



ANALYSIS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES IN THE MOVIE 'OUTSOURCED' (2006)

Afidatul Aqma Mohamad Sabre,

Eliyas S. Mohandasⁱ

Universiti Teknologi MARA,

Shah Alam, Malaysia

Abstract:

Cross-cultural communication has sparked many cultural misunderstandings in today's world. This happens because of the challenges faced by people from different cultural backgrounds who communicate with each other without having knowledge or familiarity with each other cultures. Besides, different cultural values can be one of the main reasons for cross-cultural communication challenges to happen. This study aims to identify the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by the American and Indian main characters in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006). This study investigates the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by the main characters from two different countries: America and India and how the challenges affect them. The researcher employed a qualitative research design by using content analysis to identify the challenges faced by them. The researcher employed two types of data: primary and secondary data, to collect the best materials to support this study to have a better understanding of the study. The researcher employed the purposive sampling method to select the movie that depicted the cross-cultural communication challenges. In this study, the researchers used coding guidelines and coding themes to get the relevant answers to the research questions. The researcher analysed six themes according to the Stumbling Block in Intercultural Communication by Laray M. Barna (1994) to answer the research questions of this study. The results are presented in a table to get a clear view of data on the cross-cultural communication challenges. This study revealed the common challenges of cross-cultural communication faced by people from different cultures based on the movie 'Outsourced' (2006) such as the Assumption to Similarity, Language Differences, Nonverbal Misinterpretation, Stereotype or Preconception, Tendency to Evaluate and High Anxiety or Stress. Hence, this study is significant for people who want to learn about cross-cultural communication as well as those who are in a cross-cultural situation at work or institution because it exposes cross-cultural communication challenges and their effects.

ⁱ Correspondence email: elijas9154@uitm.edu.my

Keywords: cross-cultural communication challenges, cross-cultural communication, movies, content analysis

1. Introduction

Understanding cross-cultural communication is vital since many workplaces today conduct global business and have a diverse workforce that involves people from different cultures. According to Lombardo (2017), Cross-cultural communication is the understanding of different beliefs, customs, communication, and practices. To simplify, it is the interaction between people from different cultures and backgrounds, which involves knowing how people from different cultures communicate, speak, and perceive the world around them. Cross-cultural communication can trigger many challenges. The common challenges between communicators from different cultural backgrounds are misunderstanding and wrong interpretation (Lombardo, 2017). Besides, Shafaat Hussain (2018) reported that the most significant challenges in cross-cultural communication are language barriers, culture shock, non-verbal communication, and ethnocentrism. A study by Kiss (2005) stated that non-verbal communication such as gestures and facial expressions is one of the aspects that lead to cultural misunderstanding. The differences in communication style and diverse forms of communication are one of the reasons that lead to cultural barriers. As a result, it leads to misunderstanding and wrong interpretations made by people from other cultural backgrounds.

Values are related to the norms of culture, which culture influences the behaviour of a person and how they communicate with others. According to Edvardsson et al. (2008), as cited by Wang & Fan (2013), values can be summarised as the principles, standards, ethics, and ideals people and companies lived in. Therefore, values are the principles, standards, and ethics of a culture that differ from other cultures. American values display American identity and behaviour (Rose et al., 2014). America is the world's third-largest country with a culturally diverse society. Hence, America's ethnic and values in the business world are a mixture and conglomeration of other countries because of the migration of people from all over the world (Rose et al., 2014). One of the American values is self-reliance and independence (Rose, Carausu, Crone & Sengupta, (2014). America scores higher on individualism by using Hofstede's theory. According to Saenz, McGregor & Nguyen (2017), the value of individualism is mainly related to their work, and they have a hierarchy established in the workplace. This is due to the principle that they have been taught from a young to consider themselves as an individual who is responsible for their own life. American value is not afraid of taking risks in business when there are opportunities (Rose et al., 2014). Therefore, they are not hesitant when it comes to work or business.

According to Hofstede's theory, America scores low on the Uncertainty Avoidance scale. Hence, they let things run in their natural course and keep pushing themselves to success without hesitation. As reported by Garza & McGregor (2018), Americans also score high on masculinity and Indulgence. They have a "winner take all" mentality and prioritise monetary rewards (Rose et al., 2014). Lastly, Americans score

low Power Distance scale because an individual has more power against a giant corporation (Rose et al., 2014). Americans are quick to challenge authority (Rose et al., 2014). As a result, they will search for a better solution to problems that are related to business and do not accept doing things that they have been told to without any solid reason.

Indian values are entirely different from American values. According to Hofstede's theory, Indian people are more collectivist for the group's wellbeing (Jayantilal, Palacios & Jorge 2015). It indicates that Indian culture is more family-oriented. Indians score higher on the Power Distance scale as it is a country that is known as a respected culture (Jayantilal et al., 2015). Juhasz (2014) reported that India has a high level of inequality of power and wealth within society, and this condition is accepted as a cultural norm in India. It is due to India scoring higher on the masculinity index, which indicates gender discrimination in society. It can be proven by Juhasz (2014) who stated that the higher the country ranks on the masculinity index, the more significant the gap between the values of men and women. As Sinha and Sinha (1990) cited by Jayantilal et al. (2015), this index shows the cultural roles attributed to men and limited opportunities for women to obtain education and better jobs. Lastly, according to Juhasz (2014), Indian society attempts to control unexpected events or situations with fewer rules and regulations. This, as a result of Indian values, which are more open to unstructured situations and ideas just like Americans.

