SSR Journal of Multidisciplinary (SSRJM)
Volume 3, Issue 3, 2026 Homepage: https://ssrpublisher.com/ssrjm/ ISSN: 3049-1304

Evolution of Ethno-Communicology

Jane Ositadinma ogbu & Prof. Ifeanyi. L. Anorue

Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria (UNN) Nsukka

Received: *11.02.2026* | ***Accepted:*** *25.02.2026* | ***Published:*** *15.03.2026*

***Corresponding Author:** Jane Ositadinma ogbu

DOI: *10.5281/zenodo.19039817*

INTRODUCTION

Communication lies at the heart of human interaction. It is a social process through which individuals share ideas, emotions, and experiences within a community (Pate & Dauda, 2015). Although communication occurs in various forms and at multiple levels, its fundamental purpose remains the transmission of meaning from a sender to a recipient, ideally eliciting some form of feedback. Depending on the context, communication may be verbal or non-verbal. It includes both verbal expression and non-verbal signals like vocal qualities (paralanguage), movement and gesture (kinesics), the use of space (proxemics), the organisation of time (chronemics), and numerous elements of material culture including food, dress, artefacts, visual layout, and architecture. These non-verbal dimensions represent the dynamic expression of culture. Culture, in a broad sense, refers to an enduring body of shared meanings covering learned practices, norms, worldviews, dispositions, and ways of using language that people gradually absorb from early life as they relate with those around them. Communication, therefore, becomes the active means through which these cultural elements are conveyed from one generation or group to another (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1989, as cited in UNESCO, 2013).

Communication may take place on interpersonal, group, organizational, intercultural, or international levels. Regardless of the level, it refers to exchanges among people who may come from the same social origins or from entirely different life experiences. When people from different cultural or national identities engage in dialogue, the interaction is generally classified as ethno-communication. This refers to exchanges involving individuals whose cultural orientations differ but who communicate across socially or geographically recognized boundaries. Such interaction gives rise to cross-cultural communication, which involves the verbal or symbolic sharing of information between people from diverse cultural backgrounds who may nonetheless coexist within the same national space (Pate & Dauda, 2015). For example, in a multicultural society such as Nigeria, daily interactions among people of different ethnic groups naturally constitute cross-ethnic communication.

Whether communication occurs on a personal, group, or mass level, its aims remain consistent: to convey information, reduce uncertainty for the message receiver, and build or maintain relationships through interaction (Pate & Dauda, 2015). Culture and communication are so closely connected that one cannot exist or function independently of the other. No aspect of culture can be learnt without the communicative processes through which knowledge is transmitted. Culture is acquired from parents, peers, formal education, the media, and the wider society (Melbourne University, 2000). In this sense, culture emerges as a product of

communication, just as communication shapes and reinforces cultural norms and patterns.

Ethno-communication can be analyzed using the same fundamental variables that apply to alternative modes of disseminating information and interaction. Every act of communication occurs among people who differ in how well they know or understand each other. As Gabriella (2008, cited in Pate & Dauda, 2015) observes, the idea of the "stranger" is central to understanding ethno-communication. It refers to the interaction between people or groups who differ culturally and must navigate these differences while exchanging ideas. This paper therefore examines ethno-communicology, tracing its historical foundations and discussing the theoretical perspectives that inform its study.

Culture

Culture has often been described through metaphors that capture its complexity. Weaver (2005) likens culture to an iceberg: only a small portion is visible above the surface, while the far larger, unseen part lies beneath. Hofstede (1991) compares it to an onion with multiple layers that must be peeled back to reveal its deeper dimensions. Both metaphors highlight the intricate and multifaceted nature of culture. Just as striking an iceberg can have sudden and profound consequences, or peeling an onion can provoke an emotional reaction, encounters between people of different cultures can produce similarly intense experiences, this is especially evident during initial encounters. The nation of Nigeria is home to over 200 million people and a rich mix of more than 250 ethnic communities, exemplifies this cultural diversity. Each group possesses distinct practices reflected in language, clothing, greetings, and social norms. Likewise, organisations also possess their own internal cultures, which set them apart and guide their interactions and expectations.

