

**Speaking Effectively**  
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**Lecture 5**

**Cross Cultural Factors in Communication Verbal and Non-Verbal**

Hi, I am Dr. Robin Andrews I am from New Zealand, a social anthropologist and I am visiting IIT Kharagpur, just for a few days at the moment. So I was asked to give this short lecture about cross-cultural communication based on my experiences of coming to visit India.

So it is not particularly structured, it may I may move from topic to topic , so please excuse me if I do that because I have just written a few notes but really this is off the top of my head based on my experiences. So it is 20 years this month actually, so it is a nice time to be invited to do this, it is 20 years since I have been coming to India. I arrived the first time here in the end of December 1996 with my family.

And you know I come here every year or every couple of years since then. So I got used to a lot of things now that perhaps so I am trying to think about what some of the some of the early impressions I had so that I can because I have got because as I have said I got used to a lot of things now, so I am, the cross-cultural communication does not is not so much of leisure but still I find I find new things.

Now when I first came, I really wanted to come to I really wanted to come to India because two of my brothers and one of my sisters have been here and they loved their experiences of holidaying in India and it was a country that I knew I could get by with English only.

So in my preparation to come and I was finishing degree, I took I learnt as much as I could about India so that I so that I would not be so that I would be prepared, so that I would not have too many shocks, I guess. So I took papers on gender and looked at Hindu women's position in society, I looked at a philosophy paper, I looked at Hinduism and various other papers. One of the things that struck me when I came here, that I had not really realized, coming being a Westerner, being a professional woman, I used to being treated pretty much the same as men.

And one of the things, even I did read, one of the things that really struck me was that gender patriarchal aspects of society, that influenced all sorts of aspects, even as a tourist. For example when my husband and I and our children turned up at a hotel, I was never asked for

my name, it was always my husband. When we were introduced to meet new people, it was always my husband that was introduced to the other men, I was usually not introduced and certainly not introduced to other women.

So there was a gender aspect to make you know I am sort of try to resist certain various ways and my husband supported me in it too. For example, he would say now you go and pay the hotel bill or you would order dinner today even though it was not something the waiter expected or wanted so you know a little minor rebellion.

Now some of the things that I have noticed early on was, that were different from Western countries was, I have travelled quite extensively throughout Western countries as well as having lived in New Zealand for a long time obviously, one thing I noticed was that I got stared at a lot and my daughters who came with me at first time and other times, they also got stared at a lot, which does not happen in New Zealand. And if I looked at somebody who are staring at me or staring at one of my daughters, it did not break their gaze.

Ha ha so it was something that it took a little bit of getting used to and I just realised that people were curious. You know they did make me feel you know self-conscious and maybe the girls felt self-conscious. (( ))(4:49) you know feeling self-conscious something that can contribute to that just for (( ))(4:44) is how we dressed, how me and my girls who were teenagers at that time dressed and this something that am still conscious of 20 years later. I think I spent a lot of time in Kolkata and it is more Cosmopolitan there.

That there are some areas of Kolkata which I would always wear either a salwar kameez, I mean I really like salwar kameez I think and I think that it is beautiful and they are easy material easy styles of clothing to wear. So if I go to some places like some of the besties or some areas say areas that are high population of Muslims or conservative Hindu areas, then I would make sure that I am, usually I wear salwar kameez or else something extremely modest.

Generally in India I do I dress modestly and really an courage, if not completely insist, when I can I insist, that my girls do the same. So you know wearing shirts rather than sing the tops and even though there are a lot of westerns dressed young women in India, I do not want the combination of a more distressing and the white skins to draw more attention than they really than they need. So that is something that I am always conscious of.

As an academic, the issue of dress also comes up. Something I have noticed is, I have visited institutions in India and enough parts of the world, in India are sitting for a conference as lecturers, women and the men but there is not so much difference in the men between Western and Indian men but the women dress really you know quite formally, really beautifully. In New Zealand and in some other Western places, I think we can be too casual. You know it is not unusual for a woman to wear jeans to work, maybe jeans and a T-shirt.

If they wear jeans and a T-shirt to a conference, to present a conference, I would be thinking oh maybe she could have worn something a little bit tidier. Often if it is a three-day conference, she can tell the day somebody is going to present because they will wear something that is a bit tidier than on the other days. But that is some people do also like probably more like me that feel that they should dress up for their own presentation.

Talking about the workplace environment too, something I have noticed here that does not happen in New Zealand or anything like the same extent is the way we greet each other. So at the start of the year as a lecturer, I would say, Hi I am Dr Robin Andrews but you can call me Robin and they do and they email me, you know dear Robin such and so.