The cinematic discourse's concept invites people to focus on film as a communication process (Janney, 2012). As mentioned by Plazza et al. (2011) cited by Thompson & Chepinchikj (2016), Cinematic discourse is defined as the cinematic language that incorporates the verbal, nonverbal, auditory, and visual aspects of the fictional narrative. Films are made intended to have emotional and cognitive meaning for the viewers. Thus, for audiences to grasp the plot and content of the films, cinematic discourse is required. The major expressive instrument and fundamental form of communication used by filmmakers to persuade audiences is cinematic discourse (Janney, 2012). Janney (2012) stated that in the classic pragmatic sense, cinematic discourse with a pragmatic approach would strive to harmonise the relationship between films, film watchers, and filmmakers. It will make the cinematic discourse a situated narrative process involving a storyteller and audience, the platform of expression, a conventional communication setting, a shared communication space, common discursive assumptions and expectations, and an implicit communicative pact between the participants (Janney, 2012). Pandey (2012) explained cross-cultural management could be learned through the film. It is considered a valuable tool to several levels of students as they communicate through their characters, context, story, dialogues, and audio-effect. The elements of cross-cultural communication can be learned effectively by people through cinematic discourse. Films are entertaining and engaging, stimulating students' curiosity towards other cultures, which automatically benefits them (Cardon, 2010). It will help people to have an in-depth understanding of cross-cultural communication and issues easily through films.

The movie 'Outsourced' (2006) is an American romantic comedy film directed by John Jeffcoat and written by George Wing. This film tells the story of Todd Anderson, an American manager who was sent to India to train his replacement. Todd, on the other hand, struggled to live in India and train the Indian employees because of the cultural differences between the two countries. This film features a blend of American and Indian cultures, highlighting many cross-cultural communication challenges between the American and Indian main characters.

2. Research Objectives

This study aims to investigate the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by the American and Indian main characters in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006). The research objectives are as below:

- 1) To identify the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by the American and Indian main characters in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006)
- 2) To analyse the effect of the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by the American and Indian main characters in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006)

3. Problem Statement

Culture provides essential social and economic benefits that improve many aspects of people's lives such as learning, tolerance, working, health, and quality of life. In today's world, it is unavoidable for cultures to meet, blend, and clash. By having cross-cultural communication, people can express themselves and understand other people from different cultures and backgrounds better. Cultural diversity knowledge helps in conflict resolution, team building, effective collaboration, trust formation, and many more (Binder, 2007).

However, people are merely affected by cross-cultural differences as the world nowadays expands to numerous workplaces, schools, and universities. Typically, cross-cultural challenges always happen to people from different cultural backgrounds. They interact with each other without knowing their cultural backgrounds, such as language, ethnicity, race, religion, and cultural practices. Different cultural values can also lead to cross-cultural communication challenges where it is essential judgment for people to judge whether it is good or bad and right or wrong (Sun, 2012). People from different cultures have different values, which is another reason for cross-cultural communication challenges. The most common challenges people face are different communication styles, language barriers, stereotypes, ethnocentrism, culture shock, and many more. These cross-cultural communication challenges often lead to miscommunication, issues, and conflicts.

Generally, western cultures communicate more directly and explicitly (Shafaat Hussain, 2018). Western countries such as America, Europe, and Australia voice their opinions and ideas unfiltered. In contrast, Asian countries such as Malaysia, India, and Arab are more structured and tend to filter their thoughts and views. Accordingly, when

these two different countries from Western and Asia meet, cross-cultural challenges such as misunderstanding, differences in understanding non-verbal communication, assumption, and disagreement tend to surface. These situations will lead to conflicts, and tension arises because of their difficulties (Bibi Noraini Mohd Yusuf, Zurina Zulkifli, Zurina Zulkifli, Intan Maizura Abd Rashid & Syahida Kamil, 2014). Several past studies in movies have been conducted regarding cross-cultural communication challenges. However, these past studies analysed the general view of cross-cultural communication challenges, and none focus on the film 'Outsourced' (2006). This study helped people to gain knowledge of cross-cultural communication challenges and avoid this situation when they interact with people from different cultures.

4. Literature Review

Laray M. Barna developed a framework in 1994, "Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural communication", which refers to the main causes of the communication challenges across cultures. This framework has six stumbling blocks which are Assumption to Similarity, Language Differences, Nonverbal Misinterpretation, Tendency to Evaluate, Stereotype or Preconception, and High Anxiety or Stress. The first stumbling block is an assumption to similarities. Assumption to similarities is when people think that every human being has standard requirements such as food, shelter, security, education, and so on, which makes them alike (Barna, 1994). However, the adaptation of everyday biological and social needs, values, beliefs, and attitudes differs in cultures. The second stumbling block is language differences. Barna (1994) discussed that slang, dialects, vocabulary, syntax, idioms, and jargon could cause difficulties across cultures besides struggling with a different language.

The next stumbling block is non-verbal misinterpretations. According to Barna (1994), people from different cultures absorb whatever fits into their world of recognition and interpretation through the frame of reference of their own culture. The fourth stumbling block among communicators is the existence of stereotypes and preconceptions. People interfere with the objective viewing of stimuli which sometimes, rationalises prejudices (Barna, 1994). Another stumbling block is the tendency to evaluate, where people tend to judge whether to approve or disapprove of a person or group instead of comprehending the differences in other people's culture (Barna, 1994). The last stumbling block is high anxiety which is also known as stress. Barna (1994) explained that stress is common in cross-cultural experiences because of the uncertainties present multiple times. Stress happens because people try to protect themselves from making 'stupid mistakes' in a foreign culture in which they are affected by culture shock (Barna, 1994).

