

# Cross-Cultural Communication in Organizations and Its Perspective on Islamic Communication

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**ABSTRACT** This research aims to explore how linguistic and cultural differences shape communication dynamics in organizational settings, as well as to identify strategies that can effectively minimize misunderstandings. This research employs a library study design using secondary data sourced from books and online journals. The results show that company activities involve individuals from various countries, making cross-cultural communication unavoidable, with language differences being one of its main barriers. Since language is part of culture, variations in understanding or interpreting words or symbols can disrupt business or organizational processes. From an Islamic perspective, cross-cultural communication should be grounded in the values of honesty, trustworthiness, wisdom, and tolerance, as cultural differences are viewed as sunnatullah that must be approached with mutual respect. The application of Islamic communication ethics such as conveying information accurately, avoiding prejudice, and maintaining proper manners can create a harmonious and inclusive work environment. Thus, cross-cultural communication based on Islamic values not only strengthens professional relationships but also fosters brotherhood and brings blessings to the organization.

**Keywords:** *Cross-Cultural Communication, Organization, Islamic Communication*

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication is a means of connecting people with each other. Communication is not only verbal but also nonverbal. Communication is carried out to achieve a goal, including providing and seeking information, persuading others to do what we want, etc. It could even be said that communication has been with us since birth and is inseparable from human life. This means that communication is a fundamental and vital social process. It is fundamental because all humans desire to maintain agreement regarding various social rules through communication. It is vital because every individual has the ability to communicate with others, thereby increasing their chances of survival. Organizational communication is defined as the flow of messages within a network whose relationships are interdependent, encompassing both formal and informal communication flows.

Communication occurs not only through verbal expressions such as spoken or written language but also through nonverbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, posture, and tone of

voice. These two modes of communication often work together to create meaning, strengthen messages, and help individuals understand one another more effectively. Whether intentional or unintentional, every movement or word we produce can convey information that shapes how others perceive us. Thus, communication becomes a central mechanism through which humans express thoughts, emotions, and intentions.

Moreover, communication is always carried out to achieve specific goals, whether consciously or subconsciously. People communicate to provide and obtain information, to negotiate and solve problems, or to persuade others to act in accordance with their wishes. In daily life, communication plays a role in a wide range of contexts from simple interactions, such as asking for directions, to complex processes like influencing public opinion or managing relationships. Each of these interactions illustrates how essential communication is in guiding social behavior.

It could also be said that communication has been with us since the moment we are born. A newborn's first cry is a fundamental form of communication, signaling basic needs such as hunger or discomfort. As individuals grow, they acquire more advanced communication skills that enable them to interact with their environment and develop social relationships. Over time, communication becomes inseparable from human life, shaping our identities, values, and participation within society.

This ongoing presence of communication highlights that it is both a fundamental and vital social process. It is fundamental because humans rely on communication to maintain shared understandings and agreements regarding social norms, expectations, and rules. Without communication, collective life would lack coherence and order. At the same time, communication is vital because it enhances our ability to connect, collaborate, and survive. Through communication, individuals exchange knowledge, build trust, and coordinate actions that support their well-being.

In the context of organizations, communication acquires an even more structured role. Organizational communication refers to the flow of messages within a network of interconnected relationships, encompassing both formal channels such as reports, directives, and official announcements—and informal channels like casual conversations among coworkers. These communication flows allow organizations to function efficiently, make decisions, and adapt to changing circumstances. Ultimately, effective organizational communication strengthens cooperation and ensures that members work toward shared goals.

Differences in cultural characteristics often pose a major obstacle in organizations, where the cultures of two countries are integrated within the organization. Cultural barriers, such as differences in language, behavior, habits, and customs, will undoubtedly hinder company or organizational activities. Different cultures inevitably lead to differences in language, both verbal and nonverbal. This is the most significant obstacle in an organization, particularly in avoiding conflict arising from cultural differences.

Culture is essentially the values that emerge from the process of intercultural interaction. These values are recognized, either directly or indirectly, over time. Sometimes these values even persist in the subconscious of individuals and are passed down to the next generation. From a theoretical perspective, for example, in the anthropological tradition, Clifford Geertz (Syarifah & Mushtoha, 2022) defines culture as values that historically possess their own characteristics and can be discerned from the symbols they display. Culture becomes a practice of communication between humans; for example, we can discern someone's expression from a photo they send without ever having met them. However, in the context of culture, through a semiotic perspective, the meaning of the displayed expression naturally aligns with generally accepted social practices.

These symbols are meaningful within a system of concepts of communication expression among humans, which contain meaning and continue to evolve as human knowledge advances in life. In the science of sociology, communication explains that communication is a process of interpreting information, attitudes and behavior carried out by someone regarding other people's information, attitudes and behavior in the form of knowledge, speech and gestures or attitudes, behavior and feelings so that someone makes reactions to the information, attitudes and behavior based on the experiences he has had.

Communicating with people from different cultures and backgrounds requires understanding the differences in values, beliefs, and attitudes held by others. Language barriers occur when people communicating do not share the same language or do not have the same level of language proficiency. Barriers can also arise when we use inappropriate language levels or when we use jargon, slang, or slang that is not understood by one or more of the people we are communicating with. Another contributing factor is language barriers within multicultural organizations.

The ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) has been in effect since 2015, providing an opportunity for a country's skilled workforce to become professionals in ASEAN member states. The AEC's implementation inherently entails the revocation of regulations that allow for the unhindered flow of goods, services, people (skilled labor), and money (Naukoko, 2017). This situation makes the role of cross-cultural communication within organizations highly strategic in strengthening the sustainability of skilled workers in pursuing their professional careers. It has become a trend in the global economy that company activities involve individuals/employees/managers from more than one country, whether assigned to other countries or within their own country. This situation makes cross-cultural communication unavoidable.

Cultural differences pose a challenge for companies and institutions in implementing appropriate cross-cultural communication. Based on this, this study analyzes the impact of cross-cultural communication on cultural factors, the adaptation model adopted, and the obstacles encountered. Appropriate cross-cultural communication results in positive interaction and cooperation between individuals in achieving the company's and institution's vision. Intercultural communication is essentially ordinary communication; the difference lies in the cultural backgrounds of the individuals involved.

The success of an organization in efficiently achieving its goals depends on various factors. The skills and knowledge of its members significantly influence the achievement of these goals. To achieve these goals, one of the factors is well-developed and managed communication within the organization. Good communication within an organization will also provide good service. Therefore, communication needs to be implemented in every organization.

The impact of the free flow of skilled labor from one country to another within the ASEAN region requires a thorough understanding of the culture and language used in that country. These two factors effectively facilitate skilled labor in understanding the behavior of a nation's civilization, thus ensuring their continued professional existence. Therefore, cross-cultural communication within a company is an important topic to study.

Each person has a different perception of the reality around them, depending on how they grew up, where they were, with whom they were, how they lived, and other factors in their development and life (Rahmania, 2023). Perception is based on past experiences, so it is highly dependent on what their culture teaches them. Perception is generally selective, with internal factors such as motivation, drive, expectations, and emotions as benchmarks, and external factors such as movement, intensity, contrast, novelty, and repetition of existing objects.

Intercultural communication serves as a bridge to create balance in national life. This is driven by differences in cultural perceptions, which are often a cause of conflict within organizations. Citizens' perceptions are certain to vary depending on their experiences and perspectives. Likewise, culture greatly influences each citizen's perception of culture.

## METHOD

This research employed a library research method, focusing on collecting data and information from various written sources relevant to the topic "Cross-Cultural Communication in Organizations and Its Perspective in Islamic Communication." Data were collected through a literature review, including books, scientific journals, academic articles, theses, and trusted digital sources discussing cross-cultural communication theory and communication principles in Islam. This approach was chosen because it can provide in-depth conceptual and theoretical understanding without the need for field research. The data collection process involved selecting credible and up-to-date sources to ensure validity and relevance to the research problem.

Next, the collected data was analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis, with the aim of describing, interpreting, and comparing cross-cultural communication concepts with Islamic communication values. The analysis examined the alignment between modern communication theory and Islamic communication principles, such as *sidq* (honesty), *amanah* (responsibility), and *fathanah* (wisdom). The results of the analysis are expected to show how Islamic values can be applied in cross-cultural communication practices in organizations, thus producing a communication model that is harmonious, ethical, and in accordance with Islamic teachings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Cross-cultural communication is communication between people of different cultures, for example, between ethnic groups, between races, or between social classes (Hariyanto & Dharma, 2020a). Cross-cultural communication is the exchange of messages delivered verbally, in writing, or even in imaginary ways between two people with different cultural backgrounds. This communication involves the sharing of messages in the form of information or entertainment, delivered verbally, in writing, in imaginary ways, or through other means by two people of different cultural backgrounds. This information sharing process also occurs through body language, personal style or appearance, or the assistance of other media that can clarify the message.

Nasukah et al., (2020) explain that effective communication is often difficult to achieve even under the best conditions, for example, when members come from the same culture and have many similarities among members of an organization. In the context of organizations with diverse/multinational members, cross-cultural factors clearly create the potential for increased communication problems. The process of encoding and decoding messages into symbols is based on an individual's cultural background, and as a result, the results are not the same for everyone. Significant differences in background between sender and receiver lead to significant differences in the meanings attached to certain words or behaviors. People from different cultures perceive, interpret, and evaluate things differently, and consequently, their actions differ.

Cicilia (2023) explains that each individual has a unique style of speaking, not only in the manner but also in the topics of conversation. This uniqueness is generally inherited from their culture. Edward T. Hall (1973) distinguishes between high-context and low-context cultures, which differ significantly in the way messages are encoded (Muzzammil, 2021). Low-context cultures are characterized by verbal and explicit messages, a direct, straightforward, and frank style of speaking. Adherents of low-context cultures say what they mean and mean what they say. High-context cultures are characterized by high levels of communication, with most messages being implicit, indirect, and less direct. The true message may be hidden in the speaker's nonverbal

behavior, such as voice intonation, hand gestures, body posture, facial expressions, eye contact, and physical appearance.

Two key concepts that shape intercultural communication are culture and communication. The relationship between the two is complex. Culture influences communication, and communication, in turn, helps determine, create, and maintain cultural realities. In other words, culture and communication are like two sides of the same coin, inseparable and mutually influencing each other. Culture not only determines who speaks to whom, about what, and how communication takes place, but also determines how people encode messages (Sihabudin, 2022).

The entire communication process ultimately hinges on the level of achievement of communication goals, namely the extent to which participants assign shared meaning to the messages exchanged. Gudykunts argues that for two or more people to communicate effectively across cultures, they will be dealing with one or more messages being exchanged (sent and received). They must be able to assign shared meaning to those messages. In short, effective communication is communication that results from the ability of the participants to minimize misunderstandings (Suryadi, 2010).

The most important outcome of communication is shared meaning. It's not just the communicator, the message content, the media, or the channel. Therefore, for the intended meaning of communication to be understood, accepted, and implemented together, participation must be enabled to exchange and negotiate meaning among all parties and elements in the communication, ultimately resulting in harmony and compatibility.

Furthermore, Sihabudin (2022) explains that cultural barriers and the implications of cross-cultural communication can be anticipated by understanding the concepts of high-context and low-context cultures. Countries such as China, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia are high-context cultures. They emphasize nonverbal and subtle situational cues when communicating with others. What is not said may be more significant than what is said. In these cultures, a person's formal position, social status, and reputation are important considerations in communication.

In contrast, people from North America and Europe reflect a low-context culture. They rely on words to convey meaning. Body language or titles/titles are secondary to spoken and written words (Hariyanto & Dharma, 2020b). Communication in high-context cultures implies trust in the other party. What appears to outsiders to be causal and insignificant in conversation is important because it reflects a desire to build relationships and establish trust. Verbal agreements signify strong commitment in high-context cultures, and age, seniority, and organizational position are highly valued and significantly influence credibility. However, in low-context cultures, contracts tend to be written, detailed, and legally binding.

Similarly, low-context cultures value directness. Managers are expected to be explicit and detailed in conveying their intentions. This contrasts with high-context cultures, where managers tend to give suggestions rather than orders. The success of an organization in efficiently achieving its goals depends on various factors. The skills and knowledge possessed by organizational members significantly influence the achievement of predetermined goals. To achieve these goals, one factor is well-developed and well-managed communication within the organization. Good communication within an organization will also provide good service. Therefore, communication needs to be implemented in every organization.

This communication style stands in clear contrast to that of high-context cultures, where meaning is often derived from subtle cues, shared experiences, and nonverbal signals. In high-context settings, managers may use suggestions, hints, or indirect guidance rather than issuing direct commands. Such an approach is believed to maintain harmony, preserve relationships, and show respect. While this style can be more nuanced and relational, it may also require a deeper understanding of social norms within the organization (Levitt, 2022). The success of an

organization in achieving its goals efficiently and effectively is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Beyond structural resources and strategic planning, human interaction plays a crucial role. Communication becomes a central mechanism through which tasks are coordinated, decisions are made, and cooperation is built. Without the right communication environment, even the best organizational strategies can fail to yield optimal results.

One of the most important determinants of organizational success is the skills and knowledge possessed by its members. Employees who understand their roles, have adequate expertise, and possess strong interpersonal abilities are more capable of contributing to overall performance. However, the presence of competent personnel alone is not sufficient; their abilities must be aligned through clear and effective communication so that collective goals can be achieved. For this reason, well-developed and well-managed organizational communication becomes a critical factor. Communication that is structured, open, and responsive allows information to flow smoothly between individuals and departments. It minimizes confusion, accelerates problem-solving, and fosters a collaborative work atmosphere. When communication channels are properly managed, organizations are better equipped to adapt to challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

Good communication within an organization also leads to improved service quality, both internally and externally. Internally, it helps employees understand expectations, coordinate responsibilities, and build supportive relationships. Externally, it ensures that clients, customers, or stakeholders receive accurate information and consistent service. This alignment between internal communication and external service delivery strengthens the organization's reputation and reliability. Therefore, communication must be recognized as a foundational element that needs to be implemented, cultivated, and continuously improved in every organization. Regardless of cultural background, organizational structure, or industry, effective communication enhances productivity and creates a healthy work environment. By prioritizing communication practices, organizations can navigate cultural differences, enhance teamwork, and ultimately achieve their strategic objectives.

Regarding language in cross-cultural communication, Wicaksono et al. (2021) explain that, according to Larry, language has three functions: naming, interaction, and information transmission. Sihabudin (2022) explains that words mean different things to different people. Age, education, and cultural background are three variables that clearly influence a person's language use. In an organization, employees typically come from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, groups of employees become departments that carry out specific tasks. In a large organization, members are often geographically separated, even carrying out tasks in different countries. Therefore, individuals in each location will use terms and expressions unique to their area.

The existence of hierarchy in an organizational structure can also cause language problems. For example, differences in the meaning of the words "incentive" and "quota" have been found at different levels of management. Top managers often talk about the need for incentives and quotas, but the terms imply manipulation and create resentment among lower-level managers. This demonstrates that although two people may speak the same language, their use is not uniform. If we understand how each of us modifies language, communication difficulties can be minimized. The problem is that organizational members are often unaware of how the people they interact with modify language. Message senders tend to assume that the words and terms they use have the same meaning for the recipient. This assumption is often incorrect.

Kreitner (2003) explains that there are over 3,000 different languages spoken in the world (Setiadi, 2024). Anthropologists hold two opposing views: relativists, who believe that language fosters unique perceptions. Universalists, on the other hand, argue that all languages share common elements and therefore foster common perceptual processes.

Lukman & Widyastuti (2024) also explain that language is bound to cultural context, and language is seen as an extension of culture. Sapir-Whorf's hypothesis, known as the Theory of Linguistic Relativity, states that each language represents a unique symbolic world that reflects the reality of the mind, inner experiences, and needs of its users (Efendi et al., 2023). Therefore, different languages influence their users to think differently, perceive their environment, and the universe around them, and behave differently.

Communication phenomena are strongly influenced by the media used, so the media sometimes influences the content and interpretation of information; in fact, the media itself is the message itself. For example, if a man gives flowers to a girl, the gift can be interpreted as an expression of love, friendship, peace, sympathy, and so on. Therefore, a crucial aspect of communication is how one interprets another person's behavior, such as speech, gestures, attitudes, and the symbols used.

Robbins (2002) further explains that when communicating with people from different cultures, there are several things you can do to reduce misperceptions, misinterpretations, and misvaluations, namely (Mu'alimin et al., 2024) 1) Assume differences until similarities are proven. Most of us assume others are more similar to us than they actually are. But people from different countries are often very different from us. Therefore, it is much less likely to err by assuming others are different than by assuming they are the same until differences are proven. 2) Emphasize explanation over judgment/interpretation. Interpreting or judging what someone says and does, as opposed to describing, is based on the observer's culture and background, rather than the situation being observed. 3) Empathy: Before sending a message, put yourself in the recipient's shoes. Try to understand their values, experiences and frame of reference, education, upbringing, and background, which can provide additional insight. Strive to see others as they truly are. 4) Consider interpretations as working hypotheses or tentative assumptions. When we interpret a new situation or idea from a foreign culture, that interpretation becomes a hypothesis that must be further tested. Carefully assessing the feedback provided by the recipient of the information is necessary to ensure that the feedback aligns with the hypothesis.

Prejudice is one of the most significant obstacles or barriers in communication, because those who hold prejudice are already suspicious and hostile toward the communicator (Mu'alimin et al., 2024). In prejudice, emotions force us to draw conclusions based on suspicion, without applying our reasoning and perspective to the real facts. Therefore, once prejudice takes hold, people will not be able to think objectively, and everything they see will always be judged negatively.

Language differences are the first obstacle or barrier in the intercultural communication process, stemming from the differences in meaning of each symbol. To achieve the goals outlined, intercultural communication often encounters various obstacles. Psychological conditions have the power to positively and negatively influence the communication process (Rahayu et al., 2025). By understanding psychological conditions, a communicator knows when and how to communicate with their audience. If they encounter psychological conditions that could hinder communication, they will choose to avoid or postpone communication. Ecology or the environment relates to external forces that influence communication participants. The social environment, such as differences in socioeconomic status, can have a detrimental impact on intercultural communication. Furthermore, mechanical barriers relate to the technology or media used for communication, such as meetings, festivals, teleconferences, radio chats, and chats. If someone is inexperienced in using a particular technological medium for communication, they tend to rely on outdated methods that may be inadequate for the recipient (the recipient).

Crosscultural communication in organizations is the process of exchanging messages between individuals or groups with different cultural backgrounds. In the context of modern organizations, differences in language, values, norms, and ways of thinking often present

challenges to reaching mutual understanding. Islam views communication as a means to strengthen interpersonal relationships and uphold humanitarian values (Azzahra et al., 2025). In the Qur'an, Allah states in QS. Al-Hujurat (49): 13 that humans were created into tribes and nations so that they may know one another (*lita'arafu*) (Nisa & Farabi, 2025). This verse serves as the basis for the belief that cultural differences are a divine will that must be addressed through communication that respects and prioritizes morals.

Islamic communication theory emphasizes that communication must be based on the values of *sidq* (honesty), *amanah* (trust), *tabligh* (clear communication), and *fathanah* (wisdom). These principles are also relevant in cross-cultural communication in organizations (Iskandar & Sulaiman, 2024). For example, *sidq* requires each individual to be honest in conveying messages without manipulation, while *fathanah* emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural context of the interlocutor to avoid misinterpretation. By implementing these values, communication in multicultural environments can avoid misunderstandings and conflicts stemming from differences in cultural interpretation.

In Islam, communication is not simply about conveying messages, but also about building empathy and mutual respect. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was known as an effective communicator because he was able to adapt his speaking style to the background of his interlocutor without compromising the principle of truth (Sikumbang et al., 2024). In the context of cross-cultural organizations, the values of *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *ihsan* (good deeds) are key to successful communication. A leader or member of an organization needs to understand that differences in expression, gesture, or way of thinking are not a form of rejection, but rather part of cultural diversity that must be respected.

Islam emphasizes the importance of ethics in all forms of communication. In multicultural organizations, this ethics is manifested through fairness, not imposing opinions, and avoiding gossip or slander. The Quran prohibits the spread of news whose veracity is uncertain (Surah Al-Hujurat: 6), which also serves as an important guideline for organizational professionals in conveying information. The communicator's responsibility is not only for the successful delivery of the message, but also for its moral and social impact (Sikumbang et al., 2024). Therefore, ethical communication is the foundation of intercultural harmony in the workplace.

(Rusli et al., 2024) This study highlights the importance of integrating Islamic principles into community-led efforts to address cross-cultural communication issues. (Sari et al., 2025) cross-cultural communication not only mitigates potential conflicts but also enhances the acceptance and competitiveness of Sharia businesses globally. In cross-cultural communication, one of the obstacles is language (Mogea, 2023). Organizations operating in culturally diverse regions implement localized communication strategies to balance Islamic values with cultural sensitivities (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

Therefore, cross-cultural communication in organizations, from the perspective of Islamic communication theory, is not only about strategies for conveying messages effectively, but also about building relationships based on divine values. The principles of honesty, trustworthiness, wisdom, and tolerance make communication a means of *da'wah* (preaching) and brotherhood, not merely a professional interaction. If Islamic values are applied consistently, cultural differences will actually become a strength in enriching organizational dynamics, creating harmony, and increasing collective productivity.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that in the global economic era, company activities involve individuals/employees/managers from more than one country, whether assigned to other countries or within their own country. This situation creates unavoidable cross-cultural communication. One barrier in cross-cultural communication is

language differences. Language is an extension of culture. Differences in understanding or interpreting a word or symbol can become a potential communication barrier and can hinder business or organizational activities.

Cross-cultural communication in organizations, from an Islamic perspective, emphasizes that every interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds must be based on the values of honesty (sidq), trustworthiness (amanah), wisdom (fathanah), and tolerance (tasamuh). Islam views cultural differences as a divine law (sunnatullah) that must be addressed with a spirit of mutual understanding and respect, not as a source of conflict. By implementing Islamic communication ethics—such as conveying information accurately, avoiding prejudice, and maintaining good manners—multicultural organizations can create a harmonious, inclusive, and productive work environment. Ultimately, cross-cultural communication based on Islamic values not only strengthens professional relationships, but also fosters brotherhood and blessings in organizational life.

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that further research on "Cross-Cultural Communication in Organizations and Its Perspective in Islamic Communication" should not only focus on theoretical analysis but also expand the study through field research to observe the application of Islamic communication values in the context of multicultural organizations in practice. Future researchers can explore how principles such as sidq, amanah, and fathanah are implemented in intercultural interactions in the workplace, as well as the factors that support or hinder their effectiveness. Furthermore, research can be expanded with an interdisciplinary approach that combines aspects of psychology, sociology, and communication management to provide a more comprehensive and applicable understanding of cross-cultural communication from an Islamic perspective.

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