Communication

Scholars have explained communication in many different ways. From a linguistic standpoint, the term originates from the Latin word *communicare*, which means "to share," as well as the French word *communis*, meaning "common." In this sense, communication can be understood as the process through which meaning is created and shared among people. Fundamentally, it is an activity that allows meaning to be formed, exchanged, and understood. Chappel and Read (1984), as cited in Issa, Zara Ali-Garaga, and Yunusa (2015), describe communication as any process by which an idea or thought is passed from one individual to another. While this explanation places strong emphasis on the medium or means of transfer, it still underscores the central role of meaning. Similarly, Seema (2010) defines communication as the process of conveying information, ideas, feelings, skills, and knowledge using symbols, words, pictures, diagrams, or illustrations. Nonetheless, Seema's description appears to present communication mainly as a one-way flow rather than an interactive exchange.

Contemporary scholarship, by contrast, stresses that communication is fundamentally a reciprocal process. For communication to achieve its purpose, all parties involved need to actively participate in sharing and interpreting meaning. Solomon, Olufemi and James (2012) succinctly describe communication as "an exchange of meaning", a definition that captures the essence of the concept despite its brevity. Every participant enters a communicative situation with personal experiences, which they hope to share or negotiate with others.This understanding is reinforced by Pate and Dauda (2015) define communication as a social activity that enables the sharing of ideas and emotions within and across members of a society. They further note that communication functions across different levels and takes many forms, but always with the overarching aim of transferring meaning from a sender to a receiver, accompanied by the expectation of feedback. Their conceptualisation is comprehensive, as it incorporates all essential elements of the communication process.

Ethno-Communicology

Ethno-communicology is concerned with the study of communication across cultural boundaries. Ethno-communication occurs whenever individuals from different cultural

backgrounds interact and attempt to create shared meaning. For instance, an interaction between Fulani and Tiv speakers constitutes ethno-communication because it takes place across distinct cultural contexts.Allwood (1985) defines ethno-communication as the exchange of information across varying degrees of awareness and regulation among individuals from different cultural backgrounds differ whether those differences derive from national identity or from participation in varied cultural practices within the same national environment. Ting-Toomey (1999) similarly argues that ethno-communication emerges when people shaped by distinct cultural backgrounds work together to establish common understanding during their interactions.

The definition of ethno-communication is largely shaped by how culture itself is understood. Some scholars, such as Gudykunst (2003), adopt a narrower view and restrict ethno-communication to interactions between individuals of different nationalities. However, broader perspectives recognise that cultural differences may exist not only between nations but also within them.

Historical Development of Ethno-Communicology

The foundational concepts of ethno-communicology were shaped by Hall and his colleagues at the Foreign Service Institute during the early 1950s. Hall's upbringing in the culturally diverse setting of New Mexico, combined with his leadership of an African American regiment in World War II, heightened his sensitivity to cultural dynamics. His experiences with the Hopi and Navajo communities provided him with firsthand insight into the complexities of intercultural relations, one of the most enduring challenges in human interaction (Hall, 1992, p. 76).

While Hall's personal encounters highlighted the difficulties of cross-cultural communication, it was his formal academic and professional background that led him toward a more systematic study of ethno-communicology. His graduate studies in anthropology at Columbia University, along with his role as an applied anthropologist at the Foreign Service Institute, connected him with scholars whose perspectives greatly influenced his thinking. Hall later acknowledged that four key intellectual traditions shaped his conceptual framework: cultural anthropology, linguistics, ethology (the study of animal behavior), and Freudian psychoanalytic theory (Hall, 1992, as cited in Rogers, Hart & Mike, 2002).

