LDR 810: Cross-Cultural Dynamics

Richard Gamble

Omega Graduate School

 May 14, 2024

Professor

Dr. Jared Sorber

Assignment

### *Developmental Readings*

Review Assignment #3, the course essential elements, assigned readings, and recommended readings to identify selections of books and scholarly articles to identify and select developmental reading sources and entries.

* Refer to the “[Student Guide to Developmental Readings](https://drive.google.com/file/d/161V_FaYR2BnNGCSFUlWPjUSIQzcH04Hq/view?usp=share_link)” for updated information on sample comments, rubrics, and key definitions related to developmental readings.

**Source One:** Aririguzoh, S. (2022). Communication competencies, culture and SDGs: Effective processes to cross-cultural communication. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *9*(96), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01109-4

**Comment 1:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “It must be emphasized that no culture is superior to another as each culture meets the needs of those who subscribe to it. To a large extent our culture influences our behaviours and expectations from other people. Although there are noticeable similarities and differences, what separates one culture from another is its emphasis on specific values. As the United Nations has affirmed, there is diversity in cultures. These diversities add colour and meaning to human existence” (p. 8).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Variant Analysis:** This quote is variant. While I agree with Aririguzoh (2022) and the United Nation’s sentiment that diversity among cultures should be celebrated because it adds “colour and meaning to human existence” (p. 8), I disagree with the author’s emphasis that “no culture is superior to another” (p. 8). Under a secular worldview, this emphasis would make sense since there is no objective standard by which to judge the “specific values” that different cultures prioritize. However, under a Christian worldview, different cultures’ values should be evaluated based on their conformity to the values laid out by the authors of Christian scripture, which is an objective standard by which different cultures can be judged.

**Contextualization:** Even if my analysis above is correct, there is a pitfall that Christians can fall into: automatically assuming that their own culture conforms most closely to scripture and, therefore, is superior. I am certainly guilty of this. It is easy for me to get Western democracy and the American dream confused with the gospel. The thought is that obviously, western culture is better since it offers more personal freedom and opportunity. However, something that Hispanic and African cultures value is relationships over expediency. There is never a lack of time to converse or help a friend. This willingness to give time to a friend communicates brotherly love in a much fuller way than in my Western context, where time is often valued over relationships. I have often avoided a conversation with a friend because the timing was inconvenient. This is not the self-sacrificial attitude that Jesus demands from his followers. In this way, different cultures add “colour and meaning” to Christian existence (p. 8).

**Comment 2:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**Irrespective of our ethnicities, people want to communicate, understand, appreciate, and be respected by others. Effective communication is the foundation of good human relationships among team members, whether their cultural backgrounds differ or not. Good feedback is achieved when both the sender and receiver of messages create common meanings. This is what discourse is all about. Messages must be meaningful, meaningfully constructed, and meaningfully interpreted. Georgiou (2011) labels this the *communicative competence*: acknowledgment of the intercultural dimension of foreign language education and successful intercultural interactions that assume non-prejudiced attitudes, tolerance and understanding of other cultures, and cultural self-awareness of the person communicating. An efficient communicator must understand that culture shapes people, and the people then shape society. In other words, communication shapes the world. Therefore, appropriately chosen communication strategies help blend the different cultures” (p. 9).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related to interdisciplinary cross-cultural communication.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive to my understanding of the goal of cross-cultural communication. I appreciate the author’s focus on good communication constructing “common meanings” between the communicating parties (p. 9). The metaphors of creating, or constructing, point to the intentionality of the communicating process. Employees should not enter a conversation with a co-worker from another cultural background haphazardly and expect to come to a meaningful conclusion. Rather, before the conversation, the employee must seek to understand at least some of the basic cultural norms of the co-worker and attempt to formulate the initial communication in a way that a person from that culture would understand. This will start the conversation with a foundation of respect and will be more likely to achieve the desired outcome.

**Contextualization:** Working at OGS, I have encountered students from every major continent. This has been an incredibly enriching experience and I have learned a lot from our international students. However, I have not often been intentional in seeking to understand the culture of a particular student before having tutoring sessions with them. Much of my time has been spent trying to get them to conform to the Oxford tutorial method (or my way of thinking about the method). I recognize that much may have been lost in translation that, if understood, could have contributed to greater retention and success of international students. In the future, I plan to learn more about a student’s culture before I meet with them.

