotypes to interpret the behaviour of individuals within a group, this further impedes intercultural communication by reinforcing those negative stereotypes. Such negative stereotyping can become a self-fulfilling prophecy for those who are stereotyped and hence place them at risk. An example of this would be the prevalent stereotype that women are not good at math and science, which in turn may cause women to internalize such beliefs and avoid studying or pursuing math or science related professions.

Prejudice, like stereotypes, can be either positive or negative although it is generally referred to as the unfair, biased or intolerant attitudes or opinions towards another person or group simply because they belong to a specific religion, race, nationality or another group (Samovar and Porter, 1991). A person who thinks 'I don't want (name of a group) living in my neighborhood', for example, is expressing a prejudice. Again like stereotypes, prejudice involves the preconceptions of individuals or groups based on unfounded opinions, attitudes or beliefs. Jandit's(2001) definition of prejudice further elaborate the damaging effect of prejudice as persons within the group are not viewed in terms of their individual merit but according to the superficial characteristics that make them part of the group.

Prejudice can take many forms, ranging from those that are almost impossible to detect (unintentional) to those that are clearly intentional. As an extreme and intentional form of prejudice, discrimination impedes intercultural communication as it involves the unfavorable

treatment and/or denial of equal treatment of individuals or groups because of race, gender, religion, ethnicity or disability (brisling, 1988).

5. Nonverbal Misinterpretations

Nonverbal communication is communication without words. Nonverbal messages can take a number of forms. Some of these are our use of personal space, gestures, facial movements and eye contact; use of time and space and use of touch. Other important nonverbal messages can involve interpretations of the meanings of silence, clothing, the arrangement of space and furniture and so on.

Many nonverbal expressions vary from culture to culture, and it is just these variations that make nonverbal misinterpretations a barrier. Consider the following examples:

1. Proxemics

Proxemics refers to our use of personal space. Edward Hall (1959) demonstrated that cultures differ substantially in their use of personal space. Hall demonstrated that in North America, personal space is from 18 inches to 4 feet, the lower end being handshake distance, the distance most people in North America stand from each other in public. In Latin American and Arab cultures, that distance is much less. In an intercultural context, one may attempt to stand closer by moving in, while the other may attempt to maintain the customary personal distance by moving back.

2. Kinesics

Gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and eye contact are referred to as kinesics. In his book *Body talk,* Desmond Morris (1995) explained that gestures can be intentional or unconscious. In ancient Rome, lower classes used four fingers and the thumb to pick up food; upper classes used two fingers and the thumb. This may have been unconscious, but it clearly communicated class.

The meaning of conscious gestures can vary from culture to culture. The forefinger-to-thumb gesture forming a circle can mean “okay” in the United States. In France, it can mean zero or worthless. In Japan, it can mean “money.” In Brazil, it can clearly communicate an offensive meaning. Even things such as nodding agreement can vary. Most cultures do indicate “yes” by an up-and-down nod of the head and “no” by shaking the head from side to side. But in Albania and Bulgaria, the gestures can be reversed. In Sri Lanka, a yes to a specific question is indicated as the nod of the head, but general agreement is indicated by a slow sideways swaying of the

head. Greeting may also vary across cultures. In some cultures the appropriate greeting is a handshake, in others a bow, in others an embrace.

Certain facial expressions such as smiles are universal, but many are not. In the United States, people in conversation maintain some degree of eye contact. If one person avoids eye contact, the other may assume that the person is evasive or dishonest. In some Asian cultures such as Japan, students will often avoid making eye contact with their instructors as a sign of respect. If a U.S. instructor did not have that cultural understanding, a communication barrier would exist.

3. Chronemics

Chronemics refers to the study of our use of time. The fact that cultures have differing meanings for the use of time can become a barrier. What time dinner is served, what time you arrive for a party, how long you are kept waiting for an appointment all depend on where you are.

4. Haptics

Haptics refers to our use of touch to communicate. In Thailand and Laos, it is rude for a stranger to touch a child on the top of the head because the head is regarded as the home of the spirit or soul. It is believed that a child's spirit or soul is not strong enough to be touched and has a tendency to become ill if patted. To the contrary, in western countries, it is common to affectionately touch the top of a child's head. In New Zealand, the hongi, the touching of noses to share the breath of life, is the traditional greeting of the Maori. In some societies walking hand in hand with friends of the same sex may be taken as a sign of a romantic relationship while it is regarded as normal behaviour in other cultures.

6. Language

Language is one of the most obvious barriers to intercultural communication but perhaps not the most fundamental. People who do not share a language or who feel that they have imperfect command of another person's language may have some difficulties communicating. There is also a possibility of misunderstandings occurring between people when they do not share a common language. However, sharing a common language does not always guarantee understanding. Even speakers of the same language do not have exactly the same understanding of the meanings of the words.

The Ways in which language can be barrier to intercultural communication are problems of vocabulary equivalence, idiomatic equivalence, experiential equivalence and conceptual equivalence (Jandt, 2001). Lack of vocabulary equivalence occurs when there are not words in one language that correspond precisely with the meaning of words in another. Idiomatic equivalence can cause communication problems because although native speakers understand the meaning of an idiom, they can be very difficult for a non-native to understand and translated directly they can be either bizarre or meaningless. For example, 'the old man kicked the bucket' is meaningless unless you know that to kick the bucket means to die.

Another problem is that of experiential equivalence. Objects or experiences that do not exist in one culture are difficult to translate into the language of another culture. For example, the Chinese concept guanxi has no precise English equivalent although it does have connotations that can be expressed in English words such as relationship, connection, obligation and dependency.

Conceptual equivalence is barrier for communication if ideas or concepts are not understood in the same ways in different cultures. Jandt (2001) gives the example of concepts such as freedom. Understandings what is meant by the notion of freedom in the USA may different from what is meant in other countries.

4.5. Venturing into a new culture: culture shock and adaptation

4.5.1. What is culture shock?

The English Renaissance composer William Byrd once said, "That song is best esteemed with which our ears are most acquainted." This adage underscores the notion that people tend to enjoy and feel comfortable with the familiar. When communicating with close friends you usually know how to act and what to expect. It is the same with being a member of a particular culture. Put in slightly different terms, culture contributes to a feeling of familiarity. In fact, one of the "obligations" of all cultures is to assure that their members share many of the same experiences. From learning a common language to establishing a collective set of values, a culture creates common bonds among its members.

As culture is the guidelines for our behaviors, we depend on our cultures. It gives us stability and security because we know how to understand and respond to what is happening. However, if we move to another culture or encounter people from an alien culture, our views may clash with the different beliefs, norms, values and traditions that exist in those countries. We may have

difficulty adjusting to a new culture and to those parts of the culture not familiar to us. As Nolan points out, "Your new environment makes demands for which you have no ready-made responses; and your responses, in turn, do not seem to produce the desired results." *Culture shock* is a part of the process of trying to adjust and adapt to a new culture. Specifically, culture shock is a mental state caused by the transition that occurs when you go from a familiar cultural environment to an unfamiliar one and discover that your normative, established patterns of behavior are ineffective.

Culture shock occurs when everything is different, including language, food, currency, values, beliefs, and even traffic pattern, mealtimes and sleep patterns and so on. You feel like fish out of water, as you lose familiar surroundings. You cannot find the familiar signs and symbols of everyday communication. You feel like acting a role in a play in which everyone but you have a script (Kohut & Baxter, 1987, p.53).

