



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF IDENTIFYING AN INDIVIDUAL'S PERSONALITY TYPE FOR EFFECTIVE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Understanding personality types is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication, as an individual's personality traits can significantly influence their thinking, behavior, and communication style. This paper examines the importance of recognizing one's own personality type to enhance cross-cultural communication skills. Various research methods, including questionnaires, case studies, participant observation, and focus groups are explored to gather information on personality traits and their impact on communication. The paper also discusses how individuals with different personality types may approach cross-cultural communication and emphasizes the need to adapt communication strategies to align with the characteristics of the people being interacted with. Overall, the study highlights the significance of comprehending personality traits to establish strong international communication competencies, and advocates for individuals and organizations to prioritize this aspect of communication to cultivate more effective cross-cultural interactions. In short, recognizing personality types is a critical component of successful intercultural communication.

Keywords: *intercultural communication, personality traits, DISA method, interactions.*

Introduction

In the modern interconnected world, communication has become one of the most important aspects in many people's personal and professional lives. From emails to video conferences, social media to instant messaging, communication technologies have transformed the way we interact with each other. Effective communication becomes increasingly important for the development of relationships between people of different cultural backgrounds. It gives people the ability to communicate their thoughts, ideas, and opinions, cultivate meaningful connections, and work together with others toward the accomplishment of common goals. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively in the workplace is critical to the accomplishment of corporate goals, the success of collaborative efforts, and the enhancement of employee engagement.

"Intercultural communication is a multidisciplinary field of study that explores communication between individuals and groups who come from diverse cultural backgrounds. It examines the ways in which culture impacts communication, and how communication is used to negotiate and construct cultural identities. Intercultural communication scholars study a range of communication contexts, including interpersonal, organizational, and global communication, and employ a variety of theoretical frameworks and research methods to investigate the complex nature of intercultural interactions. Ultimately, the goal of intercultural communication research is to understand and promote effective communication across cultural boundaries, while also recognizing and valuing the diversity of cultural practices, beliefs, and values" (Kim & Gudykunst, 2002, p. 1).

Yet, cross-cultural communication can be difficult due to differences in language, customs, expectations, and another factor that is rarely discussed: personality. Personality is a component that can strongly affect intercultural communication. When we have a greater awareness of a person's personality type, we are better able to customize our communication style to connect with them on a deeper level and avoid misunderstandings. It is needed to understand the temper and personality of someone in order to successfully achieve a thriving communication act (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012).

In this paper, I will examine the significance of understanding a person's personality type for a more efficient intercultural communication. I will review the existing literature on the subject, present my research findings, and explain the practical implications of my

findings for intercultural communication. I intend to illustrate, by the end of this paper, that personality knowledge is an important factor of establishing successful cross-cultural relationships.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Behavior Patterns

Researchers frequently investigate a wide variety of aspects of a subject's behavior pattern. Given that every person has their own unique, complex personality, it can be challenging to fully comprehend individuals. Individuals can be understood better if their traits are considered. At present, due to the fact that it has a variety of characteristics, personality has emerged as an essential component. Personal characteristics of individuals, in addition to their mental states, feelings, behaviors, routines, expectations, and attitudes are very different from one another.

Adjusting yourself according to other people's behavior is a crucial part in communication, therefore in this way you can create a safe and friendly place for communication. Regardless of the kind of behavior you have, most people around you will behave differently than you. You cannot only count on your methods of communication. An effective communication is characterized by the adaptability and capacity to comprehend the requirements of others. Understanding another person's style of behavior and communication method will allow a better-informed prediction regarding the way they may react in diverse circumstances. This comprehension will also significantly improve your capacity to communicate with the person (Kim & Gudykunst, 2002).

1.2. DISC Method

The DISC personality profiling system is a tool used to assess and understand individual behavior and communication styles. It is based on the theory that there are four primary behavioral styles: Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness. The DISC system measures the degree to which an individual exhibits each of these styles, and provides insights into how they are likely to behave and communicate in different situations. According to Bradbury (2019), the DISC system "provides a framework for understanding how people are motivated,

what their communication preferences are, and how they are likely to respond to different situations" (Bradbury, 2019, p. 12). Each style has its own unique strengths and weaknesses, and understanding one's personal style and the styles of others can help improve communication, relationships, and teamwork.