They treat me with respect but they do use the name and I know that does not happen in India and the Indian students I have, they do not feel comfortable with the title so they would always call me mam and I know that happens in institutions here as well.

There in New Zealand or other Western countries are less hierarchical in the West in the workplace as well as as well as generally you know we know who is higher positioned by their titles that does not mean that we cannot that we do not chat with them, have a coffee with them, used their first names when talking, when talking to people who are higher or lower for that matter in terms of rank position in the University. We still so we would be conscious but we do not enact I think those differences as much as happens in an Indian system.

I have been in India where I have been involved in organizing a conference I know it is very hierarchical in terms of who needs to be approached in what order, in what way, in order for the conference to go ahead and that is something I have had to learn as an academic for the last few years rather than as a tourist which I often come to India as well. In terms of so dresses of one verbal thing there are also some words that we use differently.

One is that when somebody has passed away, for example if my grandfather has passed away then people may come up to me and say I am sorry to hear about your grandfather's death or your grandfather's passing. But I understand that it does not happen over here, you would talk about that they had expired. Another word that I sort of another term than I picked up recently is soft skills, somebody was talking about having gone to an Anglo-Indian school where they had picked up English and literature.

And in the English medium school they picked up certainly the content of the subjects that they were being taught but they said the other thing that they really appreciated about going to an Anglo-Indian school, English medium school was the soft skills that they had picked up along the way. I did not know what they meant by that and I asked them and they said oh things like you know things they described as etiquettes and manners. And if they ate at school, they said that they also learn to eat, to use cutlery, they had a lot of experience with cutlery.

Lots of westernized Indians do use cutlery of course, that they said that was something that they that was reinforced through the schools and some of the (11:48) in language, the pleases and thank you's and other skills of manners that they put down as manners. Now what else would I like to say, I think over the time that I have been coming to India, yes there is more westernization, more cosmopolitanism, it is easier to get a coffee but in South India it was always easy to get the you know the yard of coffee which good coffee to have.

Now there are tourists, there is Café Coffee Days and the people who have (12:47) those sort of middle-class places are all westernized as well and their (12:45) and their knowledge of the world.

Other sort of middle-class places that have noticed come up during the last 20 years are the multiplex cinemas, the malls which have you know the top end brands, so I do sometimes wonder, how many of the population walks into the office population are able to purchase anything at those walls but certainly that is a big difference over the years.

So I am just going to go back a little bit to dress again so in India as I said, particularly for a woman, I feel that it is really important for Westerners as well to dress modestly, to be aware of where they are going, what they are doing, where they who they might see during a day, if they are going to use public transport. In the West on the other hand, people are sort of one thing that determines what they dress is the weather, you know is it going to be hot, is not

going to be cold, that will determine that will play a part in decisions of what clothing is going to be worn.

Okay I think I have (( ))(14:21) what I was going to in terms of notes, that I have written here of course, as soon as it finishes, I will think of other things that I wish I had mentioned. But for this session I thank you for listening to a New Zealander, talking little bit about some of the very cultural aspects she has noticed in coming here to India for these last 20 years. Thank you.

Student: Hello my name is Tim Acknop, I am 22 years old and I am student from technical University, Munich in Germany. This semester, I spent my time at IIT Kharagpur, where I studied mechanical engineering. It is a great honour for me to be allowed to study at this high Institute, which contains mostly students who are top of the top, intellectual elite of 1,000,000 people. These academic studies on this campus are very nice as you share everything together.

You will have the hostels when everybody stays together and also spend your academic life at academic area together in contrast to Germany where you only have the academic area and you do not live together. The campus offers many activities and is very beautiful and calm and has the best opportunities to fulfil your full potential. But also studying in these classes which are top-level with these professors is a great experience for me but of course the things and lectures are different.

So as you see, not only the studies are a great experience for me but also the small differences in every detail, which is where I can learn in cultural differences everyday. There are so many examples where I learn about small differences, other cultures, other people, other ideas and which enlighten my horizon by far. I think this experience will help me a lot in my future when I will work as an engineer for an international company where we will deal with people from many different cultures who have many different backgrounds, who need to work together.

So thank you for allowing me to study at IIT Kharagpur, thank you.

Student 2: Hi, how are you?

Student 1: I am waiting for the professor.

Student 1: Yeah yeah me too. Did you do did you do the assignment?

Student 3: No, I did not.

Student 2: No, I am quite terrified and I did not complete it you know.

Student 1: I was so busy.

Student 3: Yeah, it was hectic.

Student 1: Yeah.