

EXPLORING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN CHINESE PAKISTANI INDIVIDUALS: A RELEVANCE THEORY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

Effective cross-cultural communication promotes understanding and collaboration in today's globalized society. In order to better comprehend the cross-cultural communication dynamics between Chinese and Pakistani people, this study applies the Relevance Theory. The study explores the interpretation of implicit meanings and contextual inferences using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative findings from interviews with quantitative data from surveys and evaluates communication samples. Different communication styles are revealed by qualitative analysis: Pakistani people prefer direct communication, while Chinese people prefer implicit meanings and indirect communication. According to quantitative analysis, the two cultural groups differ in communicating and understanding implicit meanings. The results provide insights for improving intercultural comprehension, cooperation, and a deeper knowledge of cross-cultural communication processes.

Keywords: Cross-cultural communication, Relevance Theory, Chinese, Pakistani, Implicit meanings, Contextual inference

Introduction:

Background Information

Relevance Theory, developed in the 1980s by Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, changed the comprehension of human communication by highlighting the significance of cognitive processes in meaning interpretation. According to the theory, speakers strive to deliver information that is worthwhile for the listener to comprehend cognitively, and communication is motivated by a sense of relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 1986). Classic code communication models concentrate on encoding and decoding signals, contrasting with this cognitive pragmatic approach.

Relevance Theory

Fundamentally, Relevance Theory proposes that people communicate by offering apparent inputs that lead the listener to pertinent conclusions. When the cognitive benefits of the knowledge outweigh the processing load needed to comprehend it, relevance is attained. Human interpretation and communication of implicit meanings—meanings that are not expressed outright but are inferred from context—rely heavily on this delicate balance between cognitive consequences and processing effort (Wilson & Sperber, 2004). The theory introduces two principles of relevance: The communicative Principle states that any act of ostensive Communication interacts with a presumption of its optimal relevance, and the

Cognitive Principle maintains that human cognition is geared towards maximizing relevance (Sperber & Wilson, 2002).

Cross-Cultural Communication

Identifying implicit meanings and contextual inference gets even more difficult when it comes to cross-cultural communication. Diverse cultural backgrounds affect the interpretation of context and what is deemed relevant. High-context cultures, like those found in East Asia, for example, mostly rely on implicit communication and common knowledge, in which a lot is implied rather than stated (Hall, 1976). Low-context cultures, on the other hand, like those in Germany and the United States, place more value on clear communication and plain information (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). The study of relevance and inference is crucial in these situations because cultural variations can cause misunderstandings and misinterpretations in cross-cultural interactions.

The Role of Implicit Meaning and Contextual Inference

Implicit meaning, also known as implicature, is essential to communication. It entails figuring out what is intended as opposed to what is said directly (Grice, 1975). Cultural norms and expectations can have a major impact on one's ability to infer implicit meanings in cross-cultural settings appropriately. Cultural differences are evident in contextual inference, the act of understanding signals based on background information and the surrounding context. Failures in communication might result from misalignments in contextual assumptions. A sentence that is deemed courteous in one culture may be viewed as excessively formal or even offensive in another (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

In today's globalized world, cross-cultural communication must be effective. However, in cross-cultural relationships, it might not be easy to discern implicit meanings and contextual judgments. The purpose of this study is to investigate how Relevance Theory may be used to better understand the communication difficulties that exist among Chinese and Pakistani people.

Through a mixed-methods approach, we will investigate the mechanisms influencing the interpretation of implicit meanings and the drawing of contextual inferences in encounters between these two cultures. We aim to learn more about the ways that people overcome cultural boundaries and the variations in communication styles through both quantitative and qualitative data.

This study advances our knowledge of Relevance theory and offers helpful suggestions for enhancing communication between Chinese and Pakistani people. In the end, we want to encourage greater cross-cultural communication and cooperation in our progressively more globalized world.

