Check for updates

Workers' Perceptions Regarding Approaches To Intercultural Communication In The Workplace: A Study In A South African University

Maria Mushaathoni[1] iD

Corresponding Author:
Maria Mushaathoni
Department of Integrated Communication, Tshwane University of Technology, SA.
Email: mushaathonim1@tut.ac.za

Abstract: The workforce in South Africa has seen significant transformation, with many organizations now collaborating with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Cultural diversity influences behavior and interactions among employees, who may find it challenging to navigate communication with colleagues from different cultures. This article explores workers' perceptions of intercultural communication approaches in the workplace. Using a qualitative case study design, the study involved ten professionals from various departments at a South African university. The findings reveal a lack of a comprehensive plan for conscious intercultural communication at the university. Employees noted the absence of strategic communication guidance and inconsistent management of intercultural communication across the institution. The study suggests formalizing management intentions into a policy or framework to standardize intercultural communication practices university-wide. The research aims to guide the university towards a formal, coordinated, and unified intercultural communication strategy. Complementary findings from various sources contribute to comprehensive conclusions for developing this strategy, intended to enhance intercultural communication effectiveness.

1. Introduction

The impact of cultural diversity, among other factors, becomes evident in the way employees communicate with each other as they struggle to identify how to relate to colleagues who are different from them (Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum, Amos, Klopper, Louw, & Oosthuizen, 2005; Smit, Cronje, Brevis, & Vrba, 2011). It is essential for managers of organizations to acknowledge that their workforce is made up of culturally diverse groups and that the cultures of employees have an impact on communication; different cultural backgrounds, experiences, and perceptions affect behavior, and their impact is evident in the way individuals interact and communicate with each other (Penceliah, 2008:335; Nyathi-Saleshando, 2011:162).

Therefore, differences in cultures can lead to misunderstandings and consequently ineffective communication. According to Roy, Samovar, McDaniel, and Porter (2016), misunderstandings occur in cross-cultural communication simply because people have different perceptions and interpretations of the same information. Green, Fairchild, Knudsen, and Lease-Gubrud (2018) further explain that perceptions drive communication decisions, and understanding this process helps us avoid common perceptual communication problems. Roy, Samovar, McDaniel, and Porter (2016) also argue that individual perceptions and cross-cultural communication are crucially shaped by culture, particularly by culturally ingrained and infused beliefs, values, media, worldviews, and language.

Considering that intercultural communication involves participants from different cultural backgrounds, each participant involved in the communication exchange needs to cooperate if the communication is to be effective (Penceliah, 2008:335; Sadri & Flammia, 2011:80). Therefore, the importance of effective intercultural communication within organizations should not be undermined, as it plays a vital role in the functioning of the organization and affects its final output. Without effective communication, culturally diverse organizations can fail to function effectively (Sadri & Flammia, 2011). In view of the understanding that employees use the communication process to carry out their tasks, organizations should create an environment in which plans, work instructions, issues, opinions, thoughts, and ideas related to work are discussed through effective communication (Hellriegel et al., 2005:313; Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). It is with this view that an effective intercultural communication approach is important if everyone involved is to understand what goals and desired outcomes are and can work towards the successful execution of plans and tasks.

For organizations to respond to the challenges of intercultural communication, they must recognize the communication difficulties and needs of employees. Previous

---

[1] Department of Integrated Communication, Tshwane University of Technology, SA. Email: mushaathonim1@tut.ac.za

research reveals that organizations that manage intercultural communication benefit from such an approach. Recognition and appreciation of cultural differences are the starting point for working toward managing and improving communication effectiveness. This view is supported by Gudykunst (2005:211) and Sadri and Flammia (2011:80), who argue that managing intercultural communication, including understanding that cultural diversity has a communicative purpose, helps culturally diverse organizations to improve intercultural communication competence, which is a requirement for employees from various cultural backgrounds to work together to achieve a common purpose.

In the university where the current study was conducted, the current approach to intercultural communication issues is not conducive to the management of intercultural communication in a uniform, focused, and coordinated way, including a common improvement of intercultural communication competence. A preliminary review of the university's strategic and policy documents revealed that the university seems to lack a uniform approach to improving intercultural communication, which is necessary for its employees to clearly understand the institutional strategic goals and desired results so that they can work to achieve them. The author of this article believes that effective intercultural communication facilitates the achievement of predetermined goals and desired outcomes. Therefore, the perceived absence of a common approach to intercultural communication issues at the university where the study was conducted is considered less than an ideal practice for effective intercultural communication and is unlikely to help the university strategically and continuously improve the competence in intercultural communication of its culturally diverse employees. The perceived gap pertaining to the university's current approach to intercultural communication issues suggests that a different approach is taken, which has the potential to improve intercultural communication management so that employees from various cultural backgrounds could improve their intercultural communication competence and ultimately help the university achieve success.

The results of the current study are expected to provide information on the perceptions of workers at the university where the study was conducted regarding the University's approaches to intercultural communication. Additionally, the results of the study are likely to close the perceived deficiencies related to the current approach of the university to issues of intercultural communication. The author of this article believes that one way to address identified intercultural communication deficiencies is in a way that is suited to the culturally diverse and unique nature of the university. To achieve this, a formalized, strategic, and continuous intercultural communication enhancement approach is required. Having information on workers' perceptions about approaches to intercultural communication on the job is likely to provide useful information that could help managers properly manage and improve the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Consequently, the paper sought to find answers to the following research question.

What are workers' perceptions of current approaches to intercultural communication?

2. Literature Review

It is imperative that university decision-makers have a sense of the dynamics of culture and its impact on communication so that they ensure appropriate measures are in place to manage and improve intercultural communication effectiveness. It is important to indicate that each generation passes its culture on to the next, and a particular culture is continually reinforced when people see symbols, hear stories, and engage in rituals. In the context of organizations, culture influences how employees think and act, and most significantly how they interact in communication encounters. Given the impact culture has on communication, it becomes imperative that organizations recognize that culture teaches significant rules, rituals, and procedures essential for interaction between employees. Many studies have been conducted that sought to investigate the impact of culture on communication. This section has four related purposes. First, it will analyze internal communication, that is, communication that takes place within an organization. Second, it contextualizes intercultural communication with the aim of providing a link between internal communication and intercultural communication. Third, it exposes the impact of culture on the communication process. Fourth, it explores the models of cultural adaptation to gain an understanding of how individuals navigate through the adaptation journey from an intercultural communication perspective.

2.1. Internal communication in organizations

Given the understanding that, in organizations, intercultural communication occurs in the context of internal communication, the discussion in this subsection begins with a review of what internal communication entails. Internal communication is considered a group of processes responsible for information flow and collaboration among participants involved in the communication process. The fundamental significance of internal communication is the effective downward, upward, horizontal, or diagonal transfer and receipt of information between employees or functional parts of an organization, and its goal and desired outcome is a common understanding of information by all who participate in the communication process (Emuze & James, 2013; Mushaathoni, 2023).

Concerning the levels at which internal communication takes place, Mumby and Stohl (2013:503–504) assert that it occurs at all levels of operation. Although basic communication skills are necessary for effective internal communication to occur, when communicating, regardless of the level at which communication is taking place, it is significant that all people participating in the process have the ability to receive, interpret, and understand information, and to obtain or provide feedback (Stanton, 2009:4; Putnam, L. L., & Mumby, D. K. (2013).