**Source Two:** Elmer, D. (2002). *Cross-cultural connections: Stepping out and filling in around the world*. InterVarsity Press. [Seminal]

**Comment 3:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**Listening is another important skill for coping with cultural differences. Focused listening should prompt more questions, which should bring more listening, which provokes more questions and so on. Most people err in not listening well, even if they do ask some good questions. Often people listen only as a courtesy until they can speak. Think of listening as an act of loving. Perhaps nothing shows respect for others more clearly than listening to them and then probing their thoughts more deeply” (p. 74).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related to interdisciplinary cross-cultural communication.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. I appreciate the author’s emphasis on “focused listening,” with the goal of asking more questions (p. 74). Often, people listen to another person to respond with their point of view. This may work in debate, but if the goal is cross-cultural understanding, then the goal of listening should be to understand the other person and then ask follow-up questions to increase understanding even more. This idea is consistent with a Christian worldview because it views the other as more important than oneself (Phil. 2:3). It is an “act of lov[e]” to be “quick to listen” and “slow to speak” (Jas. 1:19).

**Contextualization:** In my work advising students, I have often been quick to offer advice instead of asking good questions. This is especially the case with international students. I have not been intellectually curious about their culture and how their cultural norms shape how they approach class attendance, completing assignments, time management, etc. In my future interactions with international students, I plan to ask follow-up questions after an initial question instead of responding with my thoughts.

**Comment 4:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**If you carry high levels of fear, suspicion and superiority and face a host of cultural differences, you will experience higher degrees of frustration, confusion, tension and embarrassment. But even worse, you will more likely make a bad decision when you come to the point of choosing a coping strategy. Negative attribution will kick in and you will jump to a negative conclusion about these people and their culture. If you are not careful at this point, you will easily slide into a variety of unproductive mindsets:

* Comparison: it takes twice as long to get things done; we can do it back home in half the time.
* Blame: these people are at fault for my frustration
* Criticism: these people are really backward.
* Rationalization: it’s impossible to understand these people and their culture.
* Withdrawal: I will do my job but I will not get emotionally involved with these people.

Notice the repetition of “these people” (p. 80).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related to interdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive.If the primary emotion that people have when interacting with people from another culture is fear, then it is so easy to default into judging the culture. The desire for self-preservation is so pervasive in all humans that it is easy for them to feel threatened by those who are different from them. This leads to shutting down cross-cultural understanding.

**Contextualization:** In my dealings with international students, I have fallen into each of these mindsets. Lately, I have been frustrated with our students living in Ethiopia because many of them have not taken advantage of our pre-assignment meetups or chapel sessions due to the time difference. I have been quick to criticize what I think to be the backwardness of their approach to graduate school: “Why can’t they prioritize getting help with assignments over sleep?” But the reality is that I have no idea why they have not taken advantage of the meetups. It could very well be that they do not find value in the content or think that they need help, or any other myriad of reasons. The one thing that I have failed to do is ask them why and if there is anything that OGS could do to make the meetups more accessible to them. Instead of getting frustrated, I need to see how we can make OGS a better experience for all of our students, no matter what time zone they are in.

**Source Three:** Frunza, S. (2023). Cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and counseling in the age of artificial intelligence. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, *22*(64), 80-95.

**Comment 5:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**Soon Ang and Linn Van Dyne consecrated the understanding of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) as “the ability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures” (Ang, Van Dyne 2008, 3). It reveals itself, equally, as a way of thinking, as a way of action and always has in the background a pluralistic perspective on the situation of the individual towards himself and towards others. Therefore, it is not characteristic of a culture, but can be learned, assumed, and practiced in any multicultural or intercultural environment” (p. 86).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. The source provides an operational definition of cultural intelligence (CQ). Also, the perspective that CQ is “equally” a mindset, and a way of acting is helpful (p. 86). CQ is not merely having head knowledge about other cultures. It is putting this knowledge into practice. This process can be compared to the Apostle James’ encouragement for Christians to not only say that they have faith but to act it out (Jas. 2:14-16).

