

GREETING, INTRODUCTIONS AND GIFT-GIVING CUSTOMS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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Annotation (Abstract)

This thesis explores the cultural importance of greeting, introductions and gift-giving customs in intercultural communication. These practices represent key elements of social etiquette and reflect the traditions, values and behavioral norms of different societies. In an increasingly globalized world, people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact in fields such as tourism, business, diplomacy and education. Understanding cultural differences in greetings, introductions and gift-giving traditions can help individuals avoid misunderstandings and build respectful relationships. The research highlights the role of cultural awareness in successful communication and emphasizes the importance of respecting traditions when interacting with people from other cultures.

Keywords: intercultural communication, cultural etiquette, greeting customs, introductions, gift-giving traditions, social traditions

Introduction

In every society, communication begins with greetings and introductions. These simple actions represent more than polite behavior; they are expressions of cultural identity and social values. Greeting customs help people show respect, friendliness and recognition toward others. Introductions create the first connection between individuals and help establish a positive atmosphere for communication. In addition, gift-giving customs play an important role in strengthening relationships and expressing appreciation.

With the rapid development of globalization, intercultural communication has become increasingly common. People from different countries and cultural backgrounds meet in workplaces, universities, tourist destinations and international organizations. In such situations, knowledge of cultural etiquette becomes essential. A greeting that is considered polite in one culture may appear unusual or even disrespectful in another. Therefore, understanding these cultural differences helps people communicate more effectively and avoid misinterpretations.

Greeting Customs

Greeting customs vary widely across the world and reflect the social norms of each culture. In many Western countries such as the United States, Canada and several European nations, the handshake is the most common greeting in professional and formal situations. This gesture is usually accompanied by eye contact and a friendly smile. Direct eye contact is often interpreted as a sign of confidence and honesty.

In contrast, many Asian cultures emphasize respect and modesty through bowing. For example, in Japan the depth of the bow may indicate the level of respect or social status between individuals. Similarly, in Korea bowing is an important gesture used in both formal and informal greetings. These traditions demonstrate the cultural importance of hierarchy and respect for elders.

In Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures, greetings are often warmer and more expressive. Friends and family members may greet each other with hugs or kisses on the cheek. In some cultures people also place their hand over their heart as a sign of sincerity and respect. These greeting traditions emphasize hospitality and close interpersonal relationships.

Introductions in Social and Professional Contexts

Introductions are another essential component of communication. When people meet for the first time, introductions help establish mutual understanding and provide basic information about identity, profession or social status. In professional environments such as conferences, business meetings or academic events, individuals often introduce themselves by stating their name, occupation and institutional affiliation.

In many cultures there are specific rules regarding the order of introductions. For example, younger individuals are usually introduced to older people first as a sign of respect. Similarly, individuals with lower professional status may be introduced to those with higher authority. These practices reflect social hierarchy and cultural values related to respect and politeness.

Effective introductions also involve appropriate body language, tone of voice and facial expressions. A polite smile, clear speech and respectful posture contribute to a positive first impression. First impressions often influence how people perceive each other and may affect the future development of professional or personal relationships.

Gift-giving Traditions

Gift-giving is another significant cultural tradition that strengthens social bonds. Gifts are commonly exchanged during special occasions such as birthdays, weddings, religious holidays and important celebrations. In many societies gifts symbolize gratitude, friendship and appreciation.

However, the rules surrounding gift-giving vary greatly across cultures. In some cultures expensive gifts may demonstrate respect and generosity, while in others modest gifts are considered more appropriate. The presentation of the gift is also important. In Japan, for example, gifts are often wrapped carefully and presented with both hands as a gesture of politeness.

In Western cultures, gifts are typically opened immediately in front of the giver to express appreciation. In contrast, in some Asian cultures the recipient may wait until later to open the gift. This behavior is seen as a sign of humility and respect. Understanding such cultural differences helps individuals behave appropriately in intercultural situations.

Importance in Intercultural Communication

Greeting, introduction and gift-giving customs play an important role in intercultural communication. These practices help individuals demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and social traditions. When people are aware of cultural etiquette, they are more likely to build trust and establish positive relationships.

For professionals working in tourism, international business, diplomacy or education, cultural awareness is especially important. Tour guides, for example, often interact with visitors from different countries and must understand their cultural expectations. Similarly, business professionals who respect cultural etiquette are more successful in building long-term partnerships.

Conclusion

In conclusion, greeting, introductions and gift-giving customs are essential elements of social interaction and cultural identity. These traditions reflect the values and behavioral norms of different societies. By understanding and respecting these practices, individuals can communicate more effectively in multicultural environments. Cultural awareness not only helps avoid misunderstandings but also promotes cooperation, mutual respect and successful intercultural relationships.

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