1. **Cultural Anthropology:** Cultural anthropology shaped Hall's development of ethno-communication in both supportive and limiting ways. During his studies at During his time at Columbia University, Hall was significantly shaped by the work of scholars like Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict (Hart, 1996b). In *The Hidden Dimension*, he recognized that his ideas connecting culture and communication later central to *The Silent Language*were strongly influenced by Boas, who emphasized that communication lies at the heart of cultural life (Hall, 1966, as cited in Rogers et al., 2002).The emphasis that Boas and Benedict placed on cultural relativism is clearly reflected in Hall's own thinking.

Hall also drew inspiration from Margaret Mead, who had earlier assisted the U.S. government in applying anthropological insights, and from Raymond L. Birdwhistell, a cultural anthropologist renowned for pioneering kinesics. Despite these influences, Hall diverged from traditional anthropological approaches. While traditional anthropologists often study entire cultures at a broad, macro level exploring economic, political, kinship, and religious systems, Hall focused on the finer, micro-level interactions between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. His interest in intercultural dynamics developed through his practical work at the Foreign Service Institute, where he led a course called *Understanding Foreign People* for American diplomats.

2. Linguistics: Within the Foreign Service Institute, one of Hall's most significant scholarly influences was the linguist George L. Trager, who had undertaken post-doctoral work at Yale University under Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf between 1936 and 1941 (Hockett, 1993, as cited in Rogers et al., 2002). Trager was considered one of Whorf's closest intellectual

associates, and both shared a strong interest in Native American languages of the American Southwest Hopi in Whorf's case and Tanoan in Trager's (Hockett, 1993, in Rogers et al., 2002). Through this relationship, Hall was introduced to the principle of linguistic relativity, which highlights the extent to which language shapes human cognition and the interpretation of meaning. Hall later remarked that, just as Whorf illuminated the influence of language on thought, he sought to demonstrate how human behaviour is shaped through nonverbal communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990, cited in Rogers et al., 2002).

3. Ethology: Hall's interest in biology, particularly in the study of animal behaviour, developed during his youth (Hall, 1992). This early fascination is reflected in his works *The Hidden Dimension*, which discusses spatial behaviour and crowding, and *Beyond Culture*, which examines behavioural sequences or "action chains". Even the cultural "map" presented in *The Silent Language* draws on biological foundations. His categorisation of time and by extension culture into formal, informal, and technical systems was influenced by Paul MacLean's triune brain theory, which distinguishes the reptilian, limbic, and neo-cortex levels of brain functioning (Sorrells, 1998, as cited in Rogers et al., 2002).

4. Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory: Freudian thought also played a substantial role in shaping Hall's ideas, particularly regarding the unconscious dimensions of communication and nonverbal behaviour. Two key influences were his participation in a post-doctoral seminar on culture and personality at Columbia University in 1946, and his intellectual association with Erich Fromm during his period at Bennington College. At the Foreign Service Institute, Hall worked closely with the Washington School of Psychiatry, led by Harry Stack Sullivan, a central figure in popularising psychoanalytic perspectives in the United States. Hall's office was located in the same building (Hall, 1992, p. 241, cited in Rogers et al., 2002), enabling frequent interaction with scholars there. His wife, Mildred, served as the School's chief administrative officer, and Hall himself was a member of the faculty (Hall, 1992). He regularly invited psychiatrists, including Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, to participate in his training sessions in order to integrate psychoanalytic insights into ethno-communication, especially its nonverbal aspects. Hall also underwent seven years of psychoanalysis while living in Washington, D.C., which further deepened his engagement with Freudian theory (Hall, 1992, in Rogers et al., 2002).

The Foreign Service Institute

Leeds-Hurwitz (1990) observes that "the story of ethno-communicology begins at the Foreign Service Institute." Although several key ideas now associated with the field had already appeared in earlier scholarship such as Simmel's (1908, 1921) notion of the *stranger*, Sumner's (1946/1940) work on ethnocentrism, and Whorf's (1940) linguistic relativity the discipline had not yet been formally identified by 1951. At that time, no recognised framework existed that linked culture and communication in a systematic way, nor had the significance of nonverbal behaviour as a "silent language" been fully acknowledged. Prior to the 1950s, ethno-communicology remained in what Kuhn (1962/1970) would describe as a pre-paradigmatic stage (Rogers & Hart, 2001).