4.5.2. Symptoms of culture shock

The culture-shocked person, who experiences a breakdown in communication, is unable to cope, and feels isolated and lost. The person thus develops a number of defensive (and sometimes offensive) attitudes and behaviors to protect the mind from the confusion of an entirely new situation. Such people can experience many different emotional and mental difficulties. They can become extremely frustrated, angry, and rejecting of the new culture. They consider the host country bad, ridiculous, stupid, or hopeless-precisely because they themselves feel bad, ridiculous, stupid, or hopeless (Xu, 2004, p267). Culture -shock person may start to glorify the home country, suddenly everything about the native land is wonderful compared to this terrible new place! Feelings of helplessness about delays and confusions can turn rapidly in resentment. People in culture shock may feel harmed, tricked, deceived, injured, or ignored- or all of these.

People can become physically ill from the stress of culture shock. Ulcers, headaches, stomachaches, backaches, dizziness, excessive sleepiness-these and many of the other symptoms can often be traced back to an underlying culture shock condition. Common symptoms of culture shock may include antagonism and cynicism about the new culture, loss of patience, depressing and absent mindedness, overwhelming fear of being cheated or robbed; overeating, oversleeping, substance abuse, declining invitation and preferring to stay at home to read books and watch

videos shipped in back from home (Mitchell, 2000, p.32), if its extreme, some individuals are rendered completely incapable of daily functioning.

4.5.3. Phases of culture shock

Although there are variations in both how people respond and the amount of time they need to adjust, most of the early literature addressing culture shock suggested that people normally experience four phases and a U-model was used to illustrate the progression of those phases. A few introductory remarks will be helpful before explaining the overall concept of the U-curve. First, the lines separating the phases a person goes through are not at all distinct—that is to say, the transition from one stage to another is not as clear-cut as the description might imply. From a broad perspective, the U-curve seeks to demonstrate an initial decline in the level of cultural adaptation, followed by a steady period of recovery and adjustment to the host culture. This can be visualized as beginning at the top left side and moving downward before climbing back up the right side toward the top of the "U." A bit more detail will give you a better understanding of the culture shock process.

The first phase, which we call the exhilaration stage or the honeymoon stage, is usually filled with excitement, hopefulness, and even a feeling of euphoria as the individual anticipates being exposed to a different culture. People see their cultural experience as a time to explore everything from new foods to a different pace of life.

The second phase, which we call the disenchantment stage or the hostility stage, begins when people recognize the reality of the new setting, start to encounter some difficulties, and adaptation and communication problems begin to emerge. People begin to notice that not everything is as good as they had originally thought it was. They become tired of many things about the new culture. Everything that seemed to be so wonderful at first is now awful, and everything makes them feel distressed and tired. As Triandis(1994) notes, "The second phase is a period when difficulties of language, inadequate schools for the children, poor housing, crowded transportation, chaotic shopping, and the like begin taking their toll." This is the crisis period of culture shock. Confused and baffled by their new surroundings, people can easily become irritated, hostile, impatient, angry, and even lonely.

The adjustment stage or the recovery stage, the third phase, is when the sojourner gains some cultural insight and gradually begins to make some adjustments and modifications in coping with

the new surroundings. Events and people now seem much more predictable and less stressful, and adaptation begins to occur. In this stage, people start feeling more positive and they try to develop comprehension of everything they don't understand. The whole situation starts to become more favorable, they recover from the symptoms of the first two stages and they adjust themselves to the new norms, values and even beliefs and traditions of the new country. They begin to see that even though the distinction of the culture is different from their own, it has elements that they can learn to appreciate.

In the final phase, the effective functioning stage, people understand the key elements of the new culture (special customs, behaviors, communication patterns, and such) and feel comfortable in the surroundings. In this stage, people reach a point they actually feel good because they have learned enough to understand the new culture. The things that initially made them feel uncomfortable or strange are now things that they understand.

4.5.4. Reverse culture shock

Culture shock can also be experienced by people who return to their home country after an extended stay in a foreign culture. Such an experience is referred to as *reverse culture shock*. In early work, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) extended the U-curve hypothesis to account for reverse culture shock, in the *W-curve*. This type of culture shock may cause greater distress and confusion than the original shock experienced in the new culture. In reverse culture shock, the home culture is compared adversely to the admired aspects of the new culture. Research indicates that no one wants to admit that he or she is having difficulty readjusting to the home culture, so the re-entry process often involves suffering in silence. Upon first returning home, there is a sense of relief and excitement about being back in familiar surroundings, seeing old friends and family, and eating familiar food. However, to the surprise of everyone, especially the returning expatriate, a sense of depression and a negative outlook can follow the initial re-entry cycle. Several factors contribute to the downturn phase. Firstly, upon re-entry to the home culture, there is a feeling of a need to search for identity. Secondly, the home culture may look so negative at times that the re-entering person longs for the 'good old days' in the host country where she or he lived for the previous period. Thirdly, the old values, beliefs, and ways of thinking and living, with which the person was once familiar, may have changed, resulting in a

sense of loss or ambiguity. Finally, people too may have changed over the intervening years; resuming deep friendships with old friends may not be automatic or easy. For example, Chiang (2011) conducted a study of 25 young Taiwanese who emigrated to Canada and New Zealand with their parents at a young age in the 1980s and 1990s, but who had returned to Taiwan. The findings showed that although these returnees were born and raised partly in Taiwan, they reported encountering reverse culture shock during their adaptation process. More than half of the participants interviewed would like to move back to the place to which they had emigrated for a better living environment and for their children's education in the future.

4.5.5. What is acculturation?

The name given to the process of learning to live in a new culture is *acculturation. Acculturation* refers to the changes that cultural groups undergo after being in contact over a period of time. Berry (2005) defines acculturation as "the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members…. At the individual level it involves changes in a person's behavioral repertoire." This process of adjustment is a lengthy ordeal that requires gaining a large body of useful knowledge about the new culture. As Ward, Bouchner, and Furnham note, "A necessary condition of functioning effectively in a second-culture environment is to acquire relevant social skills through behavioural culture training, mentoring, and learning about the historical, philosophical and sociopolitical foundations of the host culture."

People adapting to new cultures face changes in diet, climate, housing, communication, roles, social networks, norms, and values. The stress associated with such changes is called *acculturation stress*.

4.5.6. Acculturation model

The most widely applied model of acculturation was developed by John Berry (1980). According to his model, immigrants are confronted with two basic issues: maintenance of their heritage culture and maintenance of relationships with the host society. On this continuum, acculturation orientations range from a positive value placed on both the heritage and the new culture (integration), a negative value to the old and a positive value to the new (assimilation), a positive value to the old and a negative value to the new (separation), and a negative to both cultures (marginalization). A detailed discussion of each is provided as follows:

1. Assimilation results from giving up one's original cultural identity and moving into full participation into the new culture. Assimilation can be a long-term and sometimes multigenerational process. By family name, individuals of German heritage may be one of the larger, if not the largest, group in the United States. In the 19th century, German was the second most commonly used language in the United States. By the 21st century, these individuals are totally assimilated, and little, if any, identification with Germany can be said to exist.

2. Marginalization refers to individuals devaluing their cultural heritage but not having significant psychological contact with the host society either. Marginalized people may feel as though they do not belong anywhere or, in a variant of this orientation, they may reject ethnic identity altogether as a valid source of self-esteem. Bourhis et al., (2007), refer to such people as *individualists*. The Hmong who served as mercenaries for the U.S. CIA in the 1960s and 1970s in Laos were forced to flee Laos after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam. Many of the original Hmong immigrants to the United States had few marketable skills and were ill prepared for modern life in the United States. These older, rural Hmong could not return to the culture they had fled and lacked the skills to acculturate in the United States and so existed in a marginalized state.

3. **Separation** refers to maintaining one's original culture and not participating in the new culture. The Amish in the United States exist as a culture that has chosen to live apart from the dominant culture and resist acculturation.