Research Questions:

1. What role does Relevance Theory play in explaining how Chinese and Pakistani people receive contextual cues and latent meanings in cross-cultural communication?
2. What are the main distinctions between Pakistani and Chinese communication styles in terms of implicit meaning and contextual inference?
3. In cross-cultural contacts, what tactics do Chinese and Pakistani individuals employ to guarantee that their implicit meanings are understood?

Research Objectives:

1. To look into the application of Relevance Theory in understanding how Chinese and Pakistani people receive implicit significance and contextual inference in cross-cultural communication.
2. To determine and contrast the communication styles of Pakistani and Chinese people, particular attention must be paid to how they employ contextual cues and implicit meanings.
3. To investigate the methods used by Pakistani and Chinese people to convey implicit meanings successfully during cross-cultural interactions.

Literature Review:

Relevance Theory and Pragmatics

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's Relevance theory is a cornerstone of pragmatic linguistics. Sperber and Wilson (1986) imply that communication depends on the listener's inferential processes, which are influenced by the anticipation of relevance. Later works have built upon this notion, most notably "*Relevance: Communication and Cognition*" (2004), in which Sperber and Wilson address the principles of cognition and communication that control information processing.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Edward Hall's "Beyond Culture" (1976) defines high-context and low-context cultures, which is essential reading for anybody interested in cross-cultural communication. Low-context cultures, like those in the United States, rely primarily on explicit verbal communication. In contrast, high-context cultures, like those in East Asia, especially China, express most of their meaning indirectly through context and non-verbal indicators. Given that cultural expectations of relevance and inferential procedures differ, these distinctions are essential when using Relevance Theory in cross-cultural contexts.

These concepts are furthered by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey's "Culture and Interpersonal Communication" (1988), which looks at how cultural factors affect communication methods. Their argument, which is consistent with Relevant emphasis on context and inferential reasoning in interpreting implicit meanings, is that misinterpretations frequently occur in cross-cultural communication as a result of different cultural norms and expectations.

Chinese Research Relevance Theory

Chinese academics have greatly advanced relevance theory, especially when considering it within the framework of Chinese culture. Their studies frequently concentrate on the distinctive features of Chinese communication styles and the use of Relevance theory in this context.

Implicit Communication in Chinese Culture

In "Communicating Effectively with the Chinese," Gao and Ting-Toomey (1998) address the high-context character of Chinese communication. They emphasize how crucial contextual inference and implicit meaning are in Chinese interactions. This is consistent with the tenets of relevance theory since Chinese communicators frequently rely on context and common knowledge to convey meaning, which makes the expectation of relevance critical to interpretation.

Relevance Theory and Chinese Linguistics

The use of Relevance Theory in Chinese linguistics is examined by Wang (2001) in his paper "Relevance Theory and Chinese Pragmatics." Wang contends that a sophisticated

comprehension of relevance is necessary due to the high context of Chinese culture, where implicit meanings significantly rely on context. He talks about the indirectness and politeness methods used by Chinese speakers, which are described by the cognitive principles of Relevance Theory.

Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

In "Foundations of Intercultural Communication," Chen and Starosta(1998) explore the pragmatics of cross-cultural interactions between Chinese and Western societies. They note that Chinese speakers frequently anticipate higher degrees of contextual knowledge from their interlocutors and point out disparities in the use of implicit conversation and contextual inference. This expectation is consistent with the theory of relevance, which holds that the expectation of optimal relevance directs communication.

Cultural Specificity in Relevance Theory

In "Relevance Theory and Cultural Specificity: A Chinese Perspective," Liu (2010) addresses relevance theory's cultural specificity. Liu contends that although the cognitive concepts of applicability are universal, particular cultural norms and practices in China affect how they are used. Liu underlines how crucial it is to comprehend these cultural quirks and use the Relevance Theory in Chinese situations.

Relevance and Interpersonal Communication

In "Interpersonal Communication and Relevance: A Chinese Approach," Zhang (2013) examines how relevance expectations influence interpersonal communication in China. Zhang demonstrates how face-saving and harmony are given priority by Chinese communicators, which affects how inferential processes occur in communication. This study lends credence to the notion that cultural contexts greatly influence how Relevance Theory is used.