The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) became the setting in which the early conceptual foundations of ethno-communicology took shape. Following the Second World War, the United States emerged as a global power, yet its diplomatic corps performed poorly in cross-cultural contexts. Few American diplomats spoke the languages of their host nations; for instance, only 115 of 3,076 Foreign Service officers possessed competence in Japanese or Chinese (Anonymous, 1956). As Lederer and Burdick (1958) later criticised in *The Ugly American*, many ambassadors in major postings could not speak the local language, whereas approximately 90 per cent of Soviet diplomatic staff, including support personnel, were multilingual. One State Department official even dismissed the relevance of language training with the remark that selecting officers on linguistic ability was "like picking chorus girls for moles and dimples" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990, cited in Rogers et al., 2002).

To address these weaknesses, the U.S. Congress enacted the Foreign Service Act of 1946, creating the FSI to provide continuous professional training for Foreign Service staff and other government personnel. A major responsibility of the Institute was language education, which it pursued successfully by recruiting linguists from the wartime Army Language Program. These experts introduced instructional methods that relied heavily on native speakers and emphasised the cultural dimensions of language learning. Within this context, George L. Trager and Edward T. Hall played central roles in articulating the early contours of what later became known as intercultural and ethno-communicology (Rogers & Hart, 2001).

Culture and Communication

Hall and his anthropologist colleagues initially taught broad cultural concepts kinship, institutions, and social structures to trainees at the FSI. However, diplomats and development workers soon criticised this approach as impractical. Hall (1959, p. 32, cited in Rogers et al., 2002) acknowledged that the trainees saw little value in such meta-level cultural information. They argued that examples drawn from groups such as the Navajo were irrelevant to embassies abroad (Hall, 1959). What the trainees needed, they insisted, was guidance on how to communicate effectively with people whose cultural assumptions differed from their own. Hall concluded that abstract discussions of culture offered limited practical benefit.

In response, Hall began meeting daily with Trager to rethink the curriculum (Sorrells, 1998, cited in Rogers et al., 2002). Their collaboration integrated anthropological and linguistic insights and laid the foundations for ethno-communicology. Their work culminated in an FSI manual, *The Analysis of Culture* (Hall &Trager, 1953, cited in Rogers et al., 2002), which introduced a ten-by-ten matrix for mapping cultural patterns. Communication emerged as a central dimension of this model. Hall's conclusion "culture is communication and communication is culture" (Hall, 1959, p. 186) reflected this shift towards examining the micro-level, lived realities of intercultural interaction. During the same period, Birdwhistell contributed his work on kinesics while teaching at the FSI in 1952.

The Institute's approach to nonverbal communication drew heavily on the notion of out-of-awareness behaviour, shaped in part by Freudian psychoanalytic ideas about the unconscious. Trainees responded enthusiastically to this emerging paradigm. Hall's main course a four-week orientation for mid-career diplomats and technical personnel combined language training with substantial content on ethno-communication. Over five years, Hall trained roughly 2,000 participants in small cohorts of 30 to 35. His pedagogy emphasised experiential and participatory methods rather than conventional lectures, drawing extensively on the real-world experiences of trainees. Further case material came from Hall's visits to former students stationed abroad.

The productive period at the FSI came to an end in 1955. Despite its innovative environment, the Institute remained situated within the U.S. State Department, whose administrators were often suspicious of the academic orientation of the linguists and anthropologists. Hall (1992, p. 202, cited in Rogers et al., 2002) recalled that his ideas were frequently misinterpreted or resisted. Eventually, the State Department sought to remove the anthropologists from the Institute. With the departure of Hall, Trager and their colleagues, the brief but influential era of creativity between 1951 and 1955 concluded. Thereafter, intellectual leadership in ethno-communicology shifted to university-based communication departments. One of the primary vehicles for disseminating the paradigm developed at the FSI was Hall's seminal publication, *The Silent Language* (1959).