Muhammad (2005) employed Barna's theory of stumbling blocks in intercultural communication in his past study. He stated that these six stumbling blocks are the main causes of cultural misunderstanding and frustration in intercultural communication. Lia & Camelia (2014) concluded that non-verbal misinterpretation is one of the stumbling blocks caused by cross-cultural communication. Shachaf (2008) states in her study that

Barna's (1994) six stumbling blocks clearly describe the failure to create mutual understanding between people from different cultures.

The six stumbling blocks by Barna (1994) are the main causes of cross-cultural communication challenges among people from different cultural backgrounds. Language Differences, Nonverbal Misinterpretation, Assumption to Similarity, Tendency to Evaluate, Stereotype, and High Anxiety are the most common challenges in cross-cultural communication. It is supported by previous studies done by Muhammad (2005), Lia & Camelia (2015), and Shachaf (2008). However, these three studies just stated the six elements in the stumbling blocks but did not justify in-depth how the six stumbling blocks contribute to cross-cultural communication conflicts.

Previous studies have demonstrated consistent evidence of attempts in analysing cross-cultural communication challenges, as described above. The first paragraph of previous studies has focused on the challenges from a corporate perspective, whereas the content analysis of past studies has only focused on culture shock and language barriers as challenges.

A study on cross-cultural communication conducted by Liu (2012) focused on Swedish and Chinese employees to understand the cross-cultural communication problem in the interaction between Chinese and Swedish employees. She utilized qualitative research and interviews as the study's primary data, which involved nine Chinese employees and six Swedish employees. The study found that significant problems concerning cross-cultural communication between Chinese and Swedish employees are the language barrier, different interpretations of the exact words, power distance degree differences, high and low context communication, and the ways people of different cultures handle conflicts. A study on managing communication challenges in multicultural organizations by Shafaat Hussain (2018) aimed to identify the challenges in communication in a multicultural environment and overcome them. He used secondary data such as journal articles to support his study. The study explained that language barriers, stereotyping, ethnocentrism, cultural shock, and attitudes toward conflict are the challenges that employees face in the multicultural workplace.

There are also past studies on cross-cultural communication challenges in content analysis. A past study by Tira Nur Fitria (2021) explained the culture shock analysis in the "English Vinglish" movie to better understand cross-cultural communication. She employed a descriptive qualitative method based on Ward's theory about culture shock. The study discovered that the main character in the film faced challenges because of cultural shocks. She also described the stages of cultural shocks: the honeymoon phase, crisis phase, recovery phase, and adjustment phase. Cui (2017)'s study discussed Chinese and foreign film and TV drama from cross-cultural communication perspectives. She explained in her study that there is no comparative understanding of the two cultures for translators, making it impossible to correctly grasp and express language of and engaging in news translation for people who understand the source language is crucial for the translation's national cultural quality.

5. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design in which the cross-cultural communication challenges between the American and Indian main characters in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006) were observed and analysed. The content of the movie 'Outsourced' (2006) in terms of phrases, sentences, and gestures in the scripts, as well as the film, were identified and analysed based on six themes namely Language Differences, Non-Verbal Misinterpretation, Stereotypes, Assumption to Similarities, Tendency to Evaluate and High Anxiety. These themes were developed based on the Stumbling Blocks framework by Barna (1994). The results are presented in a table to get a clear view of cross-cultural communication challenges.

6. Results

Data collected from the study shows that both main characters, American and Indian in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006) have faced cross-cultural communication challenges. The challenges happened due to the differences in their culture, background, and experiences. The challenges were determined according to the Barna (1994) framework which is Assumption of Similarity, Language Differences, Non-verbal Misinterpretation, Stereotype, and Preconception, Tendency to Evaluate, and High Anxiety or Stress. Table 1 indicates the result of the analysis based on the number of cross-cultural communication challenges faced by both main characters using Barna (1994) framework. Based on the results, the American main character, Todd Anderson faced all six stumbling blocks by the previously mentioned framework which indicates the challenges in cross-cultural communication which are Assumption to Similarity, Language Difference, Nonverbal Misinterpretation, Stereotype or Preconception, Tendency to Evaluate and High Anxiety or Stress. However, Indian main characters faced only four out of six stumbling blocks which are Assumption to Similarity, Language Differences, Stereotype or Preconception, and Tendency to Evaluate.

Table 1: The result of the analysis based on the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by the main characters using Barna (1994) framework

	Themes: Stumbling blocks by Barna (1994)					
	Assumption to Similarity	Language Differences	Nonverbal Misinterpretation	Stereotype or Preconceptions	Tendency to Evaluate	High Anxiety or Stress
American	4	5	3	2	2	10
Indian	3	10	0	2	5	0

Based on Table 1, the finding shows that the Assumption to Similarity for the American main characters is higher than for the Indian main characters. Four events that indicate the American main characters' actions of the Assumption of Similarity were found in the movie 'Outsourced' (2006). These scenes can be found at the minute 0:27:17, 0:33:09, 0:34:02, and 1:09:08. As compared to the American main characters, the finding shows the

number of assumptions to similarity made by the Indian main characters is lower than the American. They were seen in only three situations that indicate the acts of Assumption to Similarity. The scenes are at the minute 0:13:39, 0:45:58, and 0:53:20.

