Life-long Learning in Business and Industry

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Proceedings
Richard D. Babcock  
University of San Francisco, USA

Bertha Du-Babcock  
City University of Hong Kong, China

A model of communication zones in international business communication

This conference presentation previewed our journal article which is cited as followed:


The comments of the audience were incorporated into the final version of the article. We want to take this opportunity to thank those who made comments or asked questions during our session.

Rather than paraphrase or summarize the article, we refer you to the article directly or to access it through ProQuest. Following is the article abstract:

This paper presents a model of language-based communication zones in international business communication. The model builds on Du-Babcock and Babcock's (1996) descriptions of expatriate-local personnel communication patterns by reconfiguring and adding new zones, which vary according to the language proficiency matches of the interactants. The eight new communication zones represented here can contribute to a more comprehensive framework that represents the dynamic, bi-directional, multiply influenced and transformational translation process integral to international business communication. Previous research operated on the assumption that all participants within an international business communication setting functioned as fully proficient users of all languages being spoken with no accounting for communication difficulties based on varying levels of language proficiency. This research integrates the notion that there is, in fact, a language-competency variable that greatly impacts communication and communication dynamics within the eight identified language-based communication zones. Research-based incidents from four countries illustrate the communication patterns in the language-based communication zones.

For further discussions of the model, please contact us via e-mail (BABCOCKR@USFCA.EDU or ENBERTHA@CITYU.EDU.HK).
Figure 1: Language-Based Communication Zones in International Business Communication

Different-Language Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel Competencies</th>
<th>Non-parallel Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unilingual*</td>
<td>Zone One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Bilingual</td>
<td>Partial Bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Bilingual</td>
<td>Full Bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone Two</td>
<td>Zone Three-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full Bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zone Three-Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Partial Bilingual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zone Two-One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unilingual*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Same-Language Zones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intracultural</th>
<th>Intercultural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-Language Speaker (C^A)</td>
<td>Zone A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First-Language Speaker (C^A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Zone A-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First-Language Speaker (C^B)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
C^A: Culture A
C^B: Culture B
* : Includes bilinguals in language environments where their languages are not spoken.
Figure 2: Link-pin Communication Channels
Figure 3: Language Proficiencies of the Speakers at a Business Meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speakers</th>
<th>Language Proficiency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisional Manager (Japanese Multinational)</td>
<td>Native</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Manager (Taiwanese Multinational)</td>
<td>Elementary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Manager stationed in Japan (Taiwanese Multinational)</td>
<td>Fluent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4: Communication Zones and Conversation Subjects at a Business Meeting

Speakers

Divisional Manager (Japanese Multinational)

Regional Manager (Taiwanese Multinational)

Country Manager stationed in Japan (Taiwanese Multinational)

Divisional Manager (Japanese Multinational)

Activated Zones

ZONE THREE-TWO

English

Japanese

Country Manager stationed in Japan (Taiwanese Multinational)

Chinese

ZONE ONE

Japanese

ZONE A

Chinese

ZONE THREE-ONE

Japanese

ZONE A

Japanese

Speakers

Regional Manager (Taiwanese Multinational)

Country Manager stationed in Japan (Taiwanese Multinational)

Divisional Manager (Japanese Multinational)

Plant Manager in Osaka* (Japanese Multinational)

Subjects

Social (relationship building) & Business (decision making)

Business (decision making)

Social (relationship building)

Business (clarification)

Business (information exchange)

Business (implementation)

*via telephone