Hall's Paradigm for ethno Communicology

The key components of the paradigm understood as a framework that offers a shared set of problems and research methods for scholars in ethno-communication can be outlined as follows:

1. **A focus on ethno-communication rather than macro-level cultural study.**

The scholars at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) concentrated on communication between members of different cultural groups, shifting away from Hall's earlier but unsuccessful efforts to teach large-scale, single-culture perspectives. Although ethno-communication drew from both anthropology and linguistics, it gradually evolved into a distinct field after 1955.

2. **Nonverbal communication as a central domain.**Hall defined nonverbal communication as communicative behaviour that does not rely on words. Together with Trager and Birdwhistell, he established the empirical study of proxemics, chronemics, and kinesics, providing the foundational directions that subsequent scholars in nonverbal communication would later expand.
3. **Attention to out-of-awareness behaviour.**A significant feature of the paradigm was its focus on the subconscious or unexamined levels of information exchange, particularly in nonverbal behaviour. Hall's thinking here reflected the influence of Freud, Fromm, Sullivan, and the work of Birdwhistell.
4. **A non-judgemental and culturally relativistic stance.**Ethno-communication stressed respect for cultural differences and avoided evaluative comparisons. Drawing from anthropological training, Hall embraced the Boasian and Benedictian view that cultural practices must be understood within their own contexts a position aligned with Herskovits' (1973) articulation of cultural relativism (cited in Rogers et al., 2002).
5. **Participatory and experiential methods of instruction.**Because FSI courses were intensive, full-day workshops for mid-career professionals with considerable field experience, Hall and his colleagues relied on simulations, interactive exercises, and other forms of experiential learning. These methods ensured that training was practical and directly connected to the realities of intercultural encounters.
6. **A thoroughly applied orientation.** Ethno-communicology emerged as a practical response to the communication deficiencies of U.S. diplomats and technical personnel. The paradigm was therefore designed from the outset to equip practitioners with usable skills. These six elements, first developed at the FSI, continue to define the teaching of ethno-communication in American universities (Gudykunst& Kim, 1984/1997) and, to an extent, in other regions.

From the FSI to the Field of Ethno Communicology

Although the paradigm developed at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) made substantial intellectual contributions, Hall never attempted to establish a new academic discipline or create a formal research tradition (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1990, in Rogers et al., 2002). While he actively disseminated the ideas he developed at the FSI through works like *The Silent Language*, Hall himself did not consider these efforts as founding a separate scholarly field. Throughout his career, he continued to identify primarily as an anthropologist rather than a communication scholar.

Despite this, Edward Hall is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of ethno-communication, with *The Silent Language* serving as the field's foundational text. He laid the conceptual groundwork that later scholars would expand. Notably, many of these subsequent contributors were not linguists, as the study of linguistics typically emphasizes verbal communication over nonverbal forms (Rogers &Steinfatt, 1999, in Rogers et al., 2002). This raises the question of why intercultural communication became more closely associated with communication studies than anthropology. Two key factors appear relevant: first, Hall did not actively pursue the formal integration of ethno-communication into anthropology programs, and second, he did not mentor a substantial group of doctoral students in

anthropology. In this sense, Hall became what might be called an "accidental founder" of ethno-communicology, leaving its institutional development largely to others (Rogers, 1994, as cited in Rogers et al., 2002).

Hall continued to explore nonverbal communication, particularly proxemics, during his time at the Illinois Institute of Technology (1963–1967) and Northwestern University (1967–1977), producing several influential works in the field (Hall, 1966, 1976, 1983). Archival documents from the University of Arizona indicate that, while Hall remained deeply involved in research, he did not view himself as responsible for formally establishing ethno-communicology in university departments of anthropology or communication. The presence of Ph.D. students is often crucial for consolidating a new academic discipline; however, Hall had few doctoral students directly following his line of work. Additionally, the FSI, being a non-degree-granting institution, did not provide the kind of student base necessary to create a cohesive research community, even if Hall had intended to do so (Murray, 1994, p. 220, in Rogers et al., 2002). Consequently, the task of extending Hall's work fell to communication scholars in the 1960s and 1970s.