The results also show that the American and the Indian main characters displayed many language differences in the movie. The Americans faced five instances where they were challenged by the language differences whereas the Indian main characters were faced with ten. The most common language differences they faced were word choice, dialect, and accents. These scenes can be seen at the minute 0:04:38, 0:13:20, 0:16:15, 0:22:20, and 1:01:20. The Indian main characters faced twice the language differences challenges as the American main character. In this movie, the Indian main characters had difficulties understanding technical words or jargon, vocabulary, pronunciation, and accent. The scenes are at the minute of 0:09:20, 0:10:16, 0:10:51, 0:11:19, 0:12:22, 0:13:26, 0:29:26, 0:46:43, 0:50:08, and 1:32:25. Most of the frequent language differences challenges faced by Indian main characters can be seen in this movie are the pronunciation.

The American faced three non-verbal misinterpretation situations while the Indian main characters faced none at all. The scenes are found at minutes 0:14:30, 1:12:26, and 1:29:53.

The finding indicates that American main characters experienced an equal number of stereotypes with the Indian main characters. The scenes are at the minute 0:46:16 and 0:50:45. The Indian main characters too experienced two stereotypes similar to Americans. The scene indicates the incidents are at 0:01:15 and 0:48:44.

Based on the findings, the Indian main characters have a higher tendency to evaluate as shown in five scenes; 0:11:32, 0:11:55, 0:13:58, 0:24:35, and 1:10:33 in which they showcased the characters trying to evaluate Todd Anderson's actions as compared to the American main characters evaluating the actions of the Indian main characters by only three times; 0:21:20, 1:10:08, and 1:10:29.

The findings also show that the American main characters experienced a lot of stress and high anxiety throughout their stay in India. Both main characters, Todd, and Dave have experienced stress when they were in India. However, Todd experienced more than Dave because he stayed longer in India to train the staff. This situation is the opposite of the Indian main character, who faces no stress or high anxiety throughout the movie. The scene that depicted the American main characters stress are at the minutes 0:05:12, 0:07:30, 0:18:25, 0:19:12, 0:20:16, 0:23:41, 0:24:44, 0:26:10, 0:36:14, and 0:38:46.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher found out that the American main characters were the most affected by the cross-cultural communication challenges compared to the Indian main characters. Table 2 displays the effect of the cross-cultural communication challenges both characters face and the number of times it happens in the movie. It can be seen in the film as supported by Barna's framework, the effects of the cross-cultural communication challenges faced by them are misunderstanding, stomach upset from new and unusual food, frustration, and anger, and lastly, sadness and feeling helpless. American main characters faced all the effects while Indian main characters only faced one effect from cross-cultural communication challenges which is a misunderstanding.

Table 2: The effect of the cross-cultural communication challenges both characters face and the total of time it happens in the movie

Types of Characters	Effects of Cross-cultural Communication Challenges			
	Misunderstanding	Refusal to Eat Due to Past Bad Experience with Indian Food	Frustration and Anger	Sadness and Helpless
American	5	5	6	3
Indian	5	0	0	0

7. Discussion

Being in a global and diverse environment can cause a challenge for people to communicate effectively, especially when they have different cultures and backgrounds. Cross-cultural communication can cause a person to have difficulty not only because of language differences but also due to ethics and cultural differences. Considering that many people have faced cross-cultural communication challenges, this research paper is very significant in discovering the cross-communication challenges faced by the American and the Indian main characters by using the movie 'Outsourced' (2006) as well as the effect of the cross-cultural communication challenges that they faced.

Throughout the analysis, the researcher discovered that the assumption made by Todd causes him to face a lot of challenges as he does not know and ignore the differences between America and India in terms of their ethics and culture. In the movie, Todd is ignorant to learn about India and faces many difficulties due to his actions. This is supported by the previous literature that stated that Todd demonstrates his ignorance of Indian culture and Hinduism by describing one of the company's products, a burger brand (a type of branding iron for steaks and meat) (Briam, 2010). Moreover, in one of the scenes, Todd craved American food as he felt homesick and stressed. He thought he could get real cheeseburgers in India similar to America without knowing that he could only get a veggie burger. Again, this action displays Todd as ignorant to learn about Indian cultures and assume India can be like America. Dietary regulations and traditions exist in India's most frequently practised religions (Corichi, 2021). Thus, most of the Indian population is vegetarian, and they do not consume meat. Todd's action shows that he lacks knowledge about India and does not bother to learn about India, which causes him to face all the challenges. This can be supported by Pandey (2015) stating that Todd's lacked knowledge of India and was entirely unprepared in terms of behavioural skills, according to his students.

However, Indian main characters were found to indicate the assumption to the similarity in the scene where Aunty Ji asked Todd tons of personal questions shows that she assumed her questions were normal according to her culture, but it was the opposite of the American culture, where they are not used to being asked something related to their personal life. They believe that simply being human, with the same needs for food, shelter, and so on, makes everyone the same. Aunty Ji's action can be supported by Barna (1994), who stated that another reason many individuals are persuaded to believe that "*people are people*" is that it makes dealing with differences less difficult. The assumption

made by Auntie Ji's thinking American cultures are okay with personal questions caused Todd to feel uncomfortable due to his culture where they are not used to exchanging personal information with strangers. In the study, Lee (2018) mentioned Auntie Ji asked many personal questions to Todd, which made him feel embarrassed because he is not used to being asked those questions displays that this type of question is common in high-context cultures. Lia & Camelia (2014) added although directness is often avoided in high-context cultures, being asked personal questions about family and relationships is common. Therefore, Auntie Ji is being unaware of American culture and assumes her action is common, causing challenges to both.