In addition to providing clear directions and a common understanding of information, it is argued that an important aspect of organizational members' job performance is the extent to which employees find internal communication satisfactory (Decramer, Smoulders & Vanderstraeten, 2013; Van Staden, 2013; Van Staden, Marx & Erasmus-Kritzinger, 2007:13). Satisfaction with internal communication is argued to be related to higher scores of engagement and commitment of organization members (Taylor & Elsey, 2005; Sudhakar & Patil, 2006; Sopow, 2007; Carriere & Bourque, 2009). Furthermore, it is maintained that internal communication satisfaction gives organizational members a feeling of greater responsibility, which subsequently leads to improved performance that has the potential to contribute positively to the successful functioning of organizations (White, Vanc & Stafford, 2011).

Scholars, such as Parker (2005) and Munshi (2014), argue that effective internal communication plays an important role in the successful running of organizations and is a prerequisite for organizational success. Organizational success is measured by analyzing where the organization stands regarding its strategic goals and objectives. More importantly, effective internal communication is essential if employees are to work toward the achievement of a common vision and purpose. The assertions in this paragraph call for the university where the study was conducted to ground its internal communication practices in its strategic orientations (Deetz, 2001:5; Smit et al., 2011:309; Ruch & Welch, 2012:294–302).

It is important to note, with respect to the above assertions, that effective internal communication and the successful functioning of organizations are mutually reinforcing. In other words, effective internal communication helps improve the likelihood that organizations will work successfully. In its pursuit of success, the university where the study was conducted should, therefore, not underestimate the importance of internal communication, as it plays an important role in its functioning, improving employee performance, and achieving its strategic goals and objectives. To effectively communicate with university employees, the information should flow in such a way that it provides clear direction and is commonly understood by all employees. These fundamentals demonstrate that strategic and continuous enhancement of internal communication is imperative for the university to improve effective communication and ultimately achieve success.

It is essential to mention that the university where the study was conducted uses various channels of communication to ensure that the flow of information occurs across all levels of operation, namely, strategic, tactical, and operational levels. As technology is increasingly integrated into organizations, channels of communication continue to expand. In view of the increase in the use of technology, in addition to paper-based communication channels, the university, like other organizations, increasingly relies on electronic methods of communication to share information necessary for making important decisions. Embedding the use of technology in the flow of information, Bennett and Giles (2013: 321) argue that electronic communication also fits the definition of internal communication, as this mode is also used in the processes responsible for information flow and collaboration among participants within organizations.

Notwithstanding the use of different channels of communication, it is important that the manner of internal communication facilitates a common understanding of information. Regardless of type, the primary purpose of internal communication is mutual creation of meaning. For this to be achieved, coordination is necessary for the primary purpose of ensuring that all internal communication actions are performed to achieve a common purpose. Intercultural communication is defined in the following to determine its link with internal communication.

2.2. Intercultural communication defined

This subsection contextualizes intercultural communication, aiming to determine where intercultural communication fits within the internal communication framework. This will be achieved through providing definitions of intercultural communication as a form of internal communication. Defining intercultural communication is necessary because it will guide the understanding of the primary purpose of intercultural communication. This will assist the author in formulating an operational definition relevant to the purpose of this study. The definitions provided in the following are from an internal communication perspective.

From an essential foundation, Allwood (2008:3) defines intercultural communication as the sharing of information between people from different cultural backgrounds. These differences may be national cultural differences and differences related to participation in the various activities that take place in organizations. Hall (2017:38) maintains that intercultural communication is a matter of negotiation, respect, and understanding. He emphasizes that by asking questions and talking about differences, we can mutually find a solution and accept the way the other person does certain things, or we could find a compromise for communication.

Approaching intercultural communication from the performance improvement and productivity frame of reference, Schneider and Barsoux (2003:104) define it as the processing of information using a common language in order to make decisions and communicate policies and procedures aimed at achieving organizational success; thereby emphasizing a need to recognize intercultural communication as a performance improvement driver. Schneider and Barsoux (2003) also highlight the use of a common language as a characteristic necessary for individuals in organizations to work to improve productivity. The definition in this paragraph describes intercultural communication from an internal communication orientation. The point of emphasis in this instance is performance improvement and productivity and the achievement of organizational success as the primary purpose of intercultural communication in an organizational setting.

Defining intercultural communication from a cultural point of view, Guirdham (2005) asserts that intercultural communication can be deeply conditioned by the degree of understanding of visual semiotics as a cultural code. Guirdham (2005) underscores that intercultural communication is the ability to understand dissimilar ways and patterns of communication, for instance, norms, beliefs, and values. The definition is consistent with the author's belief that culture plays an important role in shaping and informing intercultural communication.

The definitions provided above emphasize the impact culture, in an organizational setting, has on communication between culturally diverse individuals. In this instance, the emphasis is that intercultural communication practices in organizational settings should be aligned with the cultural dimensions that are dominant in a particular organization and the immediate external environment in which the concerned organization exists. Therefore, the university where the study was conducted should align its efforts to improve and manage intercultural communication with the cultural dimensions that are applicable to it and the environment in which it operates.

Regardless of differences in emphasis regarding primary characteristics of intercultural communication, it is evident from the definitions that intercultural communication refers to communication that takes place between individuals from different cultural backgrounds and that, in the contexts of organizations, it occurs in the form of internal communication. This inference signifies or provides a link between internal communication and intercultural communication and places intercultural communication within the internal communication framework. Considering the culturally diverse nature of organizations today, it can, therefore, be argued that the form of internal communication that occurs in many, if not all, organizations of the magnitude of the university where the study was conducted appears to have a conspicuous intercultural communication dynamic.

Intrinsically, all settings in which there is more than one individual are characterized by intercultural communication. All definitions provided above describe intercultural communication from a culture and communication correlation point of reference, supporting the assertion that culture and communication are mutually reinforcing. The understanding that communication in organizations is unavoidable and that organizations mainly comprise employees from diverse cultural backgrounds is presumed to be the reason why these authors approach their intercultural communication definitions from the point of reference of the influence culture and communication have on each other. Considering the correlation between culture and communication, the sub-section below proceeds to explain the impact of culture on the communication process.

2.3. The Impact of Culture on the Communication Process

Culture, as a whole, consists of a set of beliefs, values, attitudes, and patterns of behavior shared by members of a social unit. In the context of internal communication, it is assumed that each culture encourages a particular communication style, has the power to shape perception, and is regarded as the glue that bonds organization members together (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:48; Samovar & Porter, 2007:24; Holmes, 1997; Morse, 2008:4). As propounded, culture has an impact on behavior and communication. Consequently, culture and communication are inseparable, as culture is the foundation of communication. When different cultures are involved, communication practices vary. It is indispensable for individuals to understand cultural differences, as culture tells us how to interpret the behavior of others, including how to communicate effectively with individuals from other cultural backgrounds (Jandt, 2004:29; Kiss, 2008:44; Schmitz, 2012).

It is important to mention that there are different levels of culture, namely, (1) national culture, the set of norms, behaviors, beliefs, and customs that exist among the population of a sovereign nation; (2) business culture, which represents the working style, accepted norms, values, and beliefs of the sector within which an organization operates; (3) organizational culture, which is a system of shared assumptions, values, and beliefs, which govern how individuals behave in organizations; and (4) occupational culture, which encompasses associated values, norms, and characteristics of members of a particular occupational group (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:48; Westaby, Fowler, & Philips, 2020). Whatever cultural environment surrounds them, people help shape and form their attitudes, behavior, and readiness to respond to intercultural encounters (see Samovar & Porter, 2007:57).