After retiring from full-time teaching in 1977, Hall's opportunity to mentor academic successors effectively ended. Ethno-communicology began to appear formally in communication departments in the late 1960s, through publications such as Alfred Smith's *Communication and Culture* (1966) and through courses offered in communication programs (Hart, 1996). Over the following decades, the field expanded within communication departments, generating a wealth of textbooks and instructional resources. Throughout this growth, Hall's contributions have remained highly influential. His work continues to be widely cited both within and beyond the field. According to the Social Science Citation Index (1972–1998), Hall is the second most-cited author in ethno-communicology, with three of his books among the most referenced (Hart, 1999). Furthermore, a survey of U.S. members of the Society for Intercultural Education identified him as the most influential figure in the discipline (Harman & Briggs, 1991, in Rogers et al., 2002).

Theories of Ethno-Communicology

A theory can be understood as a set of ideas derived from systematic study, designed to explain a particular phenomenon. Baran and Davis (2012) cite John Bowers and John Courtright (1984), who define theories as "sets of statements asserting relationships among classes of variables." Similarly, Charles Berger describes a theory as "a set of interrelated propositions that delineate relationships among theoretical constructs, along with an explanation of the mechanisms that account for the relationships specified in the propositions."

Theories within ethno-communicology are categorised according to differences in their assumptions about human behaviour, research objectives, conceptualisations of culture and communication, and preferred research methodologies (Judith & Nakayama, 2007). Various theoretical approaches have emerged within the field, but this discussion focuses on the social science approach. Also referred to as the functionalist approach, it gained prominence in the 1980s and draws primarily on research in psychology and sociology. The central aim of theories within this approach is to predict how cultural factors influence communication. Researchers adopting this perspective typically employ quantitative methods, such as administering questionnaires or conducting direct observations of subjects (Judith & Nakayama, 2007).

Prominent theories aligned with the social science approach include, but are not limited to, the following:

i. Face Negotiation Theory
ii. Conversational Constraints Theory
iii. Communication Accommodation Theory
iv. Anxiety-Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory

i. Face Negotiation Theory

This theory was developed by Ting-Toomey, who defines 'face' as an individual's sense of favourable self-worth. Across cultures, people

are generally concerned with maintaining face. Ting-Toomey posits that conflict can be understood as a face negotiation process, in which individuals often experience threats or challenges to their face. Through a series of studies, she and her colleagues examined how cultural contexts influence conflict styles and face concerns. For instance, members of individualistic societies, such as the United States, tend to prioritise preserving their own face during conflict and are therefore more likely to employ dominating conflict resolution strategies. Conversely, members of collectivistic cultures, including China, South Korea, and Taiwan, focus on protecting the face of others and typically adopt avoiding, obliging, or integrating approaches to conflict resolution (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991 in Nakayama & Judith, 2012).

ii. Conversational Constraint Theory

Developed by Min-Sun Kim, this theory seeks to explain how and why individuals make particular conversational choices. It identifies five universal conversational constraints:

a. Clarity
b. Minimising imposition
c. Consideration for others' feelings
d. Risk of negative evaluation by the listener
e. Effectiveness

The prioritisation of these constraints varies across cultures. Individuals from individualistic cultures generally emphasise clarity, whereas those from collectivistic cultures place greater importance on minimising imposition and avoiding harm to others' feelings. Concerns such as effectiveness and avoidance are weighted relatively equally across both cultural groups (Nakayama & Judith, 2012).

iii. Communication Accommodation Theory

This theory examines how and when individuals adjust their speech and nonverbal behaviour to align with others during interaction. It posits that accommodation occurs when individuals feel positively towards their interlocutors. People may modify their communication styles, both verbal and nonverbal, to enhance understanding, particularly when differences between them and the other party are minimal. In essence, the theory highlights that "individuals adjust their verbal communication to facilitate understanding" (Nakayama & Judith, 2012).