Throughout the movie analysis, the American main character has challenges in terms of the different uses of language, word choice, dialect, and the accent of the Indian people. This can be seen when Todd requests a taxi to go to the train station. The Indian taxi drivers seem to ignore his request as they do not understand Todd because of the language differences. When Todd approaches the auto-rickshaw driver, the misunderstanding happens because he thinks the driver is driving a taxi. Moreover, the auto-rickshaw driver misunderstood Todd's request and kept on driving his auto-rickshaw. Briam (2010) supports these challenges by stating that Todd experienced a chaotic transportation system in India, which includes having to jump aboard a crowded moving train and then chasing after his suitcase, which is flung into a small auto-rickshaw. One of them is because of the language differences. Thus, language barriers are a common problem when meeting or working with a foreign worker. Vocabulary, syntax, idioms, slang, dialects, and other factors all contribute to the challenges, but the person struggling with a different language is at least aware that he or she is having difficulty but the tenacity with which someone will cling to only one meaning of a word or phrase in the new language, regardless of connotation or context, is a worse language problem. Lia & Camelia (2014) also added that noise is also different in different environments, as interferences and distractions can vary greatly under certain conditions. It can be a significant barrier to communication. Hence, Todd is having challenges because of the language differences and the chaotic situation in the scene.

The challenges that the Indian main characters faced were mostly pronunciation, the use of technical words or jargon, and the accent of the American main character. In the movie, pronunciation is the most depicted challenge the Indian main characters face. Puro and Auntie Ji often mispronounce Todd's name because of the Indian accent, which indicates that they cannot pronounce it correctly even though Todd has corrected them. Briam (2010) supported this by stating the film highlights numerous language differences, beginning with names that cause Todd's frustration, everyone he meets ends up calling him "Mr. Toad". This situation happened because speakers with Indian accents produce some consonant sounds differently and have several differences in producing vowel sounds. The language differences and the accent caused challenges for Todd and the Indian main characters to have effective cross-cultural communication.

One of the scenes indicates the nonverbal misinterpretation that happened to the main American character when Todd used his left hand to eat the food. Indian main characters notify Todd by using nonverbal communication such as making "Ahemmm"

sound, eye contact, and gestures. However, Todd ignores those gestures as he thinks that it was nothing. Puro then had to inform Todd that his action was wrong. Another scene in the movie is the action of the Indian worker trying to invite Todd to come with him. At first, Todd thought that the Indian worker was asking for food. Still, after the Indian worker insisted on his gestures, he noticed that the Indian worker was trying to ask Todd to follow him. This situation indicates that Todd has challenges in interpreting the nonverbal communication from the Indian characters in the movie. Nonverbal communication is typically more context-rich than verbal communication, and it is interpreted differently in different cultures. People abstract anything that fits into their world of recognition and then interpret it using their cultural frame of reference. Understanding nonverbal particularities is even more difficult than learning the deep meaning of words (Lia & Camelia, 2014).

Moreover, these challenges happened because India is known as a high-context culture. They are more indirect and often use nonverbal communication, which is the opposite of America. America is more direct in their communication as they are known for their low-context culture. The previous literature can support this statement by Pandey (2015) mentioned that a high context society is one with more nonverbal codes, rituals, silences, and gestures. The film demonstrates that India has a higher context culture than the United States. Cornelius (2010) stated that an example from the film demonstrating how India is a high-context culture was when Todd was given the food to follow him back to his house. Briam (2010) also mentioned that Todd has a straightforward personality that reflects a low-context culture. Hence, the different cultural background has different communication styles. Lack of knowledge about cultures may lead to cross-cultural communication challenges such as miscommunication and misinterpretation.

Indian main character is seen being stereotyped towards America when Puro and Todd are having a conversation. Puro was stereotyping and said that America's life is strange. Puro also added that America hates their boss and don't like undeveloped country like India. This situation shows Puro is being prejudiced towards Americans, and his statement indicates that Americans hate their boss and don't like undeveloped countries like India. This caused a challenge to Todd as Puro thinks that all Americans behave the same as Todd does. Lee (2018) supported this scene by stating Todd's depiction of Americans as estranged from their families is accurate. However, Puro's generalizing Americans may cause difficulty for Todd and American visitors. This is because stereotypes obstruct the objective viewing of stimuli; they are a stumbling block for communicators (Fareeda Ibad, 2020). To simplify, we have a stereotype of a person from a certain culture, and we interpret their behaviour based on that stereotype, whether the reason for the behaviour is what we think it is. Pandey (2015) also stated that Puro's statement indicates India depicted as a backward, third-world country.

The American main character can be seen as a stereotype towards India when Dave said to Todd that it is interesting to find out that Todd likes spicy food. This indicates that Dave was stereotyping India as spicy food because most Asian dishes are

spicy. Because of his assumption, he thought that Todd would be fit in India as he enjoys eating spicy food.

However, Dave's assumption is proven wrong when Todd seems to refuse to eat any dish at Aunty Ji's house because he had experienced stomach aches due to the Indian food when he first arrived in India. This can be supported by Samantha (n.d), similarly, one might think that chili is essential to authentic Indian cooking, but it originated in the New World, and no one on the Indian continent had ever eaten a chili pepper. Stereotypes are overgeneralized, the beliefs that serve as conceptual foundations for us to "make sense" of what is going on around us, whether they are accurate or appropriate for the situation (Barna, 1994). Thus, Dave was overgeneralized Indian people as they like spicy food.