The university where the study was conducted, for example, is characterized by shared assumptions, working styles, beliefs, values, norms, and characteristics that can be understood as the foundation upon which its intercultural communication practices should be based. Essentially, for intercultural communication to be appropriately managed and improved, all university employees must be sensitive to the assumptions, working styles, beliefs, values, norms, and characteristics that are likely to influence the university communication approach. Therefore, understanding the deeper meaning of culture is necessary when employees transition from one cultural environment and style of communication to the other (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:111; Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Orgad (2006:896) argues that cultural elements reflect the image of the community of itself as a social structure, and they inherently influence intercultural communication in culturally diverse settings (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47; Abdullahi & Zainol, 2016).

For diverse organizations to properly manage and improve intercultural communication effectiveness, it is essential that employees recognize the elements that exist in a specific culture so that they understand what dominant principles, values, norms, and characteristics are embedded in the way communication occurs in particular social settings. Although there may be more similarities than differences in cultural elements among employees of an organization, and despite the many common attributes employees share, there are still cultural

differences. It is important to mention that cultural differences also exist within a single race, language group, religious group, or nationality. As an illustration, people are also differentiated by age, sex, socioeconomic status, education, and exposure to other cultures. Furthermore, (1) cultures have internal variations, and cultural awareness varies among individuals; (2) one's own sense of cultural identity is not always evident until you encounter another culture; (3) cultures continuously evolve; and (4) understanding another culture is a continuous process (Surbone, 2007:238; Samovar & Porter, 2007).

These are the cultural dynamics that managers of diverse organizations should consider in their pursuit of improving intercultural communication encounters to achieve success. Some of the cultural elements that shape the way employees in organizations similar to the university where the study was conducted communicate across cultures are briefly elucidated in the following.

Norms help to inform people about behavior that is considered acceptable, as an illustration, about what we can and cannot do. Consequently, cultural norms prescribe how to respond to and greet other people, what clothes we can or cannot wear at our places of work, and when and whom we may marry (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47). Values are beliefs that guide attitudes; they tell us what is good, what is beautiful, and what are legitimate goals for life (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47–48). Understanding values helps individuals in culturally diverse organizations express their feelings and emotions and tells them how to behave (Hall, 2017:21; Lang Wang, 2018:78). Cullen and Parboteeah (2008:47–48) explain that beliefs represent our understanding of what is true. Some cultures may have the belief that God can reveal facts, while others have the belief that research must be carried out to reveal the truth (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47–48). Cultural symbols, among others, express or represent the beliefs, identities, attributes, values, ideals, and signs of people. On the job, the size and location of the office can serve as cultural symbols (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47–48; Udechukwu, 2019). Stories are, for example, rhymes and traditional legends (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47–48; Blinne, 2012:217). Rituals communicate the norms, values, and beliefs of a society or a group of people, or, in the context of this, an organization or a group of employees (Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:47–48; Abdullahi & Zainol, 2016).

Cullen and Parboteeah (2008:48) acknowledge that culture is pervasive; societies develop pervasive cultural norms, values, and beliefs to assist their members in adapting to their environments, and communication is no exception. Understanding culture as a pervasive phenomenon implies that the way people think, feel, and act is influenced by culture. Prejudice is an irrational suspicion or hatred of a particular group, race, religion, or sexual orientation (Jandt, 2013:85; Fasset, 2013). Hall (2017:204) articulates that prejudice is an attitude, which suggests that it exists within a person, and it is expressed in a variety of ways, often without people even realizing or admitting to themselves that they are expressing prejudice. Therefore, prejudice can be problematic during communication encounters. In essence, dominant race and culture groups could develop prejudicial tendencies toward other races and culture groups to suit their needs and want, thereby promoting or prioritizing their culture over other cultures. To enhance intercultural communication, culturally diverse organizations must eliminate prejudicial tendencies. Stereotypes are related to judgments that are made about one another solely on the basis of ethnicity or other group membership. Seemingly, stereotypes are based on categorizing and the human desire to make sense of the world. Although we may think of stereotypes as negative judgments, they can also be positive (Holmes, 1997:280; Cullen & Parboteeah, 2008:49; Jandt, 2017:397; Fasset, 2013).

Abdullahi and Zainol (2016) and Cullen and Parboteeah (2008:49) reflect that ethnocentrism also plays an important role in intercultural communication. Ethnocentrism is defined as a tendency to think that your own culture is superior. Accordingly, ethnocentrism involves negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own culture; This can prevent groups from acquiring new and productive knowledge that could be gained from other cultural groups. Interestingly, some people may regard other cultures as inferior to their own cultures. Moreover, feelings and expressions of ethnocentrism that protect a position of superiority increase competition, fear, and hate; all of which can lead to various types of damaging conflict in interactions or conversations. Ethnocentrism has sometimes been associated with positive social outcomes. These include cultural aspects such as a strong social identity, which can increase self-esteem, group loyalty, and group survival, and can reduce internal problems in a group. In essence, regardless of whether the outcome of how you think about your own culture is negative or positive, the groups to which we belong, and the way members of cultural groups do things are part of cultural knowledge, and it helps us to understand the world in which we live and communicate. Building an effective communication system requires culturally diverse organizations to be aware of the way people positively or negatively judge certain aspects, and this should be managed to ensure that a conducive platform for effective intercultural communication is established (see Jandt, 2013:83; Martin & Nakayama, 2013:5; Hall, 2017:199).

The discussion in this subsection explains that culture plays an important role in shaping communication interactions. Expressly, culture is fundamental to and pivotal in communication encounters, considering that we speak and interpret communication encounters in ways our culture has influenced us. Of central importance is that cultural elements determine how we experience and interact with the world in general, and colleagues in particular; hence, people often think and act in substantially different ways during different activities, and communication is no exception (see Allwood, 2008, 2021; Neuliep, 2015:57; Harvey & Allard, 2014:108). Going through the process of learning and respecting the cultural elements that are at play during internal communication instills certainty of conviction, which is essential for creating a psychological state of readiness for employees to react to the objects

and events confronting them in organizations that are culturally diverse in nature. For this reason, employees of different cultural backgrounds should understand the cultural elements that are relevant in the context of their own organizations; this understanding can help them improve their intercultural communication competence. During intercultural communication, culture acts as a filter through which all intercultural communication interactions must pass (Gudykunst, 2005; Neuliep, 2012); hence, the need for knowledge of cultural elements that are used during communication encounters in organizational settings (Hall, 2017:22).

Regarding cultural elements specific to the university as an organization, it is paramount for employees to know what influences the manner in which communication occurs within the university (see Surbone, 2007:238; Frank, 2013:2). Given that communication practices are largely created and shaped by culture, the level of culture and the applicable cultural elements must be understood and acknowledged by all within an organization. The author believes that this understanding and acknowledgment could help bring cultural sensitivity and competence that can contribute to the ability to communicate effectively. The essence is that employees and managers within a culturally diverse organization, like the university where the study was conducted, should understand and acknowledge different cultural and individual preferences and styles and realize how the imperatives of cultural elements influence intercultural communication in organizations. Understanding and acknowledging cultural elements necessary to inform organizational culture is essential for a culturally diverse organization to formulate communication strategies and styles informed by the cultural imperatives applicable to the social setting within which it operates, specifically, a system of shared assumptions, values, norms, and characteristics, which govern how individuals behave and communicate.

