Necessity of Intercultural Training Program in MET

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Abstract : Outwardly, the people in the shipping industry are aware that multicultural working environments and conditions could have a strong influence on the operation of ships. With a lack of cultural awareness and foreign language skill of crew members on ships, there are lots of misunderstandings and miscommunications among (cross-cultural) crews. More and more maritime accidents are caused by human error in the world's oceans. Nevertheless the research on cultural diversity and human interaction on ships is still in its infancy. Due to the rapid change of the demographic make-up of crews, not only teaching and training technical skills for the crews, but also education in nontechnical skills such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, intercultural competence is urgently needed. This study will deal with intercultural issues on ships. It aims to emphasize the necessity of intercultural training in MET.

Keywords : Maritime Education and Training, Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Training, Intercultural Competence, Bridge Resource and Team Management
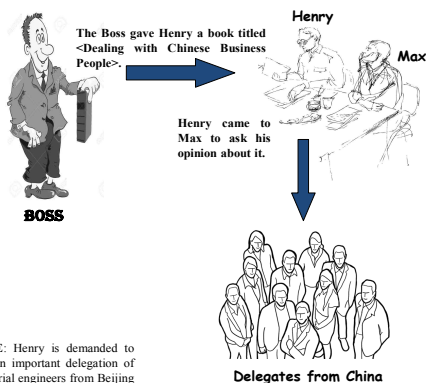
Research Backgrounds

Research Background

- Nowadays it is quiet common in the maritime industry that seafarers and ship-owners are different in nationalities, and ships operate under a different flag from their origin or ownership.

- The ship-owners and shipping companies in South Korea also are gradually employing diverse seafarers with different national and cultural backgrounds because of endless competition with other shipping companies in the world. With a lack of cultural awareness and foreign language skill of crew members on ships, there are lots of misunderstandings and miscommunications among (cross-cultural) crews.

- Furthermore, seafarers are frequently exposed to difficult working conditions and particular professional risks. Working far from home, they are vulnerable to exploit and abuse, non-compliance with contracts, exposure to poor diet and living conditions.

Critical Incident

The Boss gave Henry a book titled <Dealing with Chinese Business People>.

Henry came to Max to ask his opinion about it.

Henry

Max

NOTE: Henry is demanded to lead an important delegation of industrial engineers from Beijing in his plant.

BOSS

Delegates from China

Research Questions

- How do seafarers understand each other when they do not share a common cultural experience?

- What kind of communication is needed to be both (culturally) diverse and unified in common goals in a merchant vessel?

- How does communication contribute in creating a climate of respect, not just tolerance, for diversity on shipboard?

- How could maritime students as maritime officers in the future be trained to demonstrate the competence to communicate effectively in the multicultural working environment as well as to carry out well their responsibilities?

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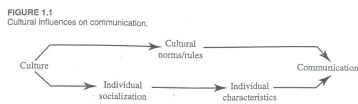
Culture and Intercultural Communication

Application of Culture Concept


A Working Definition for Culture

- Over 100 definitions of culture have been proposed. Culture can be seen as everything that is human-made or as a system of shared meaning and so on.
- Our cultures provide us with implicit theories of the <games being played> in our societies. We use our theories of the games being played in interacting with the people we encounter.
- We learn our theories of the games being played and how to be members of our cultures from our parents, from our teachers in schools, from our religious institutions, from our peers, and from the mass media.
- Our cultures influence our behavior directly through the norms and rules we use to guide our behavior when we interact with others.

FIGURE 1.1
Cultural influences on communication.

Culture → Cultural norms/rules → Communication
Culture → Individual socialization → Individual characteristics

Source: William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim (2003): Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communication, 4th Edition, McGraw-Hill, p. 17.
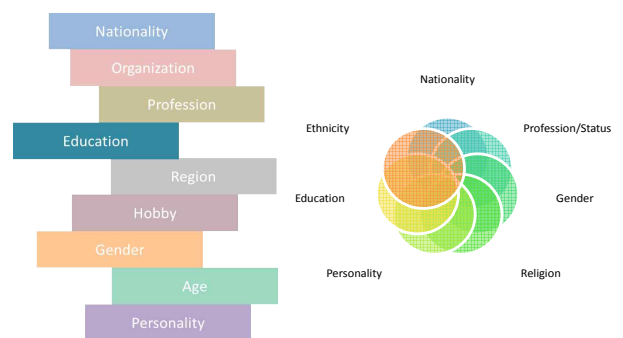