The Dominance style is characterized by a focus on achieving results, making decisions quickly, and taking charge. The Influence style is outgoing, enthusiastic, and seeks to influence others. The Steadiness style is cooperative, calm, and prefers to work in stable environments. The Conscientiousness style is analytical, detail-oriented, and values accuracy and precision (Erikson, 2019).

The DISC personality profiling system was created by William Moulton Marston, a psychologist who developed the theory of DISC in the 1920s. The model has been adapted and expanded over time by various practitioners and organizations, resulting in different versions and variations of the system, including the DISA personality profiling system. However, the original DISC model and theory were developed by Marston. Those who have a greater understanding of these behavioral patterns can better understand their own tendencies as well as those of others, which can lead to enhanced communication, increased levels of teamwork, and overall success in both personal and professional relationships.

The DISC personality profiling system is highly relevant for my article. As noted by Ward (2014), "the DISC system provides a common language for discussing behavior and communication preferences, which can help individuals and teams work together more effectively" (Ward, 2014, p. 17). By identifying an individual's dominant personality traits through the DISC method, one can better understand how that person is likely to behave and communicate in various intercultural situations. For example, a person who scores high in the Influence style may be more comfortable with informal communication styles and may value building relationships over achieving specific outcomes, while a person who scores high in the Conscientiousness style may prioritize accuracy and precision in communication.

1.2.1. Dominance

Those who exhibit a dominant behavioral pattern are typically forceful, decisive, and self-assured in their interactions with others. They are natural leaders who do not shy away from taking charge and making decisions even when

such decisions are difficult. People tend to view them as competitive and goal-oriented, and they are not hesitant to put others in a position of difficulty. Those that are dominant are also extremely results-driven and may be willing to take chances in order to accomplish what they want to (Erikson, 2019).

1.2.2. Inducement

Those who exhibit the behavioral pattern of inducing others to do something are typically gregarious, charismatic, and social. They get their energy from interacting with other people and take pleasure in cultivating relationships with others. They typically have excellent communication skills and are able to persuade people with the words they use and the way they conduct themselves. Those that are susceptible to inducement are also very creative and are able to think in unconventional ways in order to come up with original answers to challenges (Erikson, 2019).

1.2.3. Steadiness

Those who exhibit a submission behavioral tendency are typically more reserved and introverted than other types of people. They tend to avoid conflict, which contributes to the perception that they are nice and accommodating. They are excellent listeners and frequently demonstrate a high level of empathy toward the people around them. Those who are inclined to make a submission are typically focused on the topic at hand and attentive to minute details. They are really good at seeing things through to the end and ensuring that everything is carried out appropriately (Erikson, 2019).

1.2.4. Conscientiousness

Those who have a behavioral pattern associated with analytic abilities are typically methodical and attentive to minute details. They take pleasure in finding solutions to challenges and their thought processes are frequently quite analytical. They have a strong ability to analyze data and information, and they are able to spot patterns and trends very rapidly. Those who are good at analysis are typically very ordered and structured in the way that they approach different jobs (Erikson, 2019).

1.3. Intercultural Communication Ability

People of various cultural backgrounds are able to communicate with one another through intercultural communication. The term "intercultural communication" refers to the exchange of messages between people from various cultural backgrounds who share an awareness of their significance (Ozdemir, 2011). Without a shared cultural reference point, people who must communicate across cultural boundaries often attribute motives, intentions, and goals to the actions of those around them based on their own cultural assumptions. There are communication problems between people of different cultures because of this aspect.

The ability to communicate effectively across cultures requires more than simply being educated in the language of the intended culture. It is necessary to have an awareness of the cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that shape the communication patterns of people who come from different cultural backgrounds in order to accomplish this. Also, it requires being conscious of one's personal cultural prejudices and assumptions, as well as having the ability to adapt one's communication style in order to suit the cultural variations of the other person (Martin & Nakayama, 2017).