iv. Anxiety-Uncertainty Management (AUM) Theory

Proposed by William Gudykunst, the AUM theory suggests that reducing anxiety and uncertainty is crucial for successful intercultural communication. It explores whether individuals employ different strategies to manage uncertainty during initial interactions. The theory indicates that strategies vary depending on whether individuals come from individualistic or collectivistic cultures. Optimal levels of anxiety and uncertainty are deemed essential for establishing effective intercultural interaction.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Social Science Theories

Strengths:

These theories have been valuable in identifying variations in communication between cultural groups and in specifying psychological and sociological variables that shape communication processes.

Weaknesses:

1. Human communication is often more creative and less predictable than these models suggest, and reality is not solely external but also internally constructed.
2. Not all variables influencing communication can be identified, making it difficult to predict the success of intercultural interactions.
3. Certain methods within this approach may lack cultural sensitivity, and researchers may be too detached from the communities they study, limiting their understanding of the cultural context.

Barriers to Ethno-Communication

Several factors impede effective ethno-communication, including:

a. Ethnocentrism
b. Stereotyping
c. Prejudice
d. Misinterpretation of nonverbal cues
e. Language differences

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism refers to an extreme sense of ethnic identity, often accompanied by beliefs in cultural or racial superiority. It causes individuals to interpret the world through their own cultural lens, which can hinder their ability to appreciate the contributions of other cultures. The degree of ethnocentrism influences an individual's attitudes and communication style. It can also be understood as judging another culture solely by the standards of one's own (Omohundro, 2008). Recent xenophobic attacks on Nigerians and other African nationals in South Africa illustrate how ethnocentric attitudes can fuel hostility, even among people of similar racial backgrounds. Wrench and McCroskey (2003) have demonstrated a significant link between ethnocentrism and homophobia. Since cultures differ, communication is inevitably shaped by an individual's cultural background (Moon, 1996). However, culture influences rather than determines personal values and behaviour.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes are preconceived attitudes or judgments about others, often formed without direct personal experience but through social interaction or communication. They allow individuals to categorise others, sometimes positively for example, Nigerians are frequently described as highly religious but can also be negative, such as perceptions of widespread corruption in Nigeria. Former British Prime Minister David Cameron once referred to Nigerians as "fantastically corrupt," a sweeping generalisation that caused public offence. Stereotyping can lead to misunderstandings and conflict in ethno-communication. While cultural conflict is unavoidable, conscious efforts to learn about other cultures can help mitigate these issues.

Prejudice

Prejudice involves irrational dislike, hostility, or discrimination against groups based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. Highly prejudiced individuals often exhibit authoritarian tendencies, overgeneralising experiences and resisting changes to their beliefs even when faced with contrary evidence. Prejudice exists across all cultures and can impede effective communication; for instance, hostility towards Black people or negative attitudes toward the LGBTQ+ community continue despite global social progress. Prejudice obstructs communication because individuals may outright reject information that contradicts their preconceptions.

Non-Verbal Misinterpretation

Effective ethno-communication relies on both verbal and non-verbal cues. In international business negotiations, non-verbal behaviour can often convey meaning more effectively than words. However, non-verbal signals vary widely across cultures, and misinterpretation can lead to confusion. Differences in gestures, eye contact, proxemics, and other non-verbal behaviours can create misunderstandings, particularly when non-verbal messages conflict with verbal communication. Misinterpretation of non-verbal signals remains a significant barrier in ethno-communication.

