

Rynkiewich Chapter 3 Interaction Paper

Jennifer P. Hanly
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Dr. Stanley John

Language and symbols directly affect communication and are different for each culture, which can affect cross-cultural communications.

Various understandings of language and symbols have been described and debated while trying to understand concepts such as the distinction between "spoken words and mental categories" (46). Rynkiewicz explains how language acquisition builds a particular "architecture" in an infant's brain to help form and design sophisticated distinctions in the infant's primary language. While language and thought have been debated in the study of linguistics and philosophy for many centuries, such differences have now been made that show "perception, conceptualization, and cognition are linked by what they split as well as by what they lump" (58-59). Other areas of language that affect cross-cultural communications are described by the distance the speakers feel comfortable, hand gestures, facial expressions, and the relationship between the person speaking and the one listening. Culture, values, perception, body language, infant development, and cognition all inform a person's communication within their society and can cause significant miscommunication or barriers when engaging in cross-cultural communication.

Personally, I understand the difficulty of communicating symbolic or theological concepts in a cross-cultural setting. Rynkiewicz's statement, "if this is true about things we can see, then how much more is it true of things that we cannot see, such as spirits, viruses, and love" (48). The difficulty with cross-cultural communication goes deeper than just understanding the words spoken. One must understand the deep levels of cultural meaning and value behind the words.

1. Has the internet affected how a person can understand a culture's language and symbolism?

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2. How does one prepare to learn the aspects of cross-cultural communication that do not include the study of the language?