4. Finally, **integration** refers to maintaining important parts of one's original culture as well as becoming an integral part of the new culture. Individuals who wish to maintain their ethnic traditions and at the same time to become an integral part of the host society are *integrationists.* For some immigrants, there is no inconsistency in having loyalty to two cultures. In fact, that is valued. Certainly modern transportation and the mass media have made true integration more possible. An immigrant to the United States from Germany in the 1880s may have had little opportunity for either a return visit or occasional contact with family, friends, and institutions in Germany. Today's immigrant to the United States from the Philippines may have opportunities

for return visits and easy contact with family, friends, and institutions in the Philippines through e-mail, the Internet, and satellite television. And as well, the immigrant's category of acculturation significantly affects communication with others on an interpersonal level.

4.5.7. Factors influencing cross-cultural adaptation process

A number of factors influence the level of anxiety, distress, and frustration experienced by sojourners or new immigrants, and thus influence cross-cultural adaptation outcomes.

1. Similarity between host and home cultures

The degree of similarity between the host and the home cultures of immigrants can predict the acculturation stress experienced by immigrants. For example, Sudanese immigrants in Australia exhibit significantly larger psychological and cultural distance as compared to those from New Zealand. In addition to physical appearance and language, cultural traits such as beliefs and values may also be used to set one group of immigrants apart from others. The early Chinese settlers in Australia in the 1840s were resented because they were efficient, hardworking, and economically competitive, and were therefore viewed as a threat to the livelihoods of the European migrants (Ang, 2000).

2. Ethnic social support

Immigrants extend their connection to their home culture through various types of ethnic association, including religious groups. Ethnic community networks provide valuable support for immigrants in adjusting to the new culture. For example, previous research identifies social networks as a critical part of the entrepreneurial activities of immigrants in many countries (Light and Gold, 2000). When immigrants relocate from the home country, they bring with them significant attachments to their home culture. They also extend this attachment in the host country by connecting to ethnic social networks, which provide an initial cushion for negotiating a sense of place, as evidenced in ethnic residential concentration in certain areas. Ethnic social support can therefore create a space where immigrants can bridge cultural distance and gradually build connections with the mainstream culture.

3. Personal characteristics and background

Demographic factors such as age, native language and education, personal experience such as previous exposure to other cultures, and personality characteristics such as extraversion may all influence cross-cultural adaptation outcomes. Younger migrants generally adapt more easily than older ones, particularly when they are also well-educated. The ability to speak the language of the host culture certainly facilitates one's ability to adapt and function in the new culture and therefore reduces acculturation stress. Scholars argue that the lack of host language proficiency is one of the main barriers that sojourners face during cross-cultural adaptation, especially in terms of developing quality and quantity of contact with host members (e.g., Berry, 2005). Previous exposure to other cultures also better prepares a person psychologically to deal with the stress and frustration associated with settling in a new culture. For example, international students cope with the settling-in process better if they have travelled to other countries where they cannot use their native language to communicate.

4. Effect of mainstream media

As an institution of culture and an influential shaper of cultural thought, mass media influence the consciousness of the public through the symbolic environment they create and sustain (McLuhan and Fiore, 1967). This symbolic environment is commonly referred to as symbolic social reality (Adoni and Mane, 1984). When an ethnic group is portrayed in the mass media, that particular symbolic social reality becomes a common category utilized by others to identify members of that ethnic group (Potter and Reicher, 1987). Because of this naturalizing effect on the materials they present, mass media can serve as a contributor to perpetuating or diminishing racial stereotypes (Mastro and Greenberg, 2000). This role of the mass media in activating and perpetuating racial stereotypes is particularly significant when the audience either has little direct experience of the group or lacks other sources of verification (Khan et al., 1999). For example, Lee and Wu (2004) found that exposure to negative images associated with Asian Americans create doubts and ambivalence about them among other racial groups. When negative stereotypes are perceived to be real, prejudice is a likely outcome. An ethnic group's perception of how they are portrayed in the mass media will affect their attitudes to the host culture and, subsequently, their desire to integrate into the host society (Liu, 2006).

5. Effects of ethnic media

In addition to exposure to mainstream media, ethnic minorities or immigrants also have access to ethnic media, such as newspapers printed in their native language published in their host countries. Ethnic media have both intragroup and intergroup functions. As an intragroup function, ethnic media promote ethnic group cohesion not only through their news stories but also via the ethnic language they use (Ward and Hewstone, 1985). For example, Chinese ethnic groups in Australia, like other groups, value their own language as a tool in maintaining their cultural identity (Luo and Wiseman, 2000). Ethnic media also serve to help immigrants to broaden and deepen their knowledge about the unfamiliar host culture via their familiar language. Past studies have found that ethnic minorities, especially during the early stages in the new culture, may avoid interpersonal encounters when they can instead use less personal mass media, such as newspapers printed in their native language, as alternative and less stressful sources of learning about the host environment (Adoni and Mane, 1984). Ethnic media, therefore, play a positive role in affecting immigrants' cross-cultural adaptation.

6. Intergroup contact

The amount of interpersonal contact between immigrants and host nationals can influence the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Contact between groups has long been considered to be an important strategy for improving intergroup relations. Pettigrew (1997) examined the responses of over 3,800 majority group members from France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany, and found that intergroup contact played a critical role in reducing bias. Appropriate and friendly intergroup contact may translate into more positive perceptions and may also strengthen in-group identification by creating positive feelings about it.

Potentially negative stereotypes created by the mass media may also be reduced by more frequent contact. For example, Hartmann and Husband (1972) demonstrated that among adolescents living in low immigration areas, the tendency to define race relations in the terms used by the mass media was greater than among those living in high immigration areas. Intergroup contact or intercultural friendships can facilitate immigrants' cross-cultural adaptation.

7. Political and social environment

The host culture's political and social environment has a major impact on adjustment to new cultural surroundings. Specific outgroups are more (or less) welcome in a culture. Negative attitudes towards immigrants and sojourners can demonstrate a rejection of a minority group and establish impermeable social boundaries (Bourhis et al., 1997). Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) argue that the extent to which an immigrant or minority group is supported in the host society (captured by the numerical and political strength of the group, support for its language and culture, and support from institutions in the larger society like the media) is a strong predictor of resilience of the language and culture in the new society and a marker of discrimination as well. The higher the support (which they call ethnolinguistic vitality), the more resilient the ethnic group is and the lower the discrimination will be.

Numerous studies have found that perceived discrimination is significantly associated with acculturative stress and psychological adaptation. For instance, Liebkind and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) compared the experiences of discrimination on psychological distress among a large sample of 1,146 immigrants representing seven ethnic groups (Russian, Ingrian/Finnish, Estonians, Somalis, Arabs, Vietnamese, and Turks) in Finland. They found that, across the sample, self-reported experiences of discrimination were highly predictive of psychological well-being. Factors affecting the degree of tolerance of particular outgroups include the social or political policies of the mainstream culture, such as political representation, citizenship criteria, language requirements, and employment opportunities.

8. The length of time spent in the host country

The literature on the classical U-Curve hypothesis suggests that there is an association between the length of time spent in the host country and the cross-cultural adaptation experience. For instance, in a longitudinal study on the cross-cultural adaptation of 35 international students studying in New Zealand, Ward and colleagues' (1998) found that psychological and sociocultural problems were greatest at the beginning of their sojourn. In a more recent study of 500 Korean immigrants residing in the United States, Park and Rubin (2012) reported that longer residence was associated with better adaptation. The longer the sojourners stay in the new

culture, the more likely they are to develop sociocultural and linguistic competence as they become more experienced in dealing with their lives in the new culture.

