

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN DIFFERENT CULTURES. THE ALBANIAN EXPERIENCE.

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ABSTRACT

We live in a society of communication, which is carried out not only by the media, but above all a direct communication, which is implementing through people as human beings. The world is becoming more and more global. No one can exclude himself/herself from this phenomenon. As soon as we involve ourselves in this process the better will be. The phenomenon of globalization requires that in order to be successful would be better as fast as we can to have the proper knowledge as well as to respect the other culture of communication.

We have no right to say that our culture of communication is better than a culture of communication of citizen of another country. In this context is required to know generally how to communicate but the details of knowledge and communication. We have to know what we have to say.

We call ourselves "citizens", while we may consider each other "competitors" in a world where everybody wants to be better than others.

Good communication skill is essential to the success of every individual; it leads to improved success at work and in personal life. It should be perceived as a professional skill that can be learned and used to make progress in certain areas.

In this way communication and culture can turn itself into an art and will be useful for individual or collective benefits. Thus, communication becomes not the ability of conveying a message, but its transmission in such a way that the person to whom we turn to behave as we wish. This aspect is worth considering more deeply about how long that enables us to dramatically improve interests of interpersonal relations.

The purpose of the communication strategy is to make the communication culture more ethical, more honest, more tolerant, more transparent, more effective, more efficient, more stable, more accurate and more professional in relation to the tasks that we take.

The aim of this paper is to provide details of communication in different cultures, especially in countries with Islamic culture from the perspective of peacekeeping forces as an organization.

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1. Introduction.

Although the definition of the "age" of scientific fields it is difficult to be identified, I believe that we agree that communication in an organization has always existed. The beginnings of this discipline started as a need of survival. The latest years the issue of identity and struggle for autonomy were raised.

As a result of the rapid developments in the field of IT, communication has reached that maturity that few people could have predicted a half century ago. This is definitely a good thing, because without IT only a few changes would have been predicted in the world. Nowadays we are faced with differences in politics, business, technology, as well as changes in value and the environment³.

Good communication skills are essential to the success of every individual. In this context we have to perceive it as a professional skill that can be learned and used to make progress in certain areas. In this way, the culture of communication can turn into art in itself, useful for individual or collective benefits. Researchers have seen the art of communication in the optics of the result obtained by his correct practice.

Thus, communication becomes not the ability of transmitting a message, but its transmission in such a way to make person to whom we discuss with to behave as we wish. It will be better for this aspect to be analysed deeper as long as it enables us to dramatically improve interpersonal relations interests.

Communication itself is a difficult process, while on the job it is even more difficult. Work can face with different people and cultures. This obviously complicates it, because we cannot use the same standard of communication with all people and not all will understand the message you are trying to transmit.

When we talk about communication, we can not ignore the concept of employment relationship. According to Michael Armstrong⁴ the Employment term relationship That describes the relationships exist between Employers and Employees in the workplace. These formal maybe (Contracts of Employment, procedural Agreements) or informal, in the shape of the Psychological contract. The aim is to achieve professional goals and appears to be one of the sectors where it is more widely used.

In everyday work, we are dealing with a lot of different individuals: the boss, subordinates, citizens etc. We communicate with them face to face, or with different communication tools like telephone or Internet. It is undeniable that communication is a central element in the work activity. Is the element that allows us to be known to others and how to influence to the environment that surrounds us. We respect them, we inform them about our needs, our skills and for what we can offer them. Of course, that such things would happen in an ideal and theoretical world, but in terms of real world, the truth is that there are conflicts, misunderstandings, which time passes, the more it impacts the nature of our sensations and our perceptions at work, affecting our professional fulfillment and direct results obtained from it.