One of the scenes is where Aunty Ji tends to evaluate Todd's action of not being ready to start a family by saying that Todd is old enough to be a grandfather. This action caused Todd to feel uncomfortable with someone minding his own business. Aunty Ji's action of telling Todd that he's old enough to be a grandfather indicates that she is stating that Todd's action of not being married yet is wrong and he should not make that decision. It can be seen in the movie that Aunty Ji displays the act of evaluating Todd's actions and disagrees with Todd's statement of not being ready to start a family. The tendency to evaluate is the action of approving or disapproving another person's or group's statements and actions rather than attempting to fully comprehend the thoughts and feelings expressed from another's point of view (Barna, 1994). This bias prevents the open-minded attention needed to examine the other's attitude and behaviour patterns.

The scene that displays Todd's action of evaluating the Indian main character is when he asks the Indian employees to talk like a native English speaker. One of the employees named Asha told Todd that they are native English speakers as the English language is the official language in India. Todd thinks that Indian is not a native English speaker because of the Indian accent and language differences. In this scene, it can seem that Todd begins to evaluate the Indian main characters by saying that "*you people need to learn about America*" and "*things go faster if the customer feels they are talking to a native English speaker*". He also tends to evaluate the Indian main characters as being incompetent by stating "*this centre number is nowhere near what they should be*". Briam (2010) stated that Todd's actions in this movie display that he acts in an ethnocentric manner. Lee (2018) supports Briam's statement in his study by saying Todd appeared to be oblivious to Indian culture. Todd's action also indicates that he fails to acknowledge that the workers are native English speakers with a different style of English which led to cross-cultural communication challenges.

The American main character, Todd Anderson, seems to be experiencing stress during his stay in India. The scene depicted Todd feeling stressed when Aunty Ji asked him whether he was homosexual because he declined Aunty Ji's offer to find an Indian girl for him. When he is offered a meal, he immediately rejects the offer and says he cannot eat anything. Several scenes display Todd refusing to eat the food Aunty Ji serves. Instead, Todd gave the food to the poor Indian worker. Todd felt stressed because he could not adapt to India's culture and environment. The past study supports this; Lee

(2018) claims that Todd experienced disorientation, discomfort, absence, and a deep sense of anxiety and uncertainty due to his new surroundings. Lia & Camelia (2014) stated that Intercultural encounters are known to cause stress, which disrupts the internal equilibrium of the individual system. Thus, Todd is having stress caused by the intercultural encounters because he lacks knowledge about Indian cultures and was in the adapting phase.

Moreover, the stress that Todd experienced was due to the culture shock. Jati (2017) supported that Todd's symptoms of culture shock are visible in both his mental and physical state from the moment he steps foot in India. Todd experienced culture shock and failed to adapt to Indian culture because he expected his Indian co-workers to follow his values and ways, shaped by his own country, rather than being respected by his co-workers (Lee, 2018). Thus, it is clear that a lack of knowledge and culture shock can cause people to face stress.

In terms of the effects of the cross-cultural communication challenges, American main characters were the most affected. Misunderstanding, stomach upset from new and unusual food, frustration, anger, and finally sadness and feeling helpless are all effects of the cross-cultural communication challenges American and Indian main characters faced, as seen in the film supported by Barna (1994). All the effects of cross-cultural communication challenges were experienced by American main characters, whereas Indian main characters experienced only misunderstanding.

The American and Indian main characters faced an equal number of misunderstandings. One reason for misunderstanding, according to Barna (1994), is that many people assume there are enough commonalities among people all across the world to make communication easier. Misunderstanding happens because they have different cultural values. The United States has a high-context culture, whereas India has a low-context culture. Todd's actions are typical of someone from a low-context culture (Lee, 2018). Todd's bluntness about his feelings about the call centre when he first visits can be seen in the film, which is typical of communication styles in low-context cultures. The differences in cultural values have led to misunderstandings to happen. Lee (2018) also mentioned that people need to understand the differences between high-context and low-context cultures to ensure that their behaviour and language are appropriate and not offensive to people from other cultures, allowing them to interact effectively without embarrassment or misunderstanding. Barna (1994) also supported by stated the idea is to seeing and listening empathically rather than through a thick screen of value judgments, which would prevent a fair and complete understanding from being achieved. Thus, the main characters' actions of their bluntness, and their lack of knowledge have caused the misunderstanding to happen.

In the movie, due to previous bad experiences with Indian food, the American main character, Todd Anderson, refuses to eat any Indian food. This situation arose as a result of the varied cuisine served in India being different from the United States. Families' food preferences and dislikes are influenced by where they live, and their ancestors came from. Within a cultural or regional group, these food preferences result in patterns of food choices. Lee (2018) explained that Todd had a lot of issues with food

culture, and he even got sick at the start of the movie by drinking a beverage he bought on the street, but he eventually adapted. In the scene, Todd is irritated by the Indian food as he feels uncomfortable with the food and drinks in India (Jati, 2017). Todd refused to eat because of his previous stomach problems caused by the Gola he ate when he first arrived in India. He became traumatised because of this and decided not to eat Indian food. This can be proven by Barna (1994) who explained a person may also be threatened by the information, experience, and evaluation, which could lead to the visitor's scrutiny and rejection of the person or the country. Hence, it explains that Todd is under stress as a result of his earlier experiences in India, which forced him to refuse the cuisine.

The main American character's emotions are also affected by the cross-cultural communication challenges, as Todd Anderson can be seen in the movie feeling frustrated, angry, sad, and helpless on numerous occasions. Todd appeared oblivious to Indian culture because of the lack of knowledge about Indian English, religion, foods, bathroom customs, holidays, and transportation. Lee (2018) also mentioned that Todd's opinions appeared to be very negative, and he believed that his customs and behaviours were "correct." This has caused him to face challenges because of his ignorance and unwillingness to learn about India. This can be supported by Barna (1994) which she discussed that the foreigners feel odd and vulnerable, helpless to deal with the barrage of messages that bombard them because their "normal" reflexes are considered inappropriate. Hence, he faces numerous challenges while attempting to assimilate to a new culture, but he eventually adjusts and enjoys his new way of life. Foreigners will almost certainly face multiple challenges as they adjust to a new country, but they must also make an effort to learn more to aid in better assimilation (Lee, 2018).