Identifying the Research Gap:

Relevance Theory and its application in Chinese contexts have been the subject of extensive research. However, comprehensive studies that incorporate these findings into a more comprehensive cross-cultural framework are still conspicuously lacking. Without thoroughly examining the implications of Relevance Theory in cross-cultural contexts, the majority of the material currently in publication concentrates on characterizing cultural differences or particular facets of Chinese communication. Moreover, although Wang (2001) and Liu (2010) have conducted studies on cultural specificity, a thorough examination of how these cultural subtleties influence implicit meaning and contextual inference in cross-cultural communication is lacking.

This study seeks to close this gap by using Relevance Theory to analyze cross-cultural communication and investigate how implicit meanings and contextual inferences are handled in various cultural contexts, particularly in Chinese contexts. This aims to deepen our comprehension of communication's cognitive and cultural aspects. It offers useful advice for fostering better cross-cultural relationships in various contexts, such as international business, diplomacy, and cross-cultural teamwork.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

This study examines the implementation of Relevance Theory in cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Pakistani people using a mixed-methods research design that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies. By combining numerical

data with in-depth, contextual insights, the mixed-methods methodology enables thorough research. This is especially useful for analyzing the subtle differences in the management of implicit meanings and situational inferences between these two cultural contexts.

Data Collection:

Interviews

Participants who are Chinese and Pakistani will be interviewed in depth using a semi-structured interview technique to provide qualitative insights into their communication styles and implicit meaning interpretations. These interviews will also examine participants' experiences with cross-cultural communication to better understand how they deduce meaning and context from interactions.

Surveys

The survey aims to gather quantitative information about the participants' communication preferences, implicit communication experience, and context-specific meaning inference skills. The survey will incorporate Likert-scale questions to gauge how frequently and easily people engage in implicit communication and comprehend it.

Communication Samples

Evaluate examples of real-world communication from Pakistani and Chinese contexts. This project will use online forums, social media interactions, corporate emails, and informal encounters as samples. The aim is to examine how implicit meanings are expressed and understood in naturally occurring language.

Participants

Purposive sampling will be used in the participant selection to guarantee a diverse representation of both cultural backgrounds. The research will encompass:

- **Chinese Participants:** Individuals from mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.
- **Pakistani Participants:** Individuals from various regions of Pakistan, including urban and rural areas.

Social media outlets, international organizations, and institutions will all be used to attract participants. Demographic data such as age, gender, education level, and occupation will be documented to guarantee a diverse and representative sample.

Analytical Framework:

Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis will examine the qualitative data obtained from interviews and communication samples. In order to do this, the data must be coded for themes about contextual inference and implicit meaning. The actions consist of:

Familiarization: To get acquainted with the data, transcribe interviews, and review sample communications.

Coding: Creating preliminary codes for the data's important features.

Theme Development: Developing a theme involves grouping codes into prospective themes and examining these themes to ensure they appropriately depict the data.

Defining Themes: To produce a compelling story that responds to the research questions, themes should be refined and given names.

Reporting: Summarize the results and provide quotes and data samples to support them.

Quantitative Analysis

Statistical techniques will be applied to the analysis of the quantitative survey data. The data will be summarized using descriptive statistics and significant variations in the communication practices' comprehension of implicit implications between Chinese and Pakistani respondents.

It will be identified using inferential statistics (t-tests and ANOVA, for example). The actions consist of:

Data Entry: Survey results are entered into a statistical software application called data entry.

Descriptive Statistics: Using means, medians, modes, and standard deviations to summarize the data is known as descriptive statistics.

Inferential statistics: Inferential statistics involves using ANOVA and t-tests to compare groups and find statistically significant differences.

Correlation analysis: Analyzing how one variable relates to another, such as cultural background or the ease with which implicit communication can be understood.

The study attempts to provide a thorough knowledge of how Relevance Theory might explain the interpretation of implicit meanings and contextual inferences in cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Pakistani persons by integrating these qualitative and quantitative methodologies. With the help of this methodology, the research is certain to capture both the richness of personal experiences and the more general trends present in various cultural contexts.

Data Analysis:

This study investigates how Relevance Theory might better understand cross-cultural communication between Pakistani and Chinese people. Using a mixed-methods approach, it combines quantitative data from surveys with an evaluation of communication samples and qualitative insights from interviews.

Qualitative Insights from Interviews

According to the interviews, the Chinese and Pakistani individuals' communication styles differed significantly. Chinese people use implicit meanings, contextual signals, and indirect communication techniques. Conversely, individuals from Pakistan have shown a preference for straightforward communication, utilizing clear and precise linguistic phrases to communicate their goals.

Communication Style Chinese Participants Pakistani Participants

- Direct vs. Indirect Direct
- Reliance on Context High Moderate
- Use of Implicit Meanings Common Less common

Strategies for Clarity: Subtle cues, shared cultural norms, Clear and concise language.

Quantitative Insights from Surveys

Quantitative information about the participants' preferences for communication and implicit communication familiarity was obtained from the surveys. Compared to Pakistani individuals,

Chinese

Participants reported using implicit communication more frequently. Furthermore, those who were Chinese said that they were more comfortable deciphering implicit meanings in a variety of settings.

Survey Responses Chinese Participants (%) Pakistani Participants (%)

Frequency of Implicit Communication 75 45

Ease of Interpreting Implicit Meanings 80 60

Analysis of Communication Samples

Additional evidence for the qualitative conclusions came from a study of conversation data from both cultural backgrounds. Pakistani communication data tended to be more straightforward and explicit, whereas Chinese communication samples showed more subtle language and hidden meanings.

The mixed-methods approach offered a thorough grasp of the processes at work in intercultural interaction between Chinese and Pakistani people. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data made a detailed examination of communication preferences, tactics, and styles possible.

Conclusion:

To sum up, this study provides insightful information about the dynamics of cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Pakistani people. Using a mixed-methods methodology and relevance theory, the study reveals important distinctions in the communication preferences and styles of the two cultures. Subsequent investigations may examine supplementary cultural combinations and investigate the cultural elements impacting communication dynamics. Furthermore, interventions to improve cultural sensitivity and understanding may make cross-cultural communication in various contexts more successful.

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Appendix: Interview Questions

1. Background Information:

- What is your background (age, education, profession, etc.)?
- How often do you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds (specifically Chinese/Pakistani)?

2. Communication Practices:

- How would you describe your general communication style? (Direct/indirect, formal/informal, etc.)
- Can you provide an example of a typical conversation in your culture that involves implicit meanings?

3. Cross-Cultural Communication Experiences:

- Can you recall an instance where you had to communicate with someone from China/Pakistan? How did it go?
- Did you face any difficulties in understanding or being understood? Can you explain what happened?

4. Implicit Meaning and Contextual Inference:

- How do you usually infer meaning in conversations when something is not explicitly stated?
- Can you share an experience where you had to rely on contextual clues to understand what was being communicated?

5. Cultural Differences:

- What key differences have you noticed between Chinese and Pakistani communication styles?
- How do these differences affect your understanding of implicit meanings in cross-cultural interactions?

6. Expectations and Adaptations:

- How do you adjust your communication style when interacting with someone from a different culture?
- What strategies do you use to ensure that people from different cultural backgrounds understand your implicit meanings?

7. Relevance and Interpretation:

- How do you determine relevant information when communicating with someone from China/Pakistan?
- Can you explain how you successfully interpreted an implicit meaning in a cross-cultural conversation?

8. General Reflections:

- What do you think are the biggest challenges in cross-cultural communication?
- How could understanding Relevance Theory help improve cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Pakistani individuals?