2.4. Models of Cultural Adaptation

This section will discuss models of cultural adaptation, namely, the Anxiety Uncertainty Management Model (AUMM), which explains that, for successful intercultural communication to occur, anxiety and uncertainty must be reduced, the U-Curve Model (UCM), which depicts that the cultural adaptation process goes through different adaptation stages, and the Transitional Model (TM), which proposes that transitional shock is the initial reaction to an experience individuals have when they move into a new cultural environment.

More specifically, cultural adaptation models are concerned with demonstrating how individuals achieve or fail to achieve adaptation during intercultural interactions, including how individuals' previous intercultural experiences help or hinder the adaptive efforts of individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst, 2005:125; Beerkens, Le Pichon-Vorstman, Supheert & Thije, 2020). Models of cultural adaptation assume that initial communication improvement initiatives should aim at minimizing hindrances to effective intercultural communication. By way of summary, Figure 1 represents the three models of cultural adaptation that will be expounded and contextualized in this section.
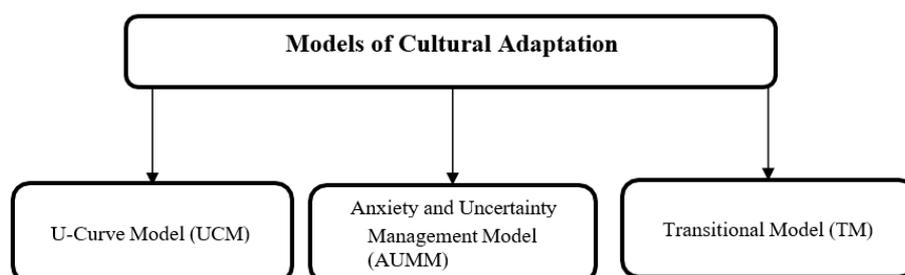

Figure 1: Models of cultural adaptation

Below, each of the three models of cultural adaptation summarised in Figure 1 will be elucidated.

2.5. Anxiety and Uncertainty Management Model

According to Gudykunst (2005:125), the AUMM is based on the supposition that at least one of the individuals in an intercultural encounter is a stranger. Strangers experience anxiety and uncertainty, as they feel insecure and are not sure how to behave when they interact with individuals from cultures different from theirs. Neuliep (2015) argues that interacting with a stranger from a different culture typically involves more uncertainty and anxiety than interacting with a stranger from a culture similar to your own. The central assumption is that the primary concern of strangers upon initial interaction is to reduce uncertainty. In view of the understanding that uncertainty has a positive effect on anxiety, it is presumed that reducing uncertainty will help to make individuals less anxious. The AUMM highlights that when individuals find themselves in new cultural environments, their primary goal is to reduce uncertainty and increase the predictability of their own and the other person's behavior. Therefore, what constitutes uncertainty depends on what people want to be able to predict and what they might be able to do about it (Neuliep, 2015). According to Martin and Nakayama (2004: 278-279), there are two kinds of uncertainty, namely predictive uncertainty and explanatory uncertainty. Predictive uncertainty is the ability to predict what someone will say or do, as it is important to be relatively sure how people respond to us. Explanatory uncertainty is the inability to explain why people behave as they do. For Martin and Nakayama (2004:279), predictive uncertainty and explanatory uncertainty may vary according to the cultural context of an organization.

Neuliep (2015) asserts that, regardless of its form, uncertainty makes people anxious (as pointed out in the paragraph above). When one is anxious because of not knowing how to react to experiences in a new cultural environment, it is only natural to focus on that feeling and not be present in the intercultural adaptation process. Gudykunst (2005) mentions that, during initial intercultural encounters, what one knows about an individual from a different cultural background triggers how one feels about the other person; uncertainty triggers anxiety, and hence, there is a link between the two behavioral aspects. The AUMM, therefore, holds that anxiety and uncertainty are two behavioral manifestations during intercultural adaptation and that managing the two behavioral aspects is necessary and sufficient for effective intercultural adaptation (Hammer, Wiseman, Rasmussen & Bruschke, 1998:312; Stephan, Stephan, & Gudykunst, 1999). Regarding intercultural communication, the AUMM relates to the cognitive and affective perspectives from which the transformation process of employees to competent intercultural communicators occurs, as argued by Kim (2006).

Cognitive information about different cultures and the ability to understand, respect, and appreciate cultural differences reduce uncertainty and help employees be less anxious, which is necessary and essential for them to adapt during intercultural communication encounters. The implication of this disclosure is that the assumptions of AUMM are therefore also applicable to the way individuals respond to their experiences of intercultural communication, including how to manage adaptation so that the adjustment of intercultural communication is a smooth process (Stephan et al., 1999; Gudykunst, 2005; Samochowiec & Florack, 2010). To this end, the AUMM places specific emphasis on the early management of anxiety and uncertainty experienced by employees and advances that effective communication is less likely when employees who are new to an organization engage in communication encounters unless the integration process starts early. As is evident, for effective communication to be achieved, anxiety and uncertainty should be reduced in the initial stages of intercultural interaction. Suggestions to minimize anxiety and uncertainty in the starting stages of intercultural interaction encounters are based on the idea that the anxiety and uncertainty individuals experience in new cultural environments are more prevalent during the early stages of adapting and slowly disappear as individuals adapt and become competent intercultural communicators. In the context of organizations, this can be achieved, among others, through the introduction of a program or course of action that aims to guide the adaptation journeys of employees to intercultural communication, in such a way that their anxiety and uncertainties are managed and reduced as early as possible when they are introduced or introduced to the new workplace.

2.6. U-curve model

The UCM is an adaptation model that also depicts the transition from one culture to another. The model provides a way for people to understand the adaptation challenges that are experienced in a new culture and provides a guide to adapt and cope with cultures that differ from what people were socialized in. Martin and Nakayama (2013:337) observed that the UCM comprises various phases that are referred to by different names by different sources. The main features of the stages that are suggested by the various sources capture and explain the journey individuals go through in their efforts to adapt to new cultural experiences. Concerning its development, Church (1982) quotes Lysgaard (1955), who described the four stages individuals go through in their efforts to adapt and become competent intercultural communicators. Lysgaard hypothesized that the transformation process over time follows a U-shaped curve. According to Church (1982), the original model included the honeymoon stage (which is characterized by excitement and curiosity), the culture shock stage (which is characterized by a sensation of confusion), the recovery stage (which is characterized by a sense of recovering from the confusion experienced during the culture shock stage), and the adjustment stage (which is the phase during which individuals adjust to the new cultural environment).

The UCM emphasizes that the cultural shock individuals experience in the initial stages of the adaptation process is a short-term feeling of disorientation and discomfort due to unfamiliarity with the surroundings and lack of familiar cues. This feeling of disorientation and discomfort is a reaction to individuals trying to adapt to an unfamiliar cultural environment. The UCM further suggests that people eventually recover from culture shock and adjust to new cultural experiences (Martin & Nakayama, 2013:338). Of essence is that employees may not experience adaptation from one culture to another in the same way: Each individual's experience is shaped by what they bring to it. Understanding and appreciating the different adaptation stages are fundamental if a culturally diverse organization plans to intentionally guide employees through the adaptation process. Of primary importance is that organizations should not underestimate the necessity and importance of managing the culture shock that might affect the adaptation process. The degree of adjustment is, in one way, dependent on the degree to which employees are introduced to the new way of communication and the way culture shock is managed over time during the adaptation process.