8. Recommendations

Following the completion of the study and considering its limitations, several recommendations for future research can be made. A larger sample size could be used in a similar study. To compare and analyse cross-cultural communication challenges, future researchers can include other intercultural films such as *The Hundred-Foot Journey* and *Victoria and Abdul*. Thus, it will not only focus solely on one film to compare the challenges that the main characters faced and how they were affected. Moreover, similar studies can be conducted by exploring other cultures besides the American and Indian cultures. Future researchers can also examine other cultures in addition to Indian and American cultures to provide more exposure to other cultures, as there have been too many previous studies that focus on Indian and American cultures. Finally, the study's implementation was affected by time constraints. Hence, in order to avoid bias, it is recommended that future researchers use an inter-rater reliability test to test the reliability and validity of the study.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our parents for their love, prayers, care, and sacrifices in teaching and supporting us along the journey to complete our research paper successfully. Special

thanks to our friends for their support and help during our research work. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to everyone who has helped us complete the research work, whether directly or indirectly.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Author(s)

Afidatul Aqma Mohamad Sabre is a final-year student of English for Intercultural Communication programme in Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. She has a sheer interest in doing research in the areas of content analysis and intercultural communication.

Eliyas S. Mohandas is a senior lecturer at the Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. Equipped with 15 years of teaching experience, he has taught various courses namely Intercultural Communication, Critical Thinking, Translation, and Web Design.

References

- Barna, L. M. (1994). Stumbling blocks in Intercultural Communication. Retrieved from <https://www.uwindsor.ca/ctl/sites/uwindsor.ca.ctl/files/stumbling-blocks-in-intercultural-communication.pdf>
- Binder, J. (2009). Global Project Management: Communication, Collaboration, and Management across Borders. *Strategic Direction*, 25(9). <https://doi.org/10.1108/sd.2009.05625iae.001>
- Cambridge Dictionary. (2021). Cross-cultural. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cross-cultural>
- Chepinchikj, N., & Thompson, C. (2016). Analysing cinematic discourse using conversation analysis. *Discourse, Context and Media*, 14, 40–53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2016.09.001>
- Corichi, M. (2021, July 25). Eight-in-ten Indians limit meat in their diets, and four-in-ten consider themselves vegetarian. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/07/08/eight-in-ten-indians-limit-meat-in-their-diets-and-four-in-ten-consider-themselves-vegetarian/>
- Cui, H. (2017). Chinese and Foreign Film and TV Drama Translation from the Perspective of Cross Cultural Communication. *DEStech Transactions on Social Science, Education and Human Science*, ICSSTE. <https://doi.org/10.12783/dtssehs/icsste2017/9254>
- Fitria, T. N. (2021). Analysis of Culture Shock in “English Vinglish” Movie: A Cross-Cultural Understanding. *Jurnal Sahdu*, 1(1), 1–11. <https://jurnal.lenterah.tech/index.php/sahdu>

- Furham, A. (2012). Culture shock Choque cultural. *Journal of Psychology and Education*, 7(1), 9–22. <http://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?T=P&P=AN&K=79758800&S=R&D=eue&EbscoContent=dGJyMNLe80SeprM4zdneyOLCmr0%2Bep7VSrqi4TbOWxWXS&ContentCustomer=dGJyMOzprlCxqbZRuePfgeyx43zx>
- Garza Saenz, M., McGregor, T., & Nguyen, M. (2017). A Cross-Cultural Examination of the United States, Argentina, and Mexico Using Hofstede's Dimensions and the World Values Survey. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review*, 7(2), 227–236. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327548344_A_Cross-Cultural_Examination_of_the_United_States_Argentina_and_Mexico_Using_Hofstede's_Dimensions_and_the_World_Values_Survey
- Gounder, S. (2004). Chapter 3 - Research methodology and research questions. *Research Methodology and Research Method*, March 2012, 84–193. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333015026_Chapter_3_-_Research_Methodology_and_Research_Method
- Gudykunst, W. B., Matsumoto, Y., Ting-Toomey, S., Nishida, T., Kim, K., & Heyman, S. (1996). The influence of cultural individualism-collectivism, self construals, and individual values on communication styles across cultures. *Human Communication Research*, 22(4), 510–543. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1996.tb00377.x>
- Hall, E. T., & Hall, M. R. (1990). Part 1 Key Concepts: Underlying Structures of Culture. *Understanding Cultural Differences*, 6. Retrieved from <http://www.csun.edu/~sm60012/Intercultural/Key%20Concepts%20-%20Hall%20and%20Hall%20-%201.pdf>
- Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalising Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>
- Hussain, S. (2018). Managing Communication Challenges in Multicultural Organisations. *International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications*, 4(2), 44–49. <https://doi.org/10.20431/2454-9479.0402005>
- Janney, R. (2013). Pragmatics and Cinematic Discourse. *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics*, 8(1), 85–113. <https://doi.org/10.1515/lpp-2012-0006>
- Jant, Fred E. 2004. *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*. London: Sage Publication. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books?id=K7bU8iXOt0MC&printsec=frontcover&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
- Jayantilal, S., Palacios, T. M. B., & Jorge, S. F. (2015). Cultural dimension of Indian family firms-impact on successor selection. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 13(3), 96–103. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308260212_Cultural_dimension_of_Indian_family_firms-impact_on_successor_selection
- Juhász, I. J. (2010). The Workforce in Indian Organisations. An Analysis Based Upon the Dimensions of Hofstede's Model. *The Five Dimensions of Hofstede's model*.