**Contextualization:** I must work harder to develop my Cultural Intelligence. I have not prioritized this aspect of learning and now is the time to begin. Even taking this course is a step in the right direction. However, I must be careful to put into practice what I am learning. In the course learning journal for this course, I intend to make a list of at least five actionable items dealing with cross-cultural understanding and communication that I will implement in the Fall 2024 term.

**Comment 6:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**Not by chance, communicating respect is one of the motivations for building Cultural Intelligence. Along with recruiting talent, managing personnel, adapting leadership style, understanding customers, Livermore places it among “the most consistent reasons identified by leading executives across the world” (Livermore 2010, 18). Respect for a person's cultural, religious, or spiritual values is a very good starting point for intercultural communication and dialogue. It is one of the most visible aspects of the meeting between Cultural Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence. Against this background, through the appeal to philosophical counseling, the elements for the construction of a new managerial philosophy can be strengthened. It targets the action frames of leaders who acquire a high level of Cultural Intelligence” (pp. 90-91).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. It makes sense that respect for another’s culture and values is the foundation for communication and dialogue. From a Christian worldview, respect for other humans’ dignity is grounded in the doctrine of the *imago dei*(i.e. image of God; Gen. 1:27). If every human is created in the image of God, then they are worthy of the deepest respect. One reason a human from one culture should be curious about humans from another culture is that they may bring insight into aspects of the image of God that would not have been understood before the cross-cultural encounter. The doctrine of the image of God is the foundation for the unification of Cultural Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence.

**Contextualization:** In 2020, OGS had the privilege of enrolling a Muslim student from Nigeria in our ABD PhD program. The OGS faculty and staff were a little nervous about how the religious differences would play out. This student was very open about being a Muslim. However, she respected our Christian values and was an excellent student. In her dissertation, she even applied her research to the moral values that Muslims and Christians held in common. She graduated recently and I am thankful that she chose to finish her doctorate at OGS. Her research will go a long way toward constructive social change. Had the faculty and staff not respected our similarities and differences with this student, I am confident that the outcome would not have been as favorable. Yes, I hope that one day this student accepts the Christian Gospel, but it was a great experience of common grace to have her as a student.

**Source Four:** King, C. S. T., & Bailey, K. S. (2021). Intercultural communication and US higher education: How US students and faculty can improve international students’ classroom experiences. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *82*, 278-287. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.04.007

**Comment 7:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**Again, if faculty improve their own cultural understanding and acknowledge that they have international students in the classroom, they can slow their speaking and universalize their examples and course content. For example, one participant asked during the interview if we would explain an idiom – It is raining cats and dogs.’ Another participant noted that one instructor started talking about a television show that reflected the culture and crime of New York City. The student had never been to New York City or watched the show and thus was confused by the cultural references” (p. 285).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding and communication.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. One of the first steps toward cross-cultural understanding is acknowledging when people from another culture are present. Professors should desire every student to benefit as much as possible from their teaching. If this is the case, then professors must learn about their students’ backgrounds and tailor their teaching methods to communicate effectively with students from all cultural backgrounds.

**Contextualization:** I can put this into practice in every aspect of my work in higher education. In my roles as instructor and tutor, I can plan my lessons and advising sessions so that I do not intentionally include idioms or cultural symbols that are specific to my own culture. I also think it would be a good idea for me to ask the international students after the lesson or tutoring session if I accidentally included one of these items. If so, then I can explain what the idiom or cultural symbol means and ask them if there is a corresponding idiom or symbol in their culture.

**Comment 8:**

**Quote/Paraphrase:** “All four participants expressed that their faculty did not know or understand their cultural norms, psychological challenges, or health issues related to climate, diet, and lifestyle changes. (We addressed this earlier in the manuscript but also want to include this note here because the participants noted that faculty may not understand.) These participants suggested that faculty learn about cultural differences so they can consider those differences in their classroom, know resources that might benefit international students, and discuss these cultural differences with their students—as part of the educational content that faculty integrate into their curriculum” (pp. 285-286).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. I find two items particularly compelling. First, acknowledging cross-cultural differences in students should not only affect teaching. The differences should also motivate professors to look for resources outside of the classroom that will help international students. This may involve the professor coordinating with academic affairs, student affairs, and library professionals to craft tools that will help the students with the professor’s particular course. Second, professors should bring cultural differences up for discussion in the classroom. Students should have the opportunity to discuss how cultural differences offer varying perspectives on the subject matter of the course.

