

History of Intercultural Communication

How did the field of Intercultural Communication evolve?

- Post World War II – growth in overseas work for business and government employees
- Mistakes/mistaken cultural assumptions = potential negative consequences

- Foreign Service Act passed by Congress in 1946: created the Foreign Service Institute to develop intercultural training materials
 - ◆ Emphasis on language skills and cultural contexts within international settings
 - ◆ Emphasis on practical training in how to understand other cultures--a focus on **interactions** between members of different cultures

Communication became a central focus, along with its relationship to culture.

- Scholars with the FSI, through the 50's and 60's researched and developed training programs to teach cross-cultural communication skills
- Edward Hall, an anthropologist at the FSI, wrote several books on cross-cultural issues; he is considered a founding father of intercultural communication as an academic discipline

What is the current state of the ICC discipline?

- Includes both international and domestic settings
- Emphasis on the practical and on research and development of theory to explain culture-based communicative behavior

What is the current state of the ICC discipline? (continued)

- Many different conceptualizations of culture and how communication linked to culture
- Emphasis on teaching individuals to recognize and interpret the subtle aspects of behaviors and interactions that are influenced by culture

Communication Competence

The ability to communicate in a socially appropriate and personally effective manner.

Intercultural Communication Competence requires:

- Being **Motivated** – to communicate with culturally different others
- The Right **Attitude** – the ability to tolerate ambiguity; being non-judgemental

Intercultural Communication

Competence requires:

- **Knowledge** – both self-awareness of your own cultural values and behaviors and culture-specific knowledge of others
- **Skills** – the ability to assess and apply cultural knowledge to interactions; to practice flexibility and adaptability in our interactions with others

Homework

(Due WED, 1/6/10)

- **Read any section of a newspaper for recent (within the past week) news items. Consider to what extent these news items suggest anything about intercultural understanding/competence (or lack of).**
- **Select one news story and write a brief (approx 1 page, typed) report summarizing the article and explaining why you think some aspect of this story helps to illuminate why increased intercultural understanding/competence is necessary and important.** Attach a copy of the article and indicate clearly the news source and date story was published.