In order to effectively navigate intercultural interactions, individuals must possess intercultural communication competence, which involves the ability to understand and adapt to different cultural norms and communication styles. Strategies that can help individuals improve their intercultural communication competence:

1.3.1. Strive to Comprehend the Culture of the Other Person

In my experience, when communicating with someone from a foreign culture, taking the effort to familiarize yourself with their cultural background is essential for effective communication. For instance, I had the opportunity to live among people from Kuwait and I realized this thing: if you are communicating with someone from Kuwait, taking the effort to familiarize yourself with their cultural background is essential for effective communication. It is important to understand that in Kuwait, the concept of "face" or reputation is highly valued, and direct confrontation or criticism should be avoided in

public. Nonverbal communication is also important, and maintaining eye contact is considered a sign of respect and attentiveness. It is also common to use personal titles and show respect to elders and those in positions of authority. Additionally, it is important to be aware of religious customs and practices, such as prayer times and Ramadan, the holy month of fasting. On the other hand, it is considered impolite to ask personal questions or inquire about a person's income or wealth. Overall, by taking the time to learn about and respect the cultural norms of Kuwait, we can avoid miscommunication and build meaningful relationships across cultural boundaries (Hall, 1959).

1.3.2. Avoid Making Assumptions

When communicating with individuals from different cultures, it is important to avoid making assumptions about their thoughts, behaviors, or communication styles. Each culture has its own unique way of communicating, and what may be considered acceptable or polite in one culture may be perceived differently in another. For one semester I have studied in Poland where I have interacted with people from Poland, Italy, Qatar and Kuwait and I observed that it is common for people to express disagreement or skepticism openly and directly, whereas in Italy, expressing disagreement can be seen as rude or confrontational. In Qatar, it is customary to take the time to establish rapport and build trust before discussing business matters, while in Kuwait, direct negotiation is valued. In Romania, humor is often used as a way to alleviate tension and establish rapport, but it is important to be mindful of the type of humor used, as some may be considered inappropriate or offensive. By taking the time to learn about these cultural differences and being willing to adapt to them, we can avoid misunderstandings and establish more effective communication across cultural boundaries (Hofstede, 1991).

1.3.3. Be Aware of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a crucial component of intercultural communication, and it is essential to understand that gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice can have different meanings across cultures. Consider your

own nonverbal clues and attempt to comprehend the nonverbal signs of the other person within the context of their cultural background. For instance, another interesting fact that I observed in Kuwaiti culture, direct eye contact is perceived as a sign of respect and interest in the conversation, while in Italian culture, it can be viewed as a sign of aggression or an attempt to dominate the conversation. Similarly, the use of hand gestures may be considered normal and expressive in Italian and Polish cultures, but it could be viewed as impolite in Qatari and Kuwaiti cultures. Therefore, it is important to be aware of nonverbal communication and its potential cultural implications to avoid misunderstandings and misinterpretations in intercultural communication (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988).

1.3.4. Take into Consideration the Personality of the Individual

Different cultural groups may have distinct personality qualities that influence their communication styles. Based on my personal experience, I have observed that certain cultural groups tend to exhibit specific communication traits. For instance:

- Poland: Polish culture is characterized by high levels of collectivism and respect for authority. Poles tend to communicate indirectly and with a great deal of formality, particularly in business settings. They may avoid confrontations and be more reserved in expressing their emotions.
- Italy: Italian culture values relationships and social connections, and Italians tend to communicate in a very expressive and emotive manner. They often use gestures and facial expressions to convey meaning, and may interrupt each other frequently during conversation.
- Qatar: Qatar is a highly hierarchical society, where status and social class are very important. Communication tends to be very polite and respectful, with a focus on preserving harmony and avoiding conflict. People may speak in a soft tone of voice and avoid making direct eye contact, especially when speaking to someone of higher status.
- Kuwait: Kuwaiti culture is characterized by a strong emphasis on family and social relationships. Kuwaitis tend to communicate indirectly, using hints and suggestions rather than direct statements, particularly when dealing

with sensitive or personal issues. They may also avoid confrontations and be very polite and respectful in their communication.