Regarding adaptation from a communication point of reference, culturally diverse organizations should introduce training and awareness programs aimed at empowering employees with the understanding and knowledge needed to deal with culture shock and navigate the intercultural communication adaptation journey with ease. In doing so, employees could move towards each other, including changing their communicative behavior. This is essential considering that, despite previous experiences, working in a new culture is completely different. Organizations should therefore manage the adaptation process in a structured manner that is likely to facilitate improved intercultural communication effectiveness and assist organizations in achieving success.

2.7. Transitional model

The TM also approaches the cultural adaptation process from the orientation of the culture shock. The model highlights the transition stages that people go through when they experience change, as is the case with the UCM. The TM suggests that culture shock is a normal part of human experience and is considered a subcategory of transition shock. Transitional shock is the initial reaction to an experience people may have when they move to a cultural environment that is different from their own. Culture shock and adaptation are like any other transition. Transitions, such as leaving home to attend college for the first time, getting married, and moving from one part of the country to another, are experiences that share common characteristics and provoke the same kind of experiences as joining a new organization; it is an experience resulting from numerous stressors occurring due to contact with a different culture. Individuals get disoriented because they find themselves in cultural environments unfamiliar to them (Fabrizio & Neill, 2005; Barna, 2009; Winkelman, 2010).

Martin and Nakayama (2004:284) maintain that all transition experiences involve change; for example, when people marry, they may lose some independence but gain companionship and intimacy. In the same way, when employees join new organizations, they may lose their work in a familiar work environment, but they may gain improved quality of life due to an increase in income and other benefits. However, such a change may lead to culture shock because of being in a new cultural environment, and this undoubtedly requires some form of adaptation. Consistent with the findings in the preceding section, this also highlights the need for efforts to start in the initial stages of cultural adaptation.

On the TM, cultural adaptation depends, in part, on the individual, as each person has a preferred way of dealing with new and unfamiliar situations. Adaptation in the context of adjusting to the manner in which communication occurs when employees join new organizations is no different. Psychologists found that most people prefer a flight, fight, or flex approach to unfamiliar situations. Each of these approaches may be more or less productive, depending on the context. Individuals who prefer a flight approach when faced with new situations tend to hang back, get the lay of the land, and see how things work before taking the plunge and joining in. Individuals who take this approach may hesitate to speak a language different from theirs until they feel they can get it right. Taking time off the stresses of intercultural interaction (by speaking, reading in one's native language, and socializing with friends of similar backgrounds) may be appropriate in the early stages of moving to an unfamiliar environment, and this requires proper management as a way to facilitate a smooth adaptation process. Small periods of flight give individuals an escape from the challenges of cultural adaptation. Regarding intercultural communication, being stuck in the flight mode can cause communication breakdown due to the individuals concerned not hanging back and taking time to adapt to the new and unfamiliar situations (Martin & Nakayama, 2004:284). On the other hand, individuals who focus on the fight approach simply jump in and participate in interactions. Individuals who take this approach use the trial-and-error method; they try to speak the new language, do not care if they make mistakes, jump on a bus even when they are not sure whether it is the right one, and often make cultural gaffes. Being stuck in the fight mode can be unproductive, as individuals who take this approach to the extreme tend to react to their surroundings with little flexibility and are likely to criticize the way things are done in the new culture.

It is imperative to mention that people who focus on the flight or fight approach to adaptation have this preference due to family, social, and cultural influences. For example, some parents encourage their children to be assertive, and others encourage their children to wait and watch in new situations (Martin & Nakayama, 2004:284). Martin and Nakayama (2004:285) indicate that preferences for dealing with new situations are neither inherently right nor wrong; hence, the flex approach is referred to as an alternative approach to adapting. In the flex approach, individuals use a combination of productive fight or flight behaviors. The idea is to go with the flow while keeping in mind contextual elements. In the context of organizations, it is imperative to acknowledge and understand how different employees experience a cultural transition, including different preferred ways of dealing with new and unfamiliar situations. Acknowledgment and understanding of different approaches to adaptation are essential if organizations wish to develop and implement all-inclusive intercultural communication adaptation initiatives following an adaptation approach that may not be relevant to or preferred by any of the employees who require guidance in transitioning. Subsequently, it is assumed that an approach preferred by many within an organization is more likely to contribute to improvement in the enhancement of intercultural communication effectiveness.

The theoretical adaptation perspectives of the TM complement the theoretical knowledge about adaptation derived from an analysis of adaptation imperatives acquired through the analysis of the other two models of cultural adaptation discussed in the two preceding sections. The all-inclusive inference is that the three models underscore how employees in culturally diverse organizations struggle to achieve understanding, specifically during initial intercultural interactions. In view of this recognition and in the context of this study, the overarching supposition underpinning the enhancement of intercultural communication, derived from the point of reference of the models of cultural adaptation, is that an organization should intensify its intercultural communication adaptation efforts at an early stage of cross-cultural interactions. Therefore, this study presents early communication adaptation efforts as an initiative for universities and similar organizations to institute in their efforts to continuously and strategically improve the effectiveness of intercultural communication.

To consciously enhance the effectiveness of intercultural communication, a culturally diverse organization should help employees navigate the intercultural adaptation stages. It is evident that cultural adaptation models

focus on the process of demonstrating how individuals could achieve understanding during intercultural interactions. Through the analysis of models of cultural adaptation, the key principles of intercultural communication adaptation an organization should prioritize in its efforts to enhance intercultural communication during the early stages of interaction across cultures are as follows: (1) Early reduction of anxiety and uncertainty employees may have, (2) systematic management of the challenges individuals go through in the process of navigating the different stages of cultural adaptation, and (3) Empowering employees with the knowledge and skills necessary for them to deal with culture shock, which is the manifestation of the initial reaction to cultural experiences employees may have

3.   Methodology

3.1. Research Approach and Design

The study followed a qualitative approach, and a case study design was used. Using a qualitative research approach allows researchers to describe, decode, translate, and come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in a social setting (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:139; Brynard & Hanekom, 2006:37). Qualitative research entails the gathering and analysis of non-numerical data to comprehend ideas, viewpoints, or past observations. Therefore, the qualitative approach was used to gain a deep understanding of an issue or to generate new research ideas (see Bhandari, 2020).

3.2. Instruments

The information was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that uses open questions to provide participants with the opportunity to answer a set of predetermined questions. A set of predetermined, open-ended questions on an interview schedule based on theoretical principles was formulated to guide the researcher during the semi-structured interviews (see Maree, 2011:87). Predetermined questions were used to obtain information on the points of view of transformation, employment equity, and diversity, human resources development, corporate affairs, and marketing experts in relation to the perspectives on approaches to intercultural communication in the workplace. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to obtain reliable and valid information from the participants during conversations regarding the topic of the study. The aim was always to obtain rich and descriptive information that helped the researcher understand the knowledge and social reality of the participants.

3.3. Participants

Participants comprised ten purposively selected professionals from departments responsible for transformation, employment equity and diversity, human resources development, and corporate affairs and marketing. Flick (2013:176) notes that purposive sampling is used in special situations, where sampling is done with the purpose of selecting participants with specific knowledge in a particular field. Therefore, professionals from the departments mentioned above were targeted because of their expert knowledge of the problems the researcher sought to address. The director responsible for transformation, employment equity, and diversity (black male), the transformation, employment equity, and diversity officer (black female), and the manager responsible for human resources development (black female) were selected due to their extensive experience and understanding of diversity management and training and development. The director responsible for corporate affairs and marketing (white female), the deputy director of corporate affairs and marketing (black male), the university spokesperson (black female), the university brand manager (white female), and four staff members responsible for writing electronic journal articles (two black males and 1 white male) were selected due to their expert knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of communication. All participants are qualified due to the possession of applicable qualifications or extensive experience in institutional communication, diversity management, and human resources development.