Language

Language is a system of symbols shared by a community to convey meaning and experience (Jandt, 2013). Shared linguistic and cultural backgrounds usually facilitate understanding, but in ethno-communication, differences in language often lead to misinterpretation. Even when the same language is spoken, vocabulary, idioms, and expressions can vary. Sechrest, Fay, and Zaidi (1972) in Dang (2006) identified five translation challenges:

1. **Vocabulary equivalence** – Direct translations may be impossible, leading to misinterpretation.
2. **Idiomatic equivalence** – Idioms often do not translate literally (e.g., "break a leg" in English).
3. **Grammatical equivalence** – Differences in syntax and grammar can alter meaning.
4. **Experiential equivalence** – Certain words exist in one language but not in another; translators must find approximate terms.
5. **Conceptual equivalence** – Even when words can be directly translated, the intended meaning may differ across cultures.

Conclusion

All communication is inherently cultural, encompassing both verbal and non-verbal behaviours shaped by learned cultural patterns. Communication varies depending on context, personality, mood, and cultural influences. Its effectiveness depends on the quality of relationships between communicators. Developing competence in effective communication can help navigate barriers in ethno-communication. A culturally fluent approach requires conscious effort to understand diverse communication styles and apply this knowledge to foster meaningful interactions across cultural differences.

REFERENCES

Allwood, J. (Ed.) (1985). English translation of: "Tvarkulturellkommunikatien" in Tvarkulturellkommunikatien. Papers in *Authopological Linguistics 12*, University of Goteborg, Dept. of Linguistics.

Arasaratnam, L. A. (2016). Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication in J. Nussbaum (Ed.). *Intercultural Competence*, London: Oxford University Press.

Arasaratnam, L. A., & Banerjee, S. C. (2011). Sensation seeking and intercultural communication competence: A model test. *International Journal ofIntercultural Relations, 35*(2), 226-233.

Baran, S.J., & Davis, D. K. (2012).*Mass Communication Theory, Foundation, Ferment and Future.* Canada: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Dang, L. C. (2016). *Intercultural Communication: Differences between Western and Asian perspective.*AThesis presented at department of Business Management in Centria University of Applied Sciences.

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studiesin International Education, 10*(3), 241-266.

Deardorff, D. K. (2009). Implementing intercultural competence assessment. *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence*, 477-491.

Gudykunst, W.B, (2003).Intercultural Communication: Introduction. In W.B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Cross-cultural and intercultural communication*, 163-166. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hofstede, D. (1991). *Cultures and Organizations-Software of the Mind*. Available at: http://home.arcor.de/katrin4u/downloads /Hofstede.pdf. Accessed October 3, 2019

Issa, A., Zara Ali-Garaga, F., &Yunusa, M. (2015).*Explain the Meaning and Theories of Intercultural Communication and How it Promotes Peace among Countries of the World.*From: DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.14026.36806

Judith, N.M., & Thomas, K.N., (2007). *Intercultural Communication in Context.* Boston: McGraw Hills

Moon, D. G. (1996). Concepts of culture: Implications for intercultural communication Research. *Communication Quarterly*, 44(1), 70-84.

Omohundro, J.T (2008). *Thinking like an anthropologist: A practical introduction to cultural*

Anthropology. NewYork*:* McGraw Hill.

Pate, U., &Dauda, S. (2015).Cross-cultural Communication, Peace Education in Nigeria.*The Online Journal of Communication*, 1(1), 11-16.

Rogers, E. M., Hart, W. B., &Miike, Y. (2002). Edward T. Hall and the History of Intercultural Communication: The United States and Japan.*Keio Communication Review No. 24.*

Seema, H. (2010). *Mass Communication: Principles and Concepts*. (2nd Ed.). New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, Pvt, Ltd

Solomon, G.A., Olufemi, S.O., & James, B.O, (2012).*Models and Theories of Communication*. Maryland: African Renaissance Incorporated

Spitzberg, B. H., &Changnon, G. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. *The SAGE handbook ofintercultural competence*, 2-52.

The University of Meilbourne, (2000).Intercultural Communication, *Helpsheet 1*.

Weaver, G.R. (2005). *Culture, communication and conflict*. Intercultural Management Institute.

Wrench, J.S.&McCroskey, J.C. (2003). A communibiological examination of ethnocentrism and Homophobia. *Communication Research Reports*, 20 (1), 24-33