1.3.5. Be Flexible and Adaptable

Intercultural communication requires a willingness to adapt and be flexible in your communication approach. This means being open to adjusting your language, pace, and topic of conversation to align with the cultural background of the person you are communicating with. For instance, in some cultures, individuals may prefer more formal language, while others may prefer casual language. During my interactions with a person from Kuwait, I was informed that in their culture it is essential to use titles such as "Sheikh" or "Haji" when addressing someone who is older or in a higher social position. Additionally, it is crucial to avoid sensitive topics such as politics, religion, or sex. In Italy, on the other hand, it is acceptable to speak with more enthusiasm and use hand gestures while communicating. Being flexible and adaptable demonstrates respect and consideration for the other person's cultural background and can lead to more effective and meaningful communication (Bennett, 1993).

1.3.6. Practice Active-Listening

Active listening is an important skill to cultivate when communicating with people from different cultures. It involves more than just hearing the words that someone is saying. Instead, active listening means actively engaging with the speaker, asking questions to clarify their meaning, and showing that you understand what they are saying. By doing so, you can better comprehend their point of view and avoid misunderstandings. As noted by Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012), in collectivistic cultures "listeners must be attuned to indirect cues and nonverbal cues that convey politeness, humility, and deference, while speakers must be aware of how their language may be interpreted" (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, p. 20). Therefore, active listening can be especially valuable in intercultural communication, helping to bridge gaps and build understanding between individuals from different cultural backgrounds.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Goal

The objective of this research is to investigate the significance of identifying an individual's personality type in achieving effective intercultural communication. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether adjusting communication strategies according to the individual's behavior pattern is essential for successful cross-cultural communication. The research will explore the extent to which personality traits influence the effectiveness of intercultural communication. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into the importance of understanding personality types in achieving effective intercultural communication.

2.2. Research Design

While surveys are a frequent way for collecting data on personality traits and the efficiency of cross-cultural communication, there are other research methodologies that can provide deeper insights into how personality factors influence communication between cultures. Case studies, focus groups, participant observation, and autoethnography are all qualitative research methodologies that can provide extensive insights into the relationship between personality traits and cross-cultural communication. These methods allow researchers to collect data on personal experiences with cross-cultural communication and investigate how personality factors affect communication strategies and outcomes.

This paper aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of personality factors on effective communication among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. To achieve this, we employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods that align with the objectives of our study. The methods utilized include: a personal case study based on my experiences while studying in Poland, examining the variations in nonverbal cues among individuals from Poland, Italy, Romania, and Kuwait; a focus group participating in a strategy game organized by Polish individuals, with participants from Romania, Italy, and Poland; and finally, a participant observation method, in which the question *How do you see the game?* was addressed to each individual before initiating the game. By employing

these diverse methodologies, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the role of personality factors in cross-cultural communication.

3. Results

3.1. Personal Case Study

The first result presented in this paper is a personal case study, which offers initial evidence of the connection between intercultural communication and personality traits, specifically focusing on nonverbal cues (*Table 1*). This case study is based on my personal experience while studying abroad in Poland from October 2022 to February 2023 at the Polish Naval Academy of Gdynia. During that time, I had the opportunity to interact with individuals of various nationalities, including Poles, Italians, and Arabs. The study involved approximately 20 participants, consisting of 7 Arabs from Kuwait, 2 Italians, 4 Romanians, and 7 Poles. This diverse group allowed for a rich exploration of the relationship between personality factors and effective cross-cultural communication.