4.6. Guidelines for effective Intercultural Communication

It is evident that intercultural communication is challenging and demanding. Culture shock caused by culture differences might arise in the process of intercultural communication. However, we can, with practice and efforts, develop the necessary skills to overcome these problems. Here are some guidelines drawn from communication research and practice that can foster better communication among various cultures:

1. Have an open mind

While it's certainly tough to feel frustrated or confused in your new surroundings, try not to form an opinion about the new culture too soon. You may be quick to judge the food, manners and communication styles and as a result, you may want to do things the way you are used to do. Don't think of the host culture as better or worse, just different. If you have this kind of attitude, you will be more willing to try new things and win new friends and allies.

2. Develop empathy

The next suggestion for improvement is to develop empathy—be able to see things from the point of view of others so that we can better know and adjust to the other people. Perhaps the most common of all barriers to empathy is a constant self-focus. It is difficult to gather information about the other person, and to reflect on that information if we are consumed with thoughts of ourselves. However, for intercultural communication to be successful, we must all learn to go beyond personal boundaries and try to learn about the experiences of people who are not part of our daily lives. We must realize that we live in an interconnected world, and we must therefore be motivated to understand everyone-regardless of how much we seem separated from them by either distance or culture.

3. Don't expect everything to be perfect too soon

You may feel frustrated that you suffer from culture shock, especially since you probably spent so much time preparing. No matter how much information you need, or how well you speak the host language, it is natural to feel overwhelmed sometimes, if you give yourself some time,

things will gradually get better. Once your realize that your trouble is due to your own lack of understanding of other people's cultural background and your own lack of means of communication rather than the hostility of an alien environment, you will also realize that you yourself can gain this understanding and these means of communication. And the sooner you do this, the sooner culture shock will disappear.

4. Develop flexibility and adaptability

The ability to be flexible and adaptable in each communication situation is an important asset for intercultural communication. It is with great flexibility and adaptability that we will be able, with little discomfort, to successfully avoid culture shock when confronting new and ambiguous situations. By flexibility and adaptability, it means the ability to adjust ourselves to culture differences as well as a new culture.

To develop this ability, we need to learn how to respond to new conditions, people, and situations. Efforts should be made to identity these culture differences and make necessary adjustments to our personalized communication style. In order to be flexible, we should avoid being self-conscious, tense and anxious and learn to observe and decode other cultures. Considering timing, physical setting and customs can certainly help increase flexibility in selecting our words and actions.

5. Be mindful that communication produces a response

The messages you produce create a response from other people. Even when communicating within your own cultural sphere, it is sometimes difficult to predict what response you may elicit. And in the intercultural environment, where cultural diversity is a factor, it is much more difficult to foretell the type of response your messages will produce. For example, you have learned, as part of your cultural endowment, the appropriate way to respond to, and thank someone for, a compliment or a gift. You can gauge with a high degree of accuracy what others expect from you as well as how they will respond to your signs of appreciation. Predicting the responses of people from other cultures is far more difficult. Let us for a moment stay with our simple example of thanking someone for a gift. In Arab cultures gift recipients are expected to be

profuse in offering thanks, whereas, in English culture recipients are expected to offer restrained thanks because too much exuberance is considered offensive.

The point is that it is difficult to always know how people will react to messages. Therefore, it is recommended that you try to concentrate on both the other person and your surroundings. This focus on actions and the results of those actions is called, in the Buddhist tradition, *being mindful.* Mindfulness is the aware, balanced, acceptance of the present experience. Obviously, concentrating on personal actions is far more complicated than can be expressed in a single sentence. Yet the central message is clear: Being mindful during a communication encounter means giving full attention to the moment. By being mindful you can adjust your messages to both the context and the person. But most importantly, you can be aware of what you are doing to another person—and that is a matter of ethics.

6. Show respect for others

How would you respond if someone embarrassed you in front of others, put you down, or treated you as if you were insignificant? The answer is obvious: Your feelings would range from anger to emotional hurt. No one likes being denigrated. Each and every person seeks respect, dignity, and a feeling of worth, regardless of their culture. From an ethical perspective this means that during your interactions you display respect for the dignity and feelings of all people. Burbulies(1993) refers to this behavior as employing "the rule of reciprocity," in which you develop a "reversible and reflexive attitude and reciprocal regard for others. Burbulies is not alone in his conviction of the importance of respect for other people. Johannesen(1996) uses words such as "devalues," "ridicule," and "excluding" when he speaks of ethical guidelines regarding respecting one another. Confucius has much the same message concerning the ethical treatment of others when he tells us that "Without feelings of respect, what is there to distinguish men from beasts?"

7. Guard against ethnocentrism

Problems adapting to a new culture are often hindered by ethnocentrism, and excessive ethnocentrism can lead to prejudice, which in turn results in mistrust, hostility, and even hate. One aspect of ethnocentrism is that it can affect everyone—"guests," immigrants, and even

members of the host culture. This can result in members of the host culture passing judgment on outsiders while the person trying to adapt cannot, or will not, sublimate his or her native culture. The key to effective adaptation is for all parties to recognize the strong pull of ethnocentrism and attempt to keep it in check.

You need to be aware and respectful of cultural differences. By developing this awareness, you will begin to develop an intercultural ethical perspective. Keep in mind that People are both alike and different. Barnlund(1989) wrote of this double-sided nature of cultures: If outwardly there is little to distinguish what one sees on the streets of Osaka [Japan] and Chicago—hurrying people, trolleys and buses, huge department stores, blatant billboards, skyscraper hotels, public monuments—beneath the surface there remains great distinctiveness. There is a different organization of industry, a different approach to education, a different role for labor unions, and a contrasting pattern of family life, unique law enforcement and penal practices, contrasting forms of political activity, different sex and age roles. Indeed, most of what is thought of as culture shows as many differences as similarities.

In order to prevent ethnocentrism from blocking effective communication, we need to cultivate a non-judgmental attitude toward cultural differences. Firstly, we should be highly aware of the habitual and subconscious nature of our ethnocentric tendency and on guard against it. Secondly, emphasizing description by observing what is actually said and done, rather than interpreting or evaluating on one's own culture so that accurate information can be gathered. Thirdly, accepting and respecting cultural differences. It means overcoming the unconscious and habitual tendency of judging other cultures as inferior to our own culture, or judging others by our cultural standards, instead, respecting values and customs of other cultures.

8. Learn about the Language of the Host Culture

It is obvious that someone living in a new culture will face numerous challenges as they attempt to deal with language differences. When we talk of problems associated with being exposed to a new language, we are talking about two ideas: language acquisition and the ways of speaking unique to the new culture. Both of these can contribute to culture shock and can delay the adaptation process. Harper summarizes this view when she notes, "Lack of language skills is a strong barrier to effective cultural adjustment and communication, whereas lack of knowledge

concerning the ways of speaking of a particular group will reduce the level of understanding that we can achieve with our counterparts."41 People trying to adjust to and interact with a new culture must face challenges associated not only with learning an additional language, but also with the unique cultural patterns within each language.

9. Learn about the Host Culture

Developing a fund of knowledge about other cultures is a useful first step toward improving intercultural communication. Culture shock and adaptation may be less troublesome if you become aware of the fundamental characteristics of the culture in which you will be living.
Cultural awareness refers to understanding the culture's religious orientation, historical background, political system, key values and beliefs, verbal and nonverbal behaviors, family organization, social etiquette, and other similar aspects.

Section five: Mass media and communication

✪ **Section overview: -** Dear learner, this section deals with mass communication which is one of the different types of human communication. The section encompasses definition of mass media; roles of mass media; Mass media and technology; and Media effects.