We need to note that each country has its own rules. The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with communicational structures of the most fundamental concepts in the culture⁵. The first step toward success is without doubt to have knowledge about them, to whom should address, for what to address and what things should not be addressed in order to avoid

³ Organizational Communication, Catherine Miller, Sixth Edition, Approaches and Processes, p.17

⁴ Human Resource Management in Practice 1999, p.185

⁵ Excerpt From: Lakoff, George. "Metaphors We Live By." iBooks

inconvenience and conflict. Good communication is the result of knowledge, patience and understanding of the rules in a certain environment. This helps to avoid and prevent any unpleasant situations. To know oneself and the communication skills of everyone, helps us to choose a model that fits to our objectives and the specific situations. There is no general rule for all individuals, in terms of how to face or deal with different situations, but it varies from person to person, from one culture to another culture.

In any relationship of interest in the professional life, it is undoubtedly important that when we communicate something, we must be efficient during the transmission of the message in the most accurate and clear way in order to avoid misunderstandings that lead to conflict. Communication facilitates the building of relationships among people and avoids any disagreements or misunderstandings. Success within an organization is often made possible through effective communication in all its levels, starting from simple workers to higher levels of the hierarchy⁶. Outside the work environment, it is important at the same level, by providing the most effective interpersonal relationships and therefore would provide a more healthy lifestyle, especially in international environments.

This paper focuses on communication with members who belong to different cultures, and have been on a mission in Afghanistan. The information was obtained through participants that took part in such cultures. It is focused on Albanian team during peacekeeping missions and how they fit their culture not only with Afghan culture, but also to many other individuals belonging to different cultures. In such conditions knowledge at global cultures level is required.

2. The role of Interpreters.

Communication with Afghan soldiers was realized through Afghan interpreters. They translated from English to their native language (Dari or Pashto, Afghanistan's two official languages). Communication would be of high quality if they build good relationship with the Afghan interpreters. This is because in some moments they would get out from difficult situations.

For example a day during a free conversation with an Afghan soldier, in order to recognize each other – they asked a question about the family; how many children they had, with what they were dealing with etc. The Afghan soldier didn't feel well because in some areas of Afghanistan, no one likes to speak about family with other people, except close family circle. This custom was explained by the military Afghan interpreter. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the interpreter informed the Afghan soldiers that they were newly arrived in this mission.

In these conditions, it is necessary to train personnel before going on mission. Griffin and Moorhead (2015)⁷ argue that success in business can grow through the development of a strong culture. If an organization has indicators of a strong culture, then workers will feel better and improve individual performance and that of the organization. They emphasize four key components of a strong culture, values (beliefs and visions of the members of the organization). Heroes- (individuals who represent the values of the organization. Rites and rituals- (ceremonies through which an organization shows how they celebrate). Finally, cultural networks as communication system, through which cultural values are institutionalized and strengthened.

⁶Gary Johns and Alan M.Saks, *Organizational Behavior, Understanding and Managing Life at Work*, sixth edition, 2005.

⁷Griffin and Moorhead, *Organizational Behaviour, Managing people and organizations*, Eleventh edition, 2015, p511-151.

Greeting in Afghan culture is very important. No matter if you know or not the other person. When a person is walking on the street, regard him by saying *Selam*, right hand placed on the heart and slight bow. The answer is *alejku selam*, right hand placed on the heart in a sign of respect. According to their custom, when a man see a Afgan female, greeting is the same as in the above example, but it is forbidden to look her in eye. If a boy sees a girl in her eyes, it is a indication of disrespect.

- **Peculiarities of Communication in Afghanistan with members of different cultures.**

Every morning two meetings were held, one with military personnel from NATO, on the main base, the other on the basis of Afghanistan with the Staff comanded by Afghan Bgigadier General. During the first meeting communication was in English. Since the military personnel of NATO as the official language is English, there have been no misunderstandings during meetings. At these working meetings a lot of discussion were focused how to accomplish the tasks, problem as well as tasks for the following day, according to the medium and long term work plan, while meeting in the Afghan base were carried out through interpreters.

- **The importance of greetings in the local language.**

Afghans feel valued and respected when a foreigner spoke to them in their language. Taking this request into consideration, as one of the interviewers highlights, you greeted Afghans in their own language, mainly in Dari. After greeting and question how are you, which in Dari said **qishturasi**, and thanks **hubasum**, you reached out the hand to shake, but not tight.