Commonality-Perspective

Intercultural Interaction on the Mono-Layered Basis

Culture A — Culture Overlapping Situation — Culture B
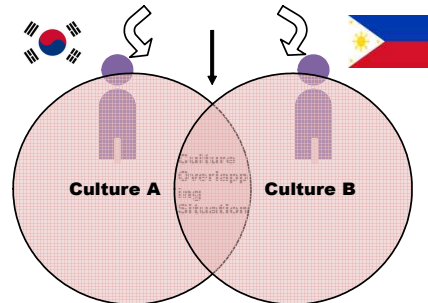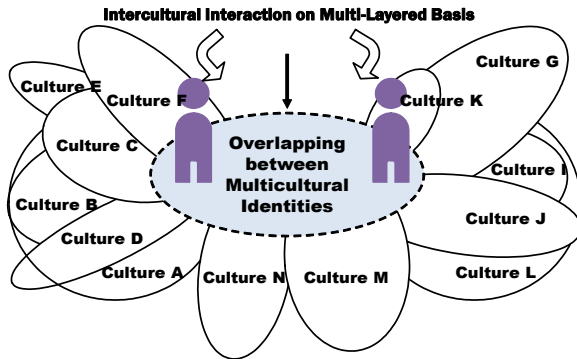

Upper-Case *Culture* and Lower-Case *culture*

- Culture writ large with a capital <C>
  - ✓ The more academic term that is used by most writers is objective culture. Examples of objective culture might include social, economic, political, and linguistic systems – the kinds of things that usually are included in area studies or history courses.

- Culture writ small with a spell <c>
  - ✓ The less obvious aspect of culture is its subjective side. Subjective culture refers to the psychological features that define a group of people – their everyday thinking and behavior – rather than to the institutions they have created. Definition: <*the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people.*>

- Social reality = C + c

Cultural Layers of an Individual

Nationality
Organization
Profession
Education
Region
Hobby
Gender
Age
Personality

Nationality
Ethnicity
Education
Personality
Profession/Status
Gender
Religion

Difference-Perspective

Intercultural Interaction on Multi-Layered Basis

Culture E
Culture F
Culture C
Culture B
Culture D
Culture A
Culture N
Culture M

Overlapping between Multicultural Identities

Culture G
Culture K
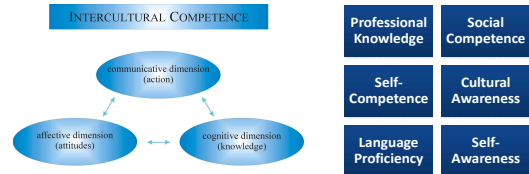Culture I
Culture J
Culture L

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The Contents of Intercultural Training

Cognitive, Affective and Behavioral Aspects

- Awareness of Culture and of Cultural Differences
- Knowledge necessary for working with crew members from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Emotional Challenges (Mental and physical health)
- Competence: Actual Behaviors

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

communicative dimension (action)

affective dimension (attitudes) ↔ cognitive dimension (knowledge)

Professional Knowledge	Social Competence
Self-Competence	Cultural Awareness
Language Proficiency	Self-Awareness

Reference: Landis, Dan et al. 1996: Handbook of Intercultural Training. Sage Publication.

Designing of ICT Programs

Implications for Maritime Education

Categories for the Administration of ICT Programs

- Needs Assessment and Evaluation
- Purpose and Goals
- Program Planning and Design
- Implementation
- Techniques to increase the effectiveness of training programs

Training Types and Techniques

The approaches used in training: **Didactic vs. Experiential approach**
The content of the training: **Culture-General vs. Culture-Specific**

- Didactic Culture General: Lecture/Discussion, Videotapes, Culture-General Assimilators (Critical incidents)
- Didactic Culture Specific: Area Orientation Briefings, Language Training, Culture-Specific Assimilators, Culture-Specific Reading
- Experiential Culture General: Intercultural Communication Workshops, Culture-General Simulations, Self-Assessments
- Experiential Culture Specific: Bicultural Communication Workshops, Culture-Specific Simulations or Role-Play

Implications and Suggestions for Maritime Education

- Intercultural Training (ICT) Programs designed for maritime students should be integrated in MET. To work effectively on a multicultural vessel, ship officers must be aware of their own culture and be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify or manage their behavior as an indication of respect for the crew members of other cultures.

- It seems that the maritime educators tend to apply a very static and essentialist concept of <culture> into their curriculum (e.g. BRM/ERM). This kind of cultural concept in MET should be changed or complemented by a dynamic and hybrid one (culture as <process>). We need to do not only to prepare maritime students to manage the crew members with different nationalities and languages, but to encourage them to understand themselves as well as the others as a multicultural individuals.

- It is recommended that the maritime educators have to find the way how intercultural communication should be taught and integrated in the current MET curriculum. Because of the rapidly changed composition of maritime labor market, the importance of teaching intercultural competence to the forthcoming ship officers who will be responsible for a multicultural and multinational vessel should be highlighted.