**Contextualization:** In my roles in higher education, I have not adequately acknowledged the “psychological challenges” that many of my international students are facing while trying to get their schoolwork done (p. 285). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, international students came to the OGS campus in Dayton, TN for a week, which caused some separation between their academics and any problems that were going on in their home country. After the pandemic, however, OGS courses moved to a virtual residency format over Zoom. In this setup, international student Zoom into class sessions from their homes, which makes it harder to not be distracted by the problems in their home country. For instance, in Ethiopia over the last few years, some military uprisings caused much chaos in the country. I wish that I had asked my Ethiopian students more questions about what was happening. It may have helped me provide more tailored assistance to these students.

**Source Five:** Hansen, H. R., Shneyderman, Y., McNamara, G. S., & Grace, L. (2018). Assessing acculturative stress of international students at a U.S. community college. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(1), 215-232. doi: 1-.5281/zenodo.1134293

**Comment 9:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**The variety of coping behaviors used to manage stress produced by the acculturation process has significant health and academic performance implications (Kuo, 2013). For example, when examining the relationship between acculturative stress, social support and coping, it has been found that parental support and active coping (versus avoidant coping) buffered the effects of high acculturative stress on anxiety and depressive symptoms (Crockett et al., 2007). Further, Berry (2005) found that participants who used the acculturation strategy of integration experienced less acculturative stress and more adaptation. Also, Cho (2014) found among international teens studying in the United States that those using problem-focused or social support coping strategies had more positive school adjustment, while those relying on emotionally focused coping strategies had greater satisfaction of life scores” (pp. 218-219).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive.It makes sense that social support strategies were effective in helping international students to cope with acculturation anxiety. It is much easier to do something difficult if one has family or friends who believe in them and assist them. This ensures that anxiety is not compounded by loneliness in the pursuit of acculturation.

**Contextualization:** At OGS, I think that we can do a better job of asking international students about their familial and social support systems. We must recognize that this support can be a defining factor for the international students’ success in our programs and encourage students to involve their families and friends in their academics. Also, it would be interesting to offer a workshop for these family members or friends to provide some tips on how they can better support their students.

**Source Six:** White, C. L. (2022). Race, negative acculturation, and the black international student: A study of Afro-Caribbean and African-born students in U.S. colleges. *International Research and Review*, *12*(1), 33-51.

**Comment 10:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**The participants in this study, in general, agree that steps must be taken to mitigate the impact of ethno-transnational racism on predominantly White college campuses. And while most participants in this study hinted at various levels of cultural integration as perhaps the most useful strategy, they believe that acculturative integration can be a two-way street. An example of such symbiosis would be the implementation of affinity programs such as African or Caribbean cultural exchange clubs where international students can share a little bit about their culture while learning more from their peers about the U.S. culture. While Black students’ Greek letter organizations have long existed at many U.S. universities, some Black international students indicated an unwillingness to join these organizations, as they believe, as one participant mentioned, the perception is that much of the focus of these groups is on racial issues. P14, for example, said he didn’t feel a need to prove he was Black enough and therefore resisted joining an all-Black fraternity.

The most salient theme that emerged from this study was university officials’ impact on the acculturation of Black students on these predominantly white U.S. college campuses—or the lack thereof resulting from their low involvement. It is evident from the data that the designated school officials should be more aware of the cultural idiosyncrasies and nuances that make the needs of Black international students unique. DSOs may benefit from participating in cultural sensitivity training specific to students from majority-Black nations. This may help to create safe spaces (physical or figurative) where meaningful cultural exchange can happen to contextualize the intersectionality of immigration and race” (p. 46).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related tointerdisciplinary cross-cultural understanding.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. A lack of involvement of school officials in the lives of Black international students, especially if there is a higher level of involvement with white, U.S. students, communicates that Black international students are not worth the investment of time. Granted, this lack of involvement may be grounded more in ignorance than intentional neglect. Even so, the lack can bring pain to Black students This is why cultural sensitivity training may be helpful for these officials.