- **Touching.**

Afghans during the conversation maintain their hand shake for a long time compared with this custom in our country. Example- a NATO officer (US), extended a hand to the Afghan military to meet and greet, but strongly tightened. The Afghan soldier frowned. To overcome the situation, the interpreter intervned and advised that during the meetings it is impolite to shake hands tightly. Compared with Western cultures, mainly Anglo-Saxon during daily activities in case of greeting to each other-there is no need to shake hands, it is accomplished through facial gestures⁴. In Afghanistan when a man meets a woman, they do not ofer hands to shake and it is not allowed to look each - other in the eye. It is considered disrespectful not only to women but also to their tradition.

During the interviews process, it is noted that it was easier for the Albanian military personnel to adapt and to continue conversation with Afghan personnel compared with personnel from other western countries. Perhaps this is as a result of oriental and western cultures in our country.

The sooner you began the process of fitting in, the easier it was to motivate the afghan soldiers. To do this they had to stay with them, learn about their concerns and problems of work and family life.

- **The Importance of details during Communication Process.**

It is very important to have knowledge about culture details, as they contribute to our success. Often when invited for lunch, they did not refuse the invitation, not only because liked the Afghan food, but the refusal was considered an insult by Afghans. Except communication through spoken or written language, another way that fullfilled the purpose of communication was through body movements, facial expressions, given emphasis to the words, the dress code, the position of the body, etc. All these convey a purpose, a meaning.

Communication through **body language** is not always conscious, however, always meets or complicates communication through words. Open body positions, stretching back, etc., show the warmth, closeness, predisposition to communicate. Closed-junction positions of the arms, legs,

hands, etc., indicate a need to protect⁸. In general, we can say that the analysis of body language is a subjective thing that can be wrongly interpreted and very dependent on the situation and cultural differences. People should be very careful when interpreting the body language of others. Incorrect interpretations, add "noise" in the communication process. The person, who sent a message, must be careful because in some moments the body language, unconsciously, may oppose what he says by words. This will confuse the receiver, or would give him messages that we do not want to say⁹. The person who receives messages (sender-recipient) must be attentive to catch those signs of the body that sender launched, in order to get all the possible meaning of what is said.

⁷ **Here's a real example:**

The first day they went to have lunch with the interpreters, took food and sat on the floor as they did, but the legs weren't crossed but spread. A few minutes later the interpreter said; please cross your legs because the way you sit based on our traditional shows disrespect for the food. Once acted upon the advice, they started a constructive conversation. Although they were given spoons, Afghans prefer to eat food by hand (rice by hand and meal without spoon but by dipping bread in it). To be closer with them, every lunch they tried to act like them. Feeling easier, the Afghans showed that in their homes, they eat food with hands, sitting cross-legged on the ground and in a circular way, and all family members must be present. In some families tables (sofra) were used, which was used years ago in our country.

They emphasized that it was very important that all members of the family eat together every meal. In Afghan culture, each morning they offered tea and some kind of biscuits. By drinking tea a better conversation was developed.

Negative impact of severity

When working with Afghans, you can not start working immediately in the morning. So one day, a NATO officer just arrived to his office where Afghans worked, and began to talk with Afghan counterpart, but with severity. Afghan few seconds after hearing found an excuse, left and did not return to work that day. Interpreters suggested that severity is not a solution to Afghan culture, and that such a way of communication will slow labor productivity.

The physical distance between people during communication is another requirement that must be taken into consideration during the communication. Various relationships, have a kind of allowed distance, commonly known to both parties. Preservation or violation of this appropriate distance, sent according to the situation a certain sense to the recipient. The physical distance varies in different cultures. What may be normal in one culture may be considered as too small in another, or vice versa⁷

Afghans during the discussion asked for a broader personal space, while the Germans were closer to each other. Thus, in a case in the Afghan military office, with whom our specialists worked, noticed that while communicating with a German soldier, the Afghan soon backed away. This thing was explained kindly by interpreters.

What may be unacceptable in a culture, it can be a normal thing to another culture. So two close Afghan friends walked by holding hands with each other, an action that in other cultures can not be considered as normal.

⁸Organizational Behavior, Andrej A. Huczynski and David A. Buchanan 2007, p.178-183

⁹Griffin and Morhead, p.298

Shopping Culture.

Afghans are very good in trade and try to sell their goods at a higher price. It is part of their culture that when a client comes in, say welcome, offer tea, and be patient. One day our officers went to a small market to buy something. It was interesting that by respecting a seller, speaking a few words in their native language but not refusing the tea they offered, it was possible to buy goods with a cheaper price compared to their real price. There were those sellers, who can also make small gifts just in order to preserve the clientele.

The Culture of Family.

Afghans are a proud people and it is important that they be respected during conversation. They pay attention to family and females. They consider women as mothers, who will educate children and for that reason she should not do ordinary work. On the other hand, men consider female as their property. This is because when they marry they should ask father in law how much money they should give to take the girl. Thus, the Afghan interpreter who was working with our officers was single, and was interested to marry.

His mother was looking for a good girl, very well educated and to belong from a good family. Once he asked and found the girl suitable for his son, she spoke with the girl's family. Then spoke to her son about the girl. Once they had met and were introduced to each other's family, the interpreter was obliged to pay the girl's family a lot of money, in order to marry. This amount of money was determined by the family of the girl. Such actions were regarded as normal in Afghanistan. The opposite happens in Western culture. When a couple is married, the bride's family pays for the wedding expenses. If the bride's family will have sufficient income, they can also donate an apartment.

Communication with military personnel from the Balkan countries.

Communication with staff coming from the Balkan countries was very cozy. There are great similarities in the communication mediums, including the body language (the messages given by the movement of feet and hands). Mostly this cooperation and communication was made freely inside the military base but after working hours. They communicated with their hands, joking and work began by offering something to drink. In their free time the favorite drink was brandy/shlevovica. As a result of similarity in culture, they organized many friendly meetings where there was no shortage of guitar music and Croatian serenades. During talks with military personnel from the Balkans, it was easy to create good relations if you greeted them in their native language.

Communication with staff from the western countries.

Regarding military personnel from countries such as Finland, Sweden, it was noted that they were cold but also quiet. They use less hands in communication compared to the Afghans. With Germans and Americans personnel on the military base, communication or social relationships started through games like volleyball, table tennis, chess, pools etc. German military personnel have left a good impression and were the opposite of what any had heard or seen in movies. They were approachable, sociable and with good humor. It is important to find the detail to give a message. So, Albanian military personnel built quality social relationships through the game of chess. So, while with the Afghans good communication was achieved by drinking tea, with the

German or American military personnel, it was realized through the game of chess, pools, table tennis, etc., or by organizing dinners, in facilities within the base.

3. Conclusions

The purpose of the communication strategy is to improve the communication culture, to be more ethical, more honest, more tolerant, more transparent, more effective, more efficient, more stable, more accurate and more professional.

Message- to be adapted to the environment, context and situation. Other forms of messages, such as personal or social, to follow the informal channels of information in the organization.

Touch- is an element of non-verbal communication, where people tend to touch what they like. Men and women interpret touch differently from each other. Rules of touch during the meeting vary greatly from one culture to another. Adapting to cultural norms is a sign of opening and honesty.

Facial expressions, as when we talk or when we listen, accompany what we say. They can transmit fear, aggression, shyness, etc. Smiling, typically expresses warmth, happiness, or friendship, while eyebrow scowl conveys disgust or anger.

The same can be said for the voice intonation that accompanies the words we say. Speech intonation that colors it can not be registered, but is accompanied by a word element that gives different meanings to it.

Recognizing differences that represent different styles of communication used by different people, managers can develop such methods to provide listening and evaluating every idea, during the meetings and free time.

Also, it will be better for each individual to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of his style of communication, compared to that required in the organization. He/she must try to fix problematic elements, since, a certain style, influences the perception of certain skills and competencies of the individual by others.

Finally, we can say that communication in terms of a global environment is important to be taught and practiced before we are in the environment where tasks will be performed. Training on the receiving culture for all personnel being public or private raises chances of successful cooperation and production.

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