5.1. Defining the mass media

When defining the mass media, *Sociological Central* (2011) prefers to breakdown a "mass media" in to its constituent parts: A *medium* is a 'channel of communication' - a means through which people send and receive information. The printed word, for example, is a medium; when we read a newspaper or magazine, something is communicated to us in some way. Similarly, electronic forms of communication - television, telephones, film and such like - are *media* (the plural of medium). *Mass*, as you probably realize, means 'many' and what we are interested in here is how and why different forms of media are used to transmit to – and be received by – large numbers of people (the audience).

Mass media, therefore, refer to channels of communication that involve transmitting information in some way, shape or form to large numbers of people (although the question of exactly how

many a “large number” has to be to qualify as a “mass” is something that’s generally left undefined - it’s one of those things that we know when we see it...).

Here is how Elizabeth (2001) defined the mass media: *Mass communication* is characterized by the transmission of complex messages to large and diverse audiences, using sophisticated technology of communication. *Mass media* refers to the institutions that provide such messages: newspapers, magazines, television, radio, film and multimedia Web sites. The term also is used for the specific institutions of mass media, such as radio networks and television stations, movie companies, music producers, and the Internet.

Dutton et al (1998) suggest that, traditionally, the mass media has been differentiated from other types of communication (such as interpersonal communication that occurs on a *one-to-one* basis) in terms of four essential characteristics:

1. Distance: Communication between those who send and receive messages (media-speak for information) is: (a) impersonal; (b) lacks immediacy; and (c) one way (from the producer/creator of the information to the consumer/audience). When you watch a film, for example, no matter how emotionally involved you become in the action, you can’t directly affect what’s unfolding on the screen;

2. Technology: Mass communication requires a vehicle, such as a television receiver, a method of printing and so forth, that allows messages to be sent and received;

3. Scale: One feature of a mass medium, as we’ve noted, is it involves *simultaneous* communication with many people; for example, as you sit in your living room watching Chelsea play Manchester United on TV, the other living rooms, not just across the country but also, in this instance, across the globe; and

4. Commodity: An interesting feature of mass communication is that it comes at a price. You can watch football on TV, for example, if you can afford a television, a license fee (to watch BBC or ITV) or a subscription to something like Sky Sports if it’s on satellite or cable.

5.2. Roles of mass media

Historians note that communication is a hallmark of society; even pre-literate cultures communicated within themselves and occasionally with others. Various inventions have transformed communication into mass opportunities. Communication scholars and other researchers have looked at the function of mass communication within society. They identify four basic roles for the mass media: surveillance, interpretation, socialization and entertainment.

1. Surveillance

As a society grows and becomes more complex, it becomes important to have a sentry or watch dog monitor the environment so that other groups in society can devote themselves to other functional activities.

Surveillance refers to the news and information role of mass media. This role can be subdivided into *warning surveillance* associated with the news media (information about pending threats such as floods, military attack, and depressed economic conditions) and *instrumental surveillance* associated with both news and popular media (transmission of useful information about news products, entertainment guides, stock market prices, etc.). Surveillance information also can come from books, films, television programs, and other types of literary culture that provides information on human issues. Information travels quickly via the electronic media. The benefit of this is instantaneous awareness; the disadvantage is that misinformation can travel just as quickly as accurate information, and speedy dissemination often means that accusations and supposed facts are not verified before they are transmitted.

2. Correlation/Interpretation

Correlation/Interpretation is the role of mass media that provides a context for new information and commentary about its significance and meaning. Through correlation/interpretation, mass media clarify and explain the relevance of information. If through surveillance the mass media tell us what is happening, through correlation the mass media relay what it means to us.

Correlation is a correction of some of the dysfunctions of surveillance. Information overload, for example, can be reduced through synthesizing and digesting information to highlight the most important bits of news. Correlation is common in the mass media. Editorial pages in newspapers present opinion and suggestions about public affairs. One simple example of correlation is the typical weather forecast. Through surveillance, the weathercaster displays maps that mark cold

and warm fronts, jet stream movement, and isobars. Unless we're familiar with climatology, these markings often make no sense. But, the weather forecaster explains these to the viewers and relays what we can expect the weather to be, based on those data.

Correlation/interpretation can be dysfunctional for society. If people rely too heavily on mass media's interpretation of news, they may lose their own critical abilities to evaluate information on their own. Or, media organizations may be hesitant to criticize and editorialize against powerful institutions and people in society out of fear of retaliation. Media organizations rely heavily on government sources, for example, and might be reluctant to lose access to those sources.

3. Socialization

Socialization is the role of mass communication that deals with the transmission of social values and cultural heritage. A society is marked by commonly shared cultural norms, values, and experiences. Mass communication serves to display and reinforce those values and experiences. Mass communication can also integrate new members of a society, children and immigrants, by teaching and relaying those norms, values, and experiences. Through socialization, mass communication promotes societal integration and cohesion.

An emphasis on cohesion, however, can be dysfunctional. If mass communication ignores subgroups in society, regional and ethnic differences may be diminished, reducing cultural and intellectual diversity in society. Mass media content often is not a multifaceted presentation of societal norms and values. Unfortunately, because of demands of the marketplace, media content is often simplified, stereotyped, and representative of the values of the dominant social class. Those images may lead to improper socialization and learning inaccurate, slanted representations of societal values.

4. Entertainment

The entertainment function serves as a source of rest, respite, and diversion. Entertainment always has been part of society, increasingly so in an age in which more people have a greater amount of leisure time. Through sound recordings, film, radio and television, entertainers have

been able to attract audiences around the globe. Painters, sculptors and poets reach mass audiences through books and magazines. The entertainment function of the media has been subdivided into three categories: *stimulation* (as an antidote to boredom), *relaxation* (as part of a soothing and perhaps meditative environment), and *release* (as a means to safely express anger, hostility or fear). Sociologists have observed that a consequence of wide-spread availability of quality media entertainment is that it may function too well as a diversion. People are increasingly becoming spectators in music, sports, theater and so on. It is far easier and perhaps more fun to watch a soccer match on television played by world-class athletes and broadcast by top-notch camera operators than it is to actually work hard, practice often, and risk injury by personally participating in the game.

5.4 Media effects

One of the primary focuses of the study of mass communication has been the social, cultural, and psychological effects of media content and use. Despite Berelson's (1959) warning that our field of media, communications and culture was "withering away," the study of media effects has remained active and robust. Much of the empirical research published in the major mass communication journals concerns the effects of the mass media. There is no longer discussion in that literature about whether the media have effects or not; nor is the field of media, communications and culture as interested in identifying the different effects that media do have. Instead, most current research attempts to improve our understanding of media effects by refining our theoretical explanations of the processes by which media effects occur. This topic of the chapter is a critical analysis of the effects of the mass media.

5.4.1. Identifying the media effects

One of the first and most important assumptions of the study of mass communication has been the presumption that media and their content have significant and substantial effects. Mass media have been hypothesized to have effects across a broad range of contexts. McGuire (1986) noted several of the most commonly mentioned intended media effects: (a) the effects of advertising on purchasing, (b) the effects of political campaigns on voting, (c) the effects of public service announcements (PSAs) on personal behavior and social improvement, (d) the effects of propaganda on ideology, and (e) the effects of media ritual on social control. He also pointed out

the most commonly mentioned unintended media effects: (a) the effect of media violence on aggressive behavior, (b) the impact of media images on the social construction of reality, (c) the effects of media bias on stereotyping, (d) the effects of erotic and sexual material on attitudes and objectionable behaviors, and (e) how media forms affect cognitive activity and style.

Likewise, McQuail's (1994) summary of the main streams of effects research adds these other areas of media effects: (a) knowledge gain and distribution throughout society, (b) diffusion of innovations, (c) socialization to societal norms, and (d) institution and cultural adaptations and changes. Liebert and Sprafkin (1988) believed that some of the important questions facing media, communications and culture scholars who study television's impact on children are (a) how television instigates antisocial behavior, (b) how it leads children to be more accepting of violence, and (c) how television's images cultivate social attitudes and stereotypes.

In particular, the impact of the Internet is seen from the view point of human relations. As it was briefly dealt with just in the preceding topic, although Internet provides exciting new opportunities to explore the social world, it also threatens to undermine human relationships and communities. Opinions on the effects of the Internet on social interaction fall into two broad categories.

On the one hand are those observers who see the online world as fostering new forms of electronic relationship that either enhance or supplement existing face-to-face interactions. While travelling or working abroad, individuals can use the Internet to communicate regularly with friends and relatives at home. Distance and separation become more tolerable. The Internet also allows the formation of new types of relationship: 'anonymous' online users can meet in 'chatrooms' and discuss topics of mutual interest. These cyber contacts sometimes evolve into fully fledged electronic friendships or even result in face-to-face meetings. Many Internet users become part of lively online communities that are qualitatively different from those they inhabit in the physical world. Scholars who see the Internet as a positive addition to human interaction argue that it expands and enriches people's social networks.

On the other hand, not everyone takes such an enthusiastic outlook. As people spend more and more time communicating online and handling their daily tasks in cyberspace, it may be that they

spend less time interacting with one another in the physical world. Some sociologists fear that the spread of Internet technology will lead to increased social isolation and atomization. They argue that one effect of increasing Internet access in households is that people are spending less 'quality time' with their families and friends. The Internet is encroaching on domestic life as the lines between work and home are blurred: many employees continue to work at home after hours-checking email or finishing tasks that they were unable to complete during the day. Human contact is reduced, personal relationships suffer, traditional forms of entertainment such as the theatre and books fall by the wayside, and the fabric of social life is weakened. According to these sociologists, the Internet also raise challenging questions about personal identity, creates new forms of community and new possibilities for democratic participation.

Still there are other, less obvious and less studied possible media effects. Studies have shown that, teachers and parents have been concerned that television viewing by children will take the place of reading, leading to lower reading skills and educational achievement (e.g., Corteen & Williams, 1986; Hornik, 1978). Pediatricians have been concerned that the unhealthy eating practices portrayed on television coupled with an emphasis on slim models contribute to increases in eating disorders (e.g., Dietz, 1990). Although there are few positive images of smoking on television programming now, print media that carry tobacco play down the dangers of tobacco in their editorial content (e.g., Kessler, 1989). Public health officials are concerned about how print advertising affects adolescents' attitudes toward smoking. There are reports of increased family violence associated with television sports viewing (Capuzzo, 1990). Legal scholars struggle with the industry's responsibilities in instigating criminal behavior in particularly susceptible radio listeners, television and movie viewers, and listeners to popular music who imitate antisocial media actions (Dee, 1987). Scholars are still sorting out how news coverage affects solidarity and consensus during crises (D.M.McLeod, Eveland, & Signorielli, 1994), perceptions about political protest (D.M.McLeod, 1995), and on narcotization (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1948).

5.4.2 Models of media effects

This subsection provides an overview of the chronicle of the study of media effects. Although there is some disagreement about the progression of theory about and study of media effects, throughout the history of our field there have been bodies of research that emphasize different forces as the impetus for media effects. Those beliefs can be summarized by four basic models of media impact. These models depict four different processes of media effects, drawn from the various bodies of research in the field of media, communications and culture.

The models differ because each places emphasis on different aspects of *media content* or the *audience* as the primary force driving media effects. It is important to remember that these four models are designed to focus explanations. So, they are simplified. Because each model focuses on only one part of the cause of media impact, no single model can be a complete explanation for media effects. But these models are valuable because they can direct study of the processes of media effects. Now, let us turn to the overview of the models.

1. Direct effects

The direct effects model focuses on *media content* as the most important explanation for media influence. Effects are seen as immediate (occurring fairly shortly after exposure), relatively uniform (similar across all audience members), and consistent with the goals of the media producer. Moreover, effects within this model are observable ones. The emphasis of this model is on effects that represent change, not reinforcement. Effects are either behavioral, cognitive, or affective effects that lead directly to noticeable actions. For example, the direct effects model is applicable in understanding how political ads might lead to voting for a specific candidate (a behavioral effect), or knowledge gain that would lead to a voting decision (a cognitive effect), or attitude acquisition that influences voting choice (an affective effect).

The major gap in the direct effects model is that, it ignores the role of the audience in the media effects process. People are assumed to be incapable of countering media's impact. They may lack the mental capacity to analyze media messages. So, young children may be the targets of direct effects. Or people may have little background knowledge or context about certain events

and issues and be reliant solely on media content. In these situations, effects maybe direct. Most commonly, however, people are seen as reacting involuntarily and automatically to certain aspects of media content. Although people may have the mental abilities to evaluate content, the direct effects model holds that they are unable to resist the attentional "pull" of some of the features of presentation.

2. Conditional effects

The conditional model is drawn from the limited effects of the mass media. That is, the *conditional model* places emphasis on the audience and is based on notions of selectivity (selective exposure, attention, perception, and recall) and social influence.

According to the conditional model, the reason for media's limited effects is the power of the audience to selectively choose and use media content. In other words, people controlled media and their content through various selectivity processes: (a) selective exposure, or control over what they watched, listened to, or read in the media; (b) selective attention, or control over which elements of media messages people would pay attention to; (c) selective perception, or control over how messages were interpreted; and (d) selective recall, or control over how and what was learned from the media.

This model is called the conditional model, because media effects are conditional on the audience member. This model recognizes that all media exposure is not bound to result in media effects. The audience has the power to avoid exposure and reject influence. And, when media effects occur, they are certainly not uniform. Different people may be affected quite differently by the same media content.

To give a simple example: Certainly not everyone is going to cry at the end of a sad movie (such as the Amharic film by the title *"Wusane"*). Some may never watch the movie because they dislike the actors or the story device. Even some of those who watch the movie will dislike it, and some may go to a movie they don't expect to like, just to accompany someone. And even those who like the movie may not cry. Different people have different feelings about expressing emotions in public places. Still others may be profoundly affected by the movie and find

themselves sobbing at certain scenes. So, the conditional model holds that the explanation of the effects of the movie rests with the individual audience member.

Effects, according to the conditional model, can be cognitive, affective, or behavioral. The effects can occur immediately after exposure or require repeated exposure to similar messages. And the effects may be short term or long term. The conditional model, because it focuses mainly on the individual audience member, can be used to explain almost any media effect at an individual level.

Thus, the generalization is that, the individual is the focus of media effects because of the individual's power to be selective. The audience member is central to the conditional model (and media content is ignored, for the most part) because of selectivity processes that act as barriers to intended media effects. People selectively expose themselves to media content. Mainly, they choose media content that is consistent with their interests, personal experiences, and their own needs and desires. Even when they are using media content, people pay attention quite selectively.

It is not only the explanation of the conditional model but also its drawback takes an opposite form of the direct effect model discussed just in the above subjection. The conditional effects model assumes that media effects cannot go beyond personal reinforcement but in actual sense, media effects often go beyond personal reinforcement. That is to say, change as a result of media exposure is likely.

3. Cumulative effects

The cumulative effects model is drawn from the "return to powerful effects" era of the received view of media effects history that covered the early 20th century through the 1930s. The received view focus on media effects was based on the *stimulus-response model* drawn from psychology and grounded in mass society theory drawn from sociology. The received view model held that the media were so powerful that the audience was powerless to resist their influence. This model was based on observations that the technological improvements in public communication and mass production of popular culture had created a mass audience attending to the same messages.

The emphasis on instinct and stimulus-response learning drawn from psychology reinforced the notion that powerful stimuli, such as effective media messages, could induce people to respond mechanically. At the same time, sociologists believed that the industrial revolution had led to a fragmentation of the social bonds in society, so that people no longer felt part of social communities but felt isolated and disconnected from others.

Thus, the main emphasis of the cumulative effects model is the ubiquitous nature of certain media content that overrides any potential of the audience to limit exposure to certain messages. This model focuses on the consonance and repetition of themes and messages across media content. The explanation for media effects, then, rests in media content—its consistent make-up and depiction. The audience is not relevant to this model because it is not within their power to avoid certain media messages. Some media content is so pervasive that selective exposure is impossible, so everyone is affected in ways that are consistent with media messages. So, amount of media exposure (as a measure of audience immersion in media content) and content analyses (as a measure of media's messages) are essential components to explaining media effects.

Unlike the direct effects model, this model explains that media effects are a result of cumulative exposure, not due to a single event. Through repeated exposure to similar content across channels, people are moved. The effects of this model are generally reality-construction effects. That is, through cumulative exposure, people begin to adopt the media's framing as their own representation of reality. Effects, according to the cumulative model, are limited to cognitions (belief and attitude acquisition) and affect (emotional reactions). This model, then, focuses on more subtle effects.

Agenda setting can be viewed as a cumulative effect. *Agenda setting* is conceptualized as the power of the news media to direct our concerns toward certain issues. The effect is a fairly limited cognitive one: the news media don't tell us what to think, but what to think about. Agenda setting is based on observations that news content tends to be fairly consonant across news channels. Broadcasting, cable, and print news media highlight the same types of stories, issues, events, and people.

4. Cognitive-transactional model

This model is drawn from cognitive psychology. It applies the notion of schematic processing to the media context. Several theorists have explained that how humans mentally process environmental stimuli affects how we interpret and learn new information. The key to this model is the *schema*. Knowledge, according to this approach, does not exist as isolated chunks in our brains. Instead, all knowledge is organized into schemas. A schema is a mental structure that represents knowledge about a concept. Schemas contain the attributes of the concept and the connections among those attributes. Schemas have a hierarchical structure, so that some elements are more central than others. Schemas may exist independently or they may be interrelated through commonly shared elements.

There is a good deal of scholarly as well as common-sense evidence to support the existence of schemas. Word association tests support the notion that some concepts are linked more closely than others. Which is easier to remember: blue *bird* or blue *frame*? We all have experienced how some environmental stimuli bring to mind a whole host of other concepts. The scent of a certain perfume may bring to mind thoughts of a relative or a past relationship. The smell of turkey roasting certainly arouses memories of past Thanksgivings.

Some of the earliest scholarly evidence for the existence of schemas comes from Bartlett (1932). He observed that when people retold stories that took place in other cultures, they altered the details so that they were consistent with their own culture. Bartlett suggested that people had mental patterns that described the stories of their cultures.

Schemas exist for all domains: (a) role schemas (e.g., what a college professor is like), (b) person schemas (our understanding of others we know), (c) self-schemas (how we think about ourselves), (d) group schemas (e.g., males vs. females), and (e) event schemas (e.g., scripts). All these are mental representations of our knowledge about various people, events, and issues. It is clear that schemas are also relevant in the mass communication context. We not only apply our schemas to interpreting mass media content (e.g., group schema and how women on television ought to act or person schema to help us anticipate how a favorite talk show host will deal with guests), but we also have schemas that help us understand mass media content specifically.

Schemas not only organize knowledge, but they serve several other functions that influence media effects. First, they direct selective exposure, perception, attention, and recall. The schema that is in use directs attention to certain aspects of the environment that are relevant to that schema. Second, because they organize knowledge, schemas control how new information is integrated with prior knowledge. How a news story is framed (with headlines, graphics, or introduction) influences which schema is used to interpret the information and which schema any new knowledge is associated with. Third, schemas allow people to make inferences about new situations and help reduce uncertainty about what to think or how to act. When we attend the first class in a semester, for example, we have a fairly good idea of what will happen during that meeting, even if we've never been in one of that professor's classes. Fourth, schemas allow us to go beyond the stimuli and make inferences about things that are not shown.

The major limitation of the cognitive-transactional model is that, contrary to its assumption, much media use and consumption is not controlled. That is, people are often more automatic in their approach to mass media use and consumption. Much television viewing grows out of entertainment or relaxation motives, for example, that leads viewers to be more automatic in their viewing. When people are relaxed or distracted, they may react more automatically to the environment. *Automatic processing* is an effortless, low-involved mental processing of environmental stimuli.

Section six: Sociological perspectives on the media

✪ **Section overview:** Dear learner**!** The mass media is one of the social institutions which are areas of concern of sociological perspectives. Sociological perspectives see the mass media from different point of view and provide their own distinct theory. In this section, we will discuss the view of structural functionalism, conflict theory, Marxist theory, feminist theory, and symbolic Interactionists theory regarding the media.

6.1. The functionalist view

Functionalists focus on the function and dysfunction of the media.

6.1.1. Functions of the mass media

The following are some of the functions of the mass media according to functionalists

1. Agent of socialization

The media serves to socialize us, helping us pass along norms, values, and beliefs to the next generation. In fact, we are socialized and resocialized by media throughout our life course. All forms of media teach us what is good and desirable, how we should speak, how we should behave, and how we should react to events.

The mass media increase social cohesion by presenting a more or less standardized common view of culture through mass communication. Sociologist Robert Park(1922) studied how news papers helped immigrants to the united states adjust to their environment by changing their customary habit and teaching them the opinions held by people in their new home country.

2. Enforcer of social norms

The media often reaffirm proper behavior by showing what happens to people who act in a way that violates societal expectation.

3. Entertainment Function

An obvious manifest function of media is its entertainment value. Most people, when asked why they watch television or go to the movies, would answer that they enjoy it.

4. Promoting consumption

Media advertising provides information about products, promote consumption, and support the economy.

5. Surveillance of the social environment

The surveillance function refers to the collection and distribution of information concerning events in the social environment. The media collect and distribute facts about a variety of events including weather, sport events, election campaigns, and international conflict.

6.1.2. Dysfunction

The following are some of the dysfunctions of the mass media according to functionalists

1. Media sometimes glorify disapproved behavior, such as physical violence, and drug use.

2. Media advertising contributes to a consumer culture that creates “needs” and raises unrealistic expectation of what is required to be happy or satisfied.

3. High level of tobacco and alcohol product advertising and promotion may contribute to increase in substance use among youth.

6.2. Marxist theory

Marxist view of the mass media can be summarized in terms of the following points:

1. Base and superstructure

Economism is a key feature of 'classical Marxism' (orthodox or fundamentalist Marxism). In economism, the economic *base* of society is seen as *determining* everything else in the superstructure, including social, political and intellectual consciousness. Theories positing economic relations as the basic cause of social phenomena are also called *materialist* theories, and Marx's version is also known as '*historical materialism*'.

Mass media research in this fundamentalist tradition interprets the 'culture industries' in terms of their economic determination. According to this view, 'the contents of the media and the meanings carried by their messages are... primarily determined by the economic base of the organizations in which they are produced' (Curran *et al.* 1982: 18). Consequently, 'commercial media organizations must cater to the needs of advertisers and produce audience-maximizing products (hence the heavy doses of sex-and-violence content) while those media institutions whose revenues are controlled by the dominant political institutions or by the state gravitate towards a middle ground, or towards the heartland of the prevailing consensus' . Marxists of the 'political economy' variety (such as Graham Murdock) still see ideology as subordinate to the economic base. The base/superstructure model as applied to the mass media is associated with a concern with the *ownership* and *control* of the media.

2. Media as means of production

The mass media are, in classical Marxist terms, a 'means of production' which in capitalist society are in the ownership of the ruling class. According to the classical Marxist position, the mass media simply disseminate the ideas and world views of the ruling class, and deny or defuse alternative ideas. This is very much in accord with Marx's argument that:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (Marx & Engels: *The German Ideology*, cited inCurran *et al.* 1982: 22).

According to this stance, the mass media functioned to produce 'false consciousness' in the working-classes. This leads to an extreme stance whereby media products are seen as monolithic expressions of ruling class values, which ignores any diversity of values within the ruling class and within the media, and the possibility of oppositional readings by media audiences.

A central feature of Marxist theory is the '*materialist*' stance that *social being determines consciousness*. According to this stance, ideological positions are a function of class positions, and the dominant ideology in society is the ideology of its dominant class. This is in contrast to the '*idealist*' stance that grants priority to consciousness (as in Hegelian philosophy). Marxists differ with regard to this issue: some interpret the relationship between social being and consciousness as one of direct determination; others stress a *dialectical* relationship.

In fundamentalist Marxism, ideology is '*false consciousness*', which results from the emulation of the dominant ideology by those whose interests it does not reflect. From this perspective the mass media disseminate the *dominant ideology*: the values of the class which owns and controls the media. According to adherents of Marxist political economy the mass media conceal the economic basis of class struggle; 'ideology becomes the route through which struggle is obliterated rather than the site of struggle' (Curran *et al.* 1982: 26).

3. Media as amplifiers

In Marxist media analysis, media institutions are regarded as being 'locked into the power structure, and consequently as acting largely in tandem with the dominant institutions in society. The media thus reproduced the viewpoints of dominant institutions not as one among a number

of alternative perspectives, but as the central and "obvious" or "natural" perspective' (Curran *et al.* 1982: 21).

According to adherents of Marxist political economy, in the mass media there is a tendency to avoid the unpopular and unconventional and to draw on 'values and assumptions which are most valuable and most widely legitimated' (Murdock & Golding 1977: 37, cited in Curran *et al.* 1982: 26).

6.3. Conflict Perspective

In contrast to theories in the functional perspective, the conflict perspective focuses on the creation and reproduction of inequality—social processes that tend to disrupt society rather than contribute to its smooth operation. When taking a conflict perspective, one major focus is the differential access to media and technology embodied in the digital divide. Conflict theorists look at who controls the media, and how media promotes the norms of upper class while minimizing the presence of the lower class, especially people of color.

Conflict theorists argue that the mass media serves to maintain the privileges of certain groups. The media serves to perpetuate the dominant ideology. Dominant ideology describes a set of cultural beliefs and practices that help to maintain powerful social, economic, and political interests.

Conflict theorists point in particular to the media's ability to decide what gets transmitted through gate keeping. Within the mass media, a relatively small number of people control what eventually reaches the audience, a process known as gate keeping. Gate keeping describes how material must travel through a series of check points (or gates) before it reaches the public. While protecting their own interest, powerful groups may limit the representation of others in the media. The media tend to ignore the lives and ambitions of subordinate groups. Even worse, media content may create false images or stereotypes of these groups that become accepted as accurate portrayal of truth.

Shoemaker and Voss (2009) define **gatekeeping** as the sorting process by which thousands of possible messages are shaped into a mass media-appropriate form and reduced to a manageable amount. In other words, the people in charge of the media decide what the public is exposed to,

which, as C. Wright Mills (1956) famously noted, is the heart of media's power. Take a moment to think of the way that "new media" evolves and replaces traditional forms of hegemonic media. With a hegemonic media, culturally diverse society can be dominated by one race, gender, or class through the manipulation of the media imposing its worldview as a societal norm. New media renders the gatekeeper role less of a factor in information distribution. Popular sites such as YouTube and Facebook engage in a form of self-policing. Users are encouraged to report inappropriate behavior that moderators will then address.

6.4. Feminist view

If the Marxist tradition tends to focus on the ways in which the media reproduce relationships and ways of thinking that are of benefit to capitalism, feminists concentrate on the ideological work carried out by the media on behalf of men. Feminists also share the view of conflict theorists that the mass media stereotype and misrepresent social reality. Women and men are portrayed in ways that reflect and perpetuate stereotypical view of gender.

Take a look at popular television shows, advertising campaigns, and online game sites. In most, women are portrayed in a particular set of parameters and tend to have a uniform look that society recognizes as attractive. Most are thin, white or light-skinned, beautiful, and young. Why does this matter? Feminist perspective theorists believe it's crucial in creating and reinforcing stereotypes. For example, Fox and Bailenson (2009) found that online female avatars (the characters you play in online games) conforming to gender stereotypes enhances negative attitudes toward women, and Brasted (2010) found that media (advertising in particular) promotes gender stereotypes.

Although there is much agreement that the media play a crucial role in the gendering of culture, there is little evidence of theoretical convergence among feminist writers. We shall, therefore, look briefly at how different feminist approaches have been applied to the media.

1. Liberal feminism

Women have been the victims of prejudice and stereotyping which are at the root of a gendered outlook for women as well as men. The limited role models and negative images that are offered

by the media play an active part in reproducing dominant and traditional values and reinforcing the power of men and the absence of opportunities for women. The liberal solution is for women to compete with men for the powerful positions within the media and to educate journalists and broadcasters in the values of non-sexist media production.

2. Radical feminism

According to this view the media are simply one more institution run by men for the convenience of men in a patriarchal society. As such the media demean women and overlook their concerns while actively encouraging female abuse through pornography and violence. The promotion of individual women within male structures which promote masculine culture is regarded as nothing other than a short-term gain for the individual career women concerned – sometimes dismissed as 'sleeping with the enemy'. Radical strategies on the other hand, entail women writers, producers and broadcasters cooperating to create their own alternative media.

3. Socialist feminism

Adopting elements of the Marxist approach, socialist feminism uses class analysis to examine the economic position of women under patriarchal capitalism. The commercial pressures on the media are clearly recognized in this perspective as important constraints on the media reforms proposed by liberal feminists or the separate developments favored by radical feminists. Power in the media is related to the economic structures of society and although in support of changes for women, the socialist feminists are also aware that the benefits of reform are most likely to improve the career opportunities of middle-class women.

6.5. Symbolic Interactionism

Technology may act as a symbol for many. The kind of computer you own, the kind of car you drive, whether or not you can afford the latest Apple product—these serve as a social indicator of wealth and status. **Neo-Luddites** are people who see technology as symbolizing the coldness and alienation of modern life. But for **technophiles**, technology symbolizes the potential for a brighter future. For those adopting an ideological middle ground, technology might symbolize

status (in the form of a massive flat-screen television) or failure (in owning a basic old mobile phone with no bells or whistles).

Meanwhile, media create and spread symbols that become the basis for our shared understanding of society. Theorists working in the interactionist perspective focus on this social construction of reality, an ongoing process in which people subjectively create and understand reality. Media constructs our reality in a number of ways. For some, the people they watch on a screen can become a primary group, meaning the small informal groups of people who are closest to them. For many others, media becomes a reference group: a group that influences an individual and to which an individual compares himself, and by which we judge our successes and failures. We might do very well without an Android smartphone, until we see characters using it on our favorite television show or our classmates whipping one out between classes.