- Economic Questions, Issues and Problems, 7(4), 38–45. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351346780> The Workforce in Indian Organizations An Analysis Based Upon the Dimensions of Hofstede's Mode
l
- Kiss, G. (2005). Managing cross-cultural communication challenges: Toward a more perfect union in an age of diversity. *Aarms*, 4(2), 215–223. Retrieved from <https://www.matrixparents.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Managing-cross-cultural-communication-challenges-by-Gabriella-Kiss.pdf>
- Lia, B., Camelia, B., & Blaga, L. (2014). Intercultural Communication Barriers – An Interpersonal Approach. 1, 28–36. *Revista Economică* 66:1. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/a/blg/reveco/v66y2014i1p28-36.html>
- Lindgren, I. (2007). Towards the mitigation of cultural barriers to communication and cooperation. In Division of Industrial Ergonomics (Issue 1300). Retrieved from <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:17174/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Lombardo, J. (2017). Cross-Cultural Communication: Definition, Strategies & Examples. Study.com. Retrieved from <http://198.23.153.33/academy/lesson/cross-cultural-communication-definition-strategies-examples.html>.
- Lopez, V., & Whitehead, D. (2013). Sampling data and data collection in qualitative research. 123–140. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/255950308>
- Lu, C., & Fan, W. (2015). Cross-cultural issues and international business communication practice: From an anthropological perspective. *Anthropologist*, 22(1), 15–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2015.11891852>
- Mo, W. (2015). A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Disney Mulan Film and Chinese Mulan Drama Impacts on Chinese Audience's Attitude. 57. Retrieved from <http://dspace.bu.ac.th/handle/123456789/1740>
- Morente, F., Ferràs, X., & Žižlavský, O. (2018). Innovation Cultural Models: Review and Proposal for Next Steps Modelos culturales de innovación: revisión y propuesta de siguientes pasos Modelos culturais de inovação: revisão e proposta de seguintes passos. *Universidad & Empresa*, 20(4), 53–81. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/empresa/a.5433>
<http://dx.doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/empresa/a.5433>
- Muhammad, R. (2005). Promoting intercultural communication. *Higher Education Policy*, 18(4), 353–359. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.hep.8300099>
- Neuendorf, A, K. (2017). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. Second Edition. Cleveland State University. Sage Publication, Inc. Retrieved from <https://methods.sagepub.com/book/the-content-analysis-guidebook-2e>
- Norales, Fracisca, O. (2006). *Cross-Cultural Communication: Concepts, Cases and Challenges*. Amherst, NY. Cambria Press. Retrieved from <https://www.cambriapress.com/pub.cfm?bid=4>
- Merriam, B. S. (2009). *Qualitative Research. A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Second Edition. Jossey Bass. A Wiley Imprint. Retrieved from https://books.google.ro/books/about/Qualitative_Research.html?id=JFN_BwAAQBAJ&redir_esc=y

- Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 05-7(4), 177–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182966000700405>
- Pandey, S., & Ardichvili, A. (2015). Using films in teaching intercultural concepts: An action research project at two universities in India and the United States. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 27(4), 36–50. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20121>
- Pipaş, M. D., & Jaradat, M. (2011). Communication barriers. *Quality - Access to Success*, 12(SUPPL. 2), 333–336. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03073289.1978.10805425>
- Rose, D., Carausu, D., Crone, B., & Sengupta, S. (2014). A Cross-Cultural Examination of the United States and Russia Using Multiple Models. *International Journal of Arts & Sciences*, 07(05), 459–470. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1652446177?accountid=26636%0A>
http://link.periodicos.capes.gov.br/sfxlcl41?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&rft_val_fmt=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:journal&genre=article&sid=ProQ:ProQ%3Amaterialsscijournals&atitle=A+CROSS+CULTURAL+EXAMINATI
- Shachaf, P. (2008). Cultural diversity and information and communication technology impacts on global virtual teams: An exploratory study. *Information and Management*, 45(2), 131–142. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2007.12.003>
- Sun, H. (2012). Cross-cultural Communication With a focus on Swedish and Chinese employees. Retrieved from <http://kau.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:550204/FULLTEXT01>
- Szeluga-romanska, M. (2020). Chapter 3: Cross-cultural Communication 3.1. Communication Process in a Cross-cultural Setting. In book: *Intercultural Management Issues* (pp.60-78) Publisher: Difin. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340931541_Chapter_3_Cross-cultural_Communication_31_Communication_Process_in_a_Cross-cultural_Setting
- Wang, Z., & Fan, W. (2013). American Values Reflected in Names of US Supermarkets, the Top Five Values and American Dream. *Open Journal of Modern Linguistics*, 03(04), 348–355. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojml.2013.34045>
- Winkelman, M. (1994). Cultural Shock and Adaptation. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 73(2), 121–126. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1994.tb01723.x>
- Yusuf, B. N. B. M., Zulkifli, Z. B., Rashid, I. M. B. A., & Kamil, S. B. (2014). A Study on Barriers of Cross-Cultural Communication in Electronic. *The International Journal of Social Sciences*, 27(1), 97–117. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267639457_A_Study_on_Barriers_of_Cross-Cultural_Communication_in_Electronic_Based_Companies

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Social Sciences Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)