3.4. Data analysis

Qualitative responses were analyzed once all interviews were conducted. Analysis was followed by interpretation of responses obtained through semi-structured interviews for the primary purpose of arriving at informed conclusions. Consistent with Maree (2011:105), qualitative responses were manually analyzed by transcribing all handwritten notes and semi-structured audio recordings. The viewpoints provided by the ten professionals sampled on the university's approaches to intercultural communication were carefully read, and the constructs were identified accordingly.

4.   Findings

Below, the findings are elaborated according to the themes focused on in the study, namely, approaches to intercultural communication, the goals and desired outcomes of internal communication, the culturally diverse nature of present-day organizations, and the adaptation to intercultural communication. These themes are based on the perceptions of the participants.

4.1. Theme 1: Approaches to Intercultural Communication

The responses provided by the participants support the author's belief, specifically that the university does not have a framework or policy to guide the approach to intercultural communication in a uniform and coordinated manner. Regarding the approach to intercultural communication, the following perceptions were provided.

> *"The way communication happens is not informed by any guidelines or policy document. Corporate communication strategies also do not mention the way messages should be uniformly transmitted. In summary, there is no concerted effort to ensure that intercultural communication is managed uniformly throughout the university. '* [P1]

> *"Although I may not confirm its visibility in terms of policy, it is important that the management of cultural diversity and intercultural communication are regulated by a policy document. There are good intentions from management, but it becomes difficult for everyone to enforce that in the absence of a formal document to which one can refer. '* [P4]

> *'I can say without doubt that there is no specific approach that can be said to be aimed at ensuring that communication between cultures is approached in a similar way'* [P9]

Based on the verbal quotations of the above professionals, it is clear (1) that the university lacks a solid plan of action aimed at a conscious approach to the issues of intercultural communication, (2) that strategic communication documents do not guide how effective intercultural communication could occur and (3) that there is no concerted effort to ensure that intercultural communication is managed consistently across the institution. It is evident from the responses provided above that the participants were of the view that the management's intentions about improving the effectiveness of intercultural communication should be regulated in the form of a policy document. They assume that a formal and uniform approach to intercultural communication could help all university students follow a formal and similar approach to the issues of intercultural communication. Notwithstanding the high regard for the management of cultural diversity, the university lacks an operational plan to guide how intercultural communication could be used as a means to unify employees to achieve a common purpose.

4.2. Theme 2: The goals and desired outcomes of communication

This study argues that the effective flow of information is necessary for employees to have a common transmission and receipt of work instructions, which is necessary for them to work to achieve a common purpose. In emphasizing the effective flow of information as a goal and desired outcome of communication, the participants provided the following responses.

> *'I think the most important outcome of intercultural communication is to be effective. Through an effective intercultural flow of information, people understand the kind of information you convey to them. Therefore, individuals should be open to accepting variations in the cultures represented in their workplace. Without understanding that there is variation, it becomes difficult to make an effort to learn the cultures of other people, including improving the way you communicate with them".* [P6]

> *'From my point of view, the desired course is to make a unified nation improve communication proficiency, understand each other on the job, create peace and harmony and build bridges among different groups. Therefore, intercultural communication is about learning other languages, including writing, reading, expressing yourself, and increasing multiculturalism. The desire to connect encourages people to learn the way other people communicate. Most importantly, giving and receiving clear instructions is a prerequisite for organisations to be productive, and it promotes peace, tranquillity, and love on the job '.* [P3]

> *"Intercultural communication brings about unity on the job and helps people respect each other regardless of differences. When we respect each other, we recognise the human rights of individuals different from us and that as a person, you do have a dignity that we need to respect '.* [P10]

Highlighting, valuing, and appreciating cultural differences as a goal and desired outcome of internal communication, [P2] suggested that learning to value and appreciate each other, including how to accommodate each other communication-wise, is good for productivity within organizations. In practice, the value, respect, and appreciation of cultural differences and language proficiency are perceived as attributes that are likely to improve the effectiveness of intercultural communication. In their different ways of expression, purposively selected professionals highlighted the improvement of multiculturalism, unification of employees, development of a common understanding of information, improvement of communication proficiency, creating peace and harmony, building bridges, promoting mutual respect, and improving productivity and quality of work as the salient goals and desired outcomes of intercultural communication.

Therefore, these imperatives for intercultural communication are suggested as practical goals and desired results of intercultural communication in the context of the university. It is contended in this study that employees who are, among other attributes, unified, respect and understand each other and work in an environment where there is peace and harmony are likely to form an effective team that could work successfully to achieve a common

purpose. The university should, therefore, determine what are considered goals and desired outcomes of communication in their respective contexts and set those as goals and desired outcomes of their intercultural communication approaches. For the university to flourish in its efforts to improve intercultural communication, it should determine goals and desired outcomes applicable to its specific situation and strive to channel its efforts towards their successful achievement.

4.3. Theme 3: The Culturally Diverse Nature of Present-Day Organisations

Commenting on their understanding and acknowledgement of the impact the culturally diverse nature of present-day organisations has on intercultural communication, purposefully selected professionals commented as follows.

'Employees who embrace cultural differences are more comfortable with colleagues from cultures different from theirs and do not feel isolated or isolated from team members, as they understand the uniqueness of employees and the value they have to the organisation. Furthermore, if you understand the impact of cultural diversity, you are more likely to support cultural diversity management approaches, including accommodating initiatives aimed at improving communication.' [P8]

'One becomes a valuable asset for an organisation if you understand and are familiar with cultures different from yours. The more there is a common way of conveying messages, the more chances people will work in the same direction. This is the key to helping employees be productive. ' [P2]

'The diverse nature of present-day organisations encourages people of different cultural backgrounds to interconnect and produce a hybrid of cultures. Working in an environment where all people are accommodated is exciting in that it encourages multiculturalism. ' [P5].

Responses provided by the participants substantiated available literature, which states that it is significant for an organization to recognize and acknowledge that its members represent a large variety of cultural differences. Therefore, acknowledging that present-day organizations are culturally diverse in nature promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion for all employees, and it improves productivity. Participants are of the view that understanding and acknowledging the diverse nature of organizations serves as a building block to encourage teamwork, as it highlights the understanding that more can be achieved if individuals are members of a team, rather than in isolation.

4.4. Theme 4: Intercultural adaptation

It is contended that organizational success happens when individuals engaging in communication interactions have adapted their experiences in a new cultural environment, such that the intercultural interactions achieve their intended objectives. Literature points to the understanding that intercultural adaptation reduces cultural distance, increases intercultural communication effectiveness, and, ultimately, creates a conducive platform for meaningful intercultural communication to occur.

Participants reported their experiences in relation to their first intercultural encounters at work and their interaction with intercultural communication. Regarding the first intercultural encounters in the workplace, the following perceptions were provided:

"My first intercultural encounter was after the university was established. As Africans, our white colleagues judged us to be loud. What annoyed my white colleague the most was the fact that we were using the language she could not understand. This was a clear indication of the assumption that people have about themselves in thinking that the way they communicate is better than the way people from other cultures do. It is imperative that as colleagues, we acknowledge that we are different and find a way of co-existing. ' [P6]

'I once worked for an organisation where we used to be expected to go to some areas where the ways of doing things were completely different compared to the way we were socialised growing up. It is important that we find ways to ensure that integration takes place, even if that happens informally. We must use each opportunity we have to talk about our differences, including finding solutions on how we can understand and accommodate each other. ' [P7]

'I once invited an executive from a different cultural background to my office; that was after the attainment of democracy. I could pick up from the way he reacted to my handshake that he was not used to that kind of being greeted. To avoid intercultural conflict, I decided to adapt to his way of greeting, and that eventually became my way of greeting people. We eventually accepted that we are different and that we need to accommodate each other. The fact that we started far apart from understanding each other brought us closer together. ' [P9]

An interesting observation from the responses provided by participants is that the initial intercultural experiences of individuals are diverse, reflecting our cultural diversity as a people. The three participants quoted above recounted their first intercultural encounters, in general, from different perspectives, for example, from a racial standpoint, a gender difference point of view, and from the frame of reference of exchanging greetings. The comments presented above confirm the insight discovered from the available literature that individuals experience

cultural transition differently. Importantly, regardless of being initially judged and behaving according to their socialization while growing up, participants believe that, eventually, individuals acknowledge differences and find ways to coexist. Therefore, intercultural adaptation is preceded by navigation on an intercultural journey characterized by various and differing experiences. The participants were of the view that, later, individuals accepted each other, integrated, and adapted.

5. Discussion of Findings

The aim of this study was to establish workers' perceptions about approaches to intercultural communication in the workplace. The results of the study focus on the importance of understanding and acknowledging the culturally diverse nature of organizations as a building block for embracing the uniqueness of the present workforce. The findings coincide with the literature review findings, specifically, that recognition and understanding of the culturally diverse nature of present-day organizations is a starting point for an organization, like the university where the study was conducted, to work towards formal and systematic approaches to intercultural communication. For the university where the study was conducted to prosper, the unique nature of individuals, cultural diversity training, recognition of institutional culture, creation of a culture of inclusion, and promotion of multilingualism must be recognized and embraced as workplace dimensions of diversity that reflect the shape of the university. These dimensions were placed by the participants as priority areas that the university should acknowledge and understand in its pursuit to improve the effectiveness of intercultural communication and unify its employees for a common purpose.

The results of this study also indicated that the university where the study was conducted lacked a solid plan of action aimed at a conscious approach to intercultural communication. Specifically, employees believed that communication strategic documents did not provide guidance on the manner in which effective intercultural communication could occur and that there was no concerted effort to ensure that intercultural communication was managed consistently across the university. Nhlapo (2013) investigated intercultural communication in information systems development teams in several organizations in Gauteng province of South Africa. Research concluded that culture and personality might affect the effectiveness of communication. This signifies the need for the university where the study was conducted and other similar organizations to formalize their approaches to intercultural communication with the specific purpose of improving the effectiveness of intercultural communication and achieving success, as ultimate outcomes. The results of this study also revealed that the employees were of the view that the intentions of the management on approaches to intercultural communication should be regulated in the form of a policy document or framework. The assumption is that a policy document or framework would further aid in formalizing a uniform approach to intercultural communication, which could assist all researchers to follow a coordinated way of approaching issues of intercultural communication.

Gumede (2016) conducted a study that explored whether cultural diversity exists and if it requires an organizational response, and whether managing cultural diversity has an impact on performance, and finally recommends strategies, methods, and tools that Engen Refinery can use to manage its culturally diverse employees. Although the study did not identify intercultural communication problems, the study noted the importance of starting team building activities and social gatherings to increase employee interaction, implementing cultural diversity programs and policies, and restructuring work teams so that they become more multicultural. The findings of the study also revealed that the stages that individuals go through in the process of adapting to the work environment must be acknowledged and understood. Coinciding with Gumede's (2016) findings, the results of this study divulged that understanding and acknowledging the diverse nature of organizations serve as a building block to encourage teamwork, as it highlights the understanding that more can be achieved if individuals work as members of a team. The findings further revealed that acknowledging that present-day organizations are culturally diverse in nature promotes a sense of belonging and inclusion of all employees and improves productivity. Providing the basis for reinforcing the unification of employees to a common purpose through a formal, uniform, and coordinated intercultural communication approach is necessary for the university to achieve success. The finding that intercultural communication could be used as a means to unify employees to achieve a common purpose is supported by previous studies conducted by Mmope (2016), who investigated assumptions to motivate a conceptual framework for integrated intercultural employee communication for line management of transformed universities. The study proposes a framework that provides a basis for the inculcation of best practices for effective and integrated employee communication that can help reinforce effective line management communication as a strategic priority, core managerial accountability, and an enabling factor to achieve strategic alignment in transformed universities.

6. Conclusions

The current study sought to establish workers' perceptions about approaches to intercultural communication in the workplace. The study proposes an approach that could guide the university where the study was conducted through a formal, coordinated, and uniform intercultural communication path. Complementary findings derived from multiple sources aided the researcher in drawing holistic conclusions that are relevant for the development of the plan, which is intended to serve as an instrument for the university and other similar organizations to become resilient in their pursuit of improving intercultural communication effectiveness.

For the university where the study was conducted, to purposefully improve intercultural communication effectiveness, all members of the institution need to adapt to new ways of communicating, efforts must be made to ensure effective intercultural communication is achieved, and all within the university must recognize and appreciate cultural differences. Furthermore, the impact culture has on the manner in which employees who are unique due to cultural differences communicate should be acknowledged and understood. Given the impact culture has on communication, it becomes imperative for universities and similar organizations to recognize that culture teaches significant rules, rituals, and procedures that are essential for employee interaction. The literature review revealed that culture and communication are inseparable, as culture is the foundation of communication. It is indispensable for managers within the university where the study was conducted to understand cultural differences, as culture tells us how to interpret the behavior of others, including how to communicate effectively with individuals from other cultural backgrounds. This understanding is essential for managers to introduce and implement intercultural communication approaches relevant to the unique nature of the university. This study adds to the volume of research that has been undertaken on enhancement approaches to intercultural communication with the specific purpose of improving intercultural communication effectiveness.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and contributor(s) and do not necessarily reflect JICC's or editors' official policy or position. All liability for harm done to individuals or property as a result of any ideas, methods, instructions, or products mentioned in the content is expressly disclaimed.

References

Abdullahi, A. I., & Zainol, F. A. (2016). The impact of socio-cultural business environment on entrepreneurial intention: A conceptual approach. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 6*(2), 201-320. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i2/2013

Allwood, J. (2008). English translation of: "Tvärkulturell kommunikation" (1985). In J. Allwood (Ed.), *Tvärkulturell kommunikation. Papers in Anthropological Linguistics, University of Göteborg, Department of Linguistics, 9*(1). https://doi.org/10.1093/jos/9.1.1

Allwood, J. (2021). Reflections on the Function of National Images in Intra- and Intercultural Communication. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 21(2), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v21i2.10

Barna, L. M. (2009). How culture shock affects communication. Paper presented in the Distinguished Scholar's Program at the Communication Association of the Pacific Annual Convention (Kobe, Japan, June 19-30 20).

Beerkens, R., Le Pichon-Vorstman, E., Supheert, R., & Thije, J. T. (Eds.) (2020). *Enhancing intercultural communication in organizations: Project advisers*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003006794

Bennett, N. P., & Giles, L. (2013). Channeling the deluge: research challenges for big data and information systems. *Proceedings of the 22nd ACM international conference on Conference on Information & Knowledge Management*. https://doi.org/10.1145/2505515.2525541

Bhandari, P. (2020). What Is Qualitative Research? Methods & Examples. Retrieved from https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/qualitative-research

Chen, G. M., & Starosta, W. J. (1996). Intercultural communication competence: A synthesis. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 19*(1), 34-45. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.1996.11678935

Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*(3), 540-572. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.91.3.540

Cullen, J. B., & Parboteeah. (2008). *Multinational management: A strategic approach* (4th ed.). Thomson South Western.

Decramer, A., Smolders, C., & Vanderstraeten, A. (2013). Employee performance management culture and system features in higher education: relationship with employee performance management satisfaction. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 24*(2), 352-371. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2012.680602

Deetz, S. (2001). Conceptual foundations. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412986243.n1

Emuze, F., & James, M. (2013). Exploring communication challenges due to language and cultural diversity on South African construction sites. *Acta Structilia, 20*(1), 44-65. https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC141555

Fabrizio, S. M., & Neill, J. T. (2005). Cultural adaptation in outdoor programming. *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education, 9*(2), 44-56. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03400820

Fasset. (2013). *Cultural diversity in the workplace handbook*. Faranani facilitating service Pty Ltd.

Frank, J. (2013). Raising cultural awareness in the English language classroom. *Journal for Teaching Forum, 5*(1), 2-11. Doi: https://scholar.google.co.za/scholar

Green, K., Fairchild, R., Knudsen, B., & Lease-Gubrud, D. (2018). Introduction to Communication. Retrieved from https://socialci.libretexts.org (Accessed on 8 July 2022)

Gudykunst, W. B. (2005). *Theorizing about intercultural communication*. London: SAGE Publications. Doi: https://scholar.google.co.za/scholar

Guirdham, L. (2005). *Communicating across cultures at work* (2nd edition). Indiana: Inchor Business Books.

Gumede, M. (2016). *The impact of cultural diversity on organizational performance and success* (Master's dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal).

Hall, B. J. (2017). *Among cultures* (3rd ed.). Wadsworth Thomson Learning. Doi: https://scholar.google.co.za/scholar?

Hammer, M. R., Wiseman, R. L., Rasmussen, J. L., & Bruschke, J. C. (1998). A test of anxiety/uncertainty Management theory: The intercultural adaptation context. *Communication Quarterly, 46*(3), 309-326. https://doi.org/10.1080/01463379809370104

Harvey, C. P., & Allard, B. (2014). *Understanding and managing diversity*. Pearson.

Hellriegel, D., Jackson, S. E., Slocum, J., Staude, G., Amos, T., Klopper, H. B., Louw, L., & Oosthuizen, T. (2005). *Management* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.54450/saradio.2021.59.2.677

Holmes, S. (1997). Intercultural communication and dialogue competence: An attempt at synthesis through useful "fictions". Working paper of International Society for Diversity Management e. V., No. 2. Retrieved from https://www.idm-diversity.org/files/Working_paper2-Holmes.pdf

Jandt, F. E. (2004). *Intercultural communication: A global reader*. London: SAGE Publications.

Jandt, F. E. (2013). *An introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in a global community*. Singapore: SAGE Publications.

Jandt, F. E. (2017). *An introduction to intercultural communication: Identities in a global community*. Singapore: SAGE Publications.

Kiss, G. (2008). A theoretical approach to intercultural communication. *Communication, 7*(3), 435-443.

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Canada: Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall.

Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7*, 45-51.

Maree, K. (2011). *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2013). *Intercultural communication in contexts* (6th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Mmope, P. P. (2016). *Integrated intercultural employee communication for line management in transformed universities in South Africa* (Doctoral thesis, North-West University, Potchefstroom).

Morse, J. M. (2008). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing Research, 40*(1), 120-123. https://doi.org/10.1097/00006199-199103000-00014

Munshi, K. (2014). Community networks and the process of development. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 28*(4), 49-76. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.28.4.49

Mushaathoni, M. (2023). Effect of Biographical Variables on Employees' Adaptation to Intercultural Communication in a University of Technology. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 23(4), 133-145. https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v23i4.191

Neuliep, J. W. (2015). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Nhlapo, M. E. (2013). *Intercultural communication in information systems development teams*. Dissertation: North-West University.

Nyathi-Saleshando, L. (2011). An advocacy project for multicultural education: The case of Shiyeyi language in Botswana. *International Review in Education, 57*(5-6). Doi: https://www.google.com/search. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-011-9254-4

Orgad, S. (2006). The cultural dimensions of online communication: A study of breast cancer patients' spaces. *New Media & Society, 8*(6), 877-889. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806069643

Parker, W. (2005). *Teaching democracy: Unity and diversity in public life*. Teachers College Press.

Penceliah, Y. (2008). Managing across cultures for organizational success. *Journal of Public Administration, 61*(3), 330-341.

Putnam, L. L., & Mumby, D. K. (Eds.). (2013). *The SAGE handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods*. Sage Publications.

Roy, C. S., Samovar, L. A., McDaniel, E. R., & Porter, R. (2016). Communication between cultures (9th ed.). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net (Accessed on 8 July 2022).

Sadri, H. A., & Flammia, M. (2011). *Intercultural communication: A new approach to international relations and global challenges*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.

Samochowiec, J., & Florack, A. (2010). Intercultural contact under uncertainty: The impact of predictability and anxiety on the willingness to interact with a member from an unknown cultural group. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34*(5), 507-515. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.05.003

Samovar, L. A., & Porter, R. E. (2007). *Intercultural communication*. Wadsworth Thomson Learning.

Schneider, S. C., & Barsoux, J. L. (2003). *Managing across cultures*. Prentice Hall.

Smit, P. J., Cronje, G. J., Brevis, T., & Vrba. (2011). *Management principles: A contemporary edition for Africa*. Cape Town: Juta.

Sopow, E. (2007). The communication climate change at RCMP. *Strategic Communication Management, 12*, 20 - 23. https://doi.org/10.1108/14754390780000952

Surbone, A. (2007). Cultural aspects of communication in cancer care. *Support Cancer Care, 16*(3), 235-240. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00520-007-0366-0

Taylor, M., & Elsey, G. (2005). Building commitment to a new business strategy at Sensis. *Strategic Communication Management, (9)*, 14-17.

Van Staden, A. (2013). An evaluation of an intervention using sign language and multi-sensory coding to support word learning and reading comprehension of deaf signing children. *Child Language Teaching and Therapy, 29*(3), 305-318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265657013479961.

Van Staden, E., Marx, S., & Erasmus-Kritzinger, C. (2007). *Getting the message across in business*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Westaby, C., Fowler, A., & Philips, J. (2020). Managing emotion in probation practice: Display rules, values, and the performance of emotional labour. *International Journal of Law, Crime, and Justice, 61*(2020), 100362. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2019.10036207

White, C., Vanc, A., & Stafford, G. (2011). Internal communication, information satisfaction, and sense of community: *The Effect of Personal Influence Journal*. *1*(3), 231-341.

Winkelman, M. (2010). *Cultural shock and adaptation*. Blackwell Publishing.

About the Author

Maria Mushaathoni is a lecturer in the Department of Journalism and Integrated Communication with a particular interest in language, culture, and communication, specifically in communication theory, intercultural communication, organizational communication, communication for specific purposes, and the effects of motivation and attitude on language proficiency.