Table 1 - Personality traits: nonverbal cues

Nonverbal Cue	Romania	Poland	Italy	Kuwait
Eye contact	Direct eye contact is generally expected and shows interest and attentiveness	Prolonged eye contact can be seen as aggressive or confrontational	Direct eye contact is important and conveys sincerity and respect	Prolonged eye contact may be seen as confrontational or disrespectful
Gestures	Gestures are commonly used in communication and are expressive	Gestures are used sparingly and with more subtle movements	Gestures are common and expressive, but should be used in moderation in formal settings	Gestures are used sparingly, and displays of emotion should be controlled
Touch	Touch is common in informal settings and can convey warmth and friendliness	Touch is less common and can be perceived as intrusive or inappropriate	Touch is common among friends and family, but not in formal settings	Touch is less common and should be avoided between members of the opposite sex who are not related
Facial expressions	Expressive facial expressions are common and convey emotions	Facial expressions are more reserved and can be interpreted as polite or aloof	Facial expressions are important and are used to convey emotions and thoughts	Facial expressions are more subdued and displays of emotion should be controlled
Proximity	Close proximity is common and shows familiarity and comfort	Personal space is more important and should not be invaded without permission	Personal space is important, but close proximity is acceptable among friends and family	Personal space is important, and close proximity may be seen as intrusive

This case study illustrates how personality traits, such as extroversion and indirect communication, can influence cross-cultural communication effectiveness. The more we are well-informed about the indirect communication as nonverbal cues, the more effective the intercultural communication will be.

3.2. Focus Groups

A focus group was conducted with 16 participants – 10 from Romania, 2 from Italy and 4 from Poland. The purpose of the focus group was to explore how behavior patterns can influence cross-cultural negotiation, more precisely, how a strategy game (“Migration Crisis”) with mixed teams of Romanians-Italians-Poles will end.

"Migration Crisis" is a strategic game that features four countries: Poland, Italy, Germany, and Sweden, each with unique roles and objectives in the context of a refugee crisis.

Italy represents a country struggling with the refugee crisis and starts with four Fuel resources. Its mission is to have no refugees on its border and to acquire one Energy and one Food resource.

Poland portrays a country with a negative approach to the crisis, beginning with four Food resources. Its mission is to have no migrants within its borders by the end of the game, complete two projects, and acquire one Energy and one Fuel resource.

Sweden assumes the role of a country with a positive approach to the crisis, starting with four Energy resources. Its mission is to accept at least 20,000 refugees, complete one project, and acquire one Money and one Food resource.

Germany exemplifies a country with a neutral approach to the crisis, commencing with four Money resources. Its mission is to accept 5,000 highly skilled refugees and 5,000 regular refugees, complete one project, and acquire one Fuel and one Food resource.

The game consists of 12 negotiation rounds. At the beginning of each round, a "World Event" card is drawn, introducing events such as the Suez Canal Blockade, a fire in an immigrant camp, a crash in the fuel market, war in Ukraine, or a natural disaster. To maintain stability, each country must possess at least one resource.

Starting from the second round, players can exchange resources. Countries can accept 5,000 refugees in exchange for two resources. Every two rounds, the Resource Commission awards one Money resource to the country hosting the most refugees. Additionally, each country receives one of its original resources every round: Poland gets Food, Sweden gets Energy, Germany gets Money, and Italy gets Fuel.

The participants were first organized in 4 teams and (2 teams of 2 Romanians + 1 Italian + 1 Pole and 2

teams of 3 Romanians and 1 Pole).

All of the participants find themselves with the following personality traits: (based on DISA method – Table 2): 2 pure *Dominance*, 6 pure *Submission*, 3 pure *Inducement*, 2 pure *Analytical*, 1 mix between *Dominance and Inducement*, 1 mix between *Submission and Analytical*, 1 mix between *Submission and Inducement*.

Table 2 - Characteristics for every behavior pattern

<p>Analytical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Slow reaction ● Maximum effort to organize ● Minimal interest in relationships ● Historical time frame ● Cautious action ● Tendency to avoid involvement 	<p>Dominant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quick reaction ● Maximum effort to control ● Minimal interest for caution in relationships ● Current time frame ● Direct action ● Tendency to avoid involvement
<p>Submission (Stable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calm reaction ● Maximum effort for connection ● Minimal interest in change ● Current time frame ● Supportive action ● Tendency to reject conflict 	<p>Inducement (Inspiring)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rapid reaction ● Maximum effort to involve ● Minimal interest in routine ● Future time frame ● Impulsive action ● Tendency to reject isolation

Important to our focus group is that the team who won the game (1st prize) was formed by 3 Romanians and 1 Pole and their personality traits were: 1 person with a mix between *Dominance and Inducement*, 1 *Analytical*, 1 mix of *Submission and Inducement* and 1 *Inducement*. The last place was taken by a team formed by 3 Romanians and 1 Pole with the following personality traits: 3 *Submission* and 1 person with a mix between *Submission and Analytical*.

What we can conclude from this focus group is that despite the fact that the two teams who got first and last place were formed similarly (with members from the same nationalities), the thing that mattered was their personality traits.

In this way, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Personality traits have a significant impact on the performance and success of a group. The team with the mix of *Dominance and Inducement*, *Analytical*, *Submission and Inducement* personalities performed better than the team with mostly submissive personalities.

- Cultural background alone does not determine group performance. Despite both teams being formed by individuals from the same nationalities, the team with the more diverse mix of personality traits performed better.

- The importance of personality traits in group performance highlights the need for effective team building and selection strategies. In order to create successful teams, it is important to consider not only cultural background but also personality traits and their potential impact on group dynamics and communication.

- Effective cross-cultural communication involves adapting communication styles to the personality traits of team members. By recognizing and understanding the personality traits of team members, individuals can adapt their communication strategies to effectively work with and understand each other.

3.3. Participant Observation

For this point, before starting the game, I asked members from every team, with different personality traits the following question: *How do you see this strategic game?*

I obtained the following answers:

- *Pure Dominance: There is no way to lose this game. I think my team should focus on an aggressive strategy. They are lucky that I am in the team and I will take the lead. We need to be proactive and not wait for our opponents to make the first move. That's the way I see this game and I am ready to take on the challenge.*

- *Pure Inducement: This game is a great opportunity for us to come together and work as a team. I will cheer them up and I hope we will win. It is kind (of) funny to be here and to play this game together. Anyway, for me the most important thing is that we get closer to each other by this game and in addition we can have fun.*

- *Pure Submissive: I see this game as a chance to work together and achieve a common goal. We need to listen to everyone's ideas and opinions when we are deciding. Personally, I am not that comfortable with taking big risks, we should let others take the first move and then we can counter-attack. So, to answer to your question, this game is an opportunity for us to come together and achieve something as a team.*

- *Pure Analytical: Taking into consideration the details will make the difference between first and second prize. Also, this is a complex challenge, and I believe that our success will depend on our ability to analyze the situation. There is no time for emotions or biases. We need to focus hard.*

3.4. Autoethnography

As an individual who characterizes himself as a *Dominant-Inducement*, I truly believe in the connection between personality traits and intercultural communication by the simple fact I am very self-assured and confident in my own abilities to connect with others.

I know and I believe my personality traits (strong communication and interpersonal skills) are a major factor in building relationships across cultures. I am aware that other people's personalities are different from mine and there are people who are more introverts and extroverts than others.

This fact can be observed in daily life by the way we interact with each other. There are people who prefer not to interact at all and people who cannot be isolated. Overall, it is widely recognized that the importance of personality traits in shaping communication and relationships is significant, both within and across cultures.

4. Conclusion

The significance of identifying an individual's personality type for effective intercultural communication has been demonstrated. The most important thing is that we need to accept the fact that we are people, we have our own minds and different ways of thinking, behaving and communicating based on our personality traits.

We may obtain insights about an individual's communication style, values, and cultural background if we take the time to learn about an individual's personality. All of these things can help us develop stronger and more effective relationships across cultures.

Whether we are conducting research, leading a team, or simply dealing with people from different backgrounds, it can be a great tool for success to be aware of personality traits and their impact on communication. As a result, it is essential for individuals as well as

organizations to make the development of intercultural communication competence a priority. This includes the ability to recognize and adjust to varying personality types across cultures, which is necessary in order to establish connections that are deeper and more meaningful across cultural lines.

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