**Contextualization:** OGS currently has many Black students from Africa and the Caribbean enrolled in its programs. I believe that this has been the case since the inception of the school. However, I have not found any record of OGS faculty and staff undergoing cultural sensitivity training specific to students from these countries. I will research opportunities for this training and suggest that it be implemented in future faculty training and development.

**Source Seven:** Whiteman, D. (2024). *Crossing cultures with the gospel*. Baker Academic.

**Comment 11:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**In our effort to understand and uncover cultural differences, we need to learn how to ask good questions in a manner that creates a safe environment for the people we are questioning. Establishing rapport is absolutely critical, and that is as much an art form as it is a (p. 311) technique. The typical questions a reporter asks are who, what, when, where, why, and sometimes how. Notice, these are open-ended questions, for which a yes or no answer is inadequate. As cross-cultural witnesses, we’re interested in learning about and understanding the cultural differences of others. These six questions can be a good starting point” (p. 312).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related to interdisciplinary cross-cultural missions in a global society.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. I appreciate the metaphor of *uncovering* presented by the author. The “cross-cultural witness” is like an archaeologist who is digging in the dirt, searching for buried treasure (p. 312). The interrogative questions are like the tools that the witness uses to dig. Like the archaeologist, the witness must be observant while they are digging so that they do not miss any important information.

**Contextualization:** I intend to start asking more open-ended questions in my dealings with international students. I often offer to set up DIAL training or Zoom training sessions with new students. I think that this could be a good setting for me to plan, informally, to ask some interrogative questions to learn more about their culture(s) while I share helpful orientation information with them.

**Comment 12:**

**Quote/Paraphrase: “**When we become bicultural, we are able to detach ourselves in some measure from our home culture and translate cultural beliefs and practices from one culture to another. When this happens, we become “cultural brokers” or traders who move between cultures, bringing ideas and products from one culture to another. Don Larson notes that too often the roles missionaries have occupied may have given them power and position but have been perceived negatively by local people. So instead of the roles of teacher, seller, or accuser, he suggests that missionaries occupy roles that will be positively perceived and more readily received by local people. These are learner instead of teacher, trader instead of seller, and storyteller instead of accuser (Larson 1978)” (p. 353).

**Essential Element:** This quote is related to interdisciplinary cross-cultural missions in a global society.

**Additive Analysis:** This quote is additive. Since the main posture of a cross-cultural witness should be that of a listener—a learner—it does not make sense for them to occupy roles of “power and position” (p. 353). Instead, the missionary should assume a kenotic position, emptying themselves of the desire for importance, and should serve others to build rapport. This could lead to the opportunity to bear witness to the gospel.

**Contextualization:** When working in higher education administration, it is so easy to occupy roles of power such as teacher, tutor, success officer, etc. These roles are sort of built into the job descriptions. But I wonder if OGS could adopt, at least partially, some of the author’s suggestions. Professors and tutors could emphasize that their roles make them primarily co-learners and knowledge traders with the students. The Oxford tutorial method, with its emphasis on individualized self-directed learning, may be a viable foundation for this cross-cultural kenotic transformation of roles to occur.

**Works Cited**

Aririguzoh, S. (2022). Communication competencies, culture and SDGs: Effective processes to cross-cultural communication. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *9*(96), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01109-4

Elmer, D. (2002). *Cross-cultural connections: Stepping out and filling in around the world*. InterVarsity Press. [Seminal]

Frunza, S. (2023). Cultural intelligence, spiritual intelligence and counseling in the age of artificial intelligence. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, *22*(64), 80-95.

Hansen, H. R., Shneyderman, Y., McNamara, G. S., & Grace, L. (2018). Assessing acculturative stress of international students at a U.S. community college. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(1), 215-232. doi: 1-.5281/zenodo.1134293

King, C. S. T., & Bailey, K. S. (2021). Intercultural communication and US higher education: How US students and faculty can improve international students’ classroom experiences. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *82*, 278-287. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.04.007

White, C. L. (2022). Race, negative acculturation, and the black international student: A study of Afro-Caribbean and African-born students in U.S. colleges. *International Research and Review*, *12*(1), 33-51.

Whiteman, D. (2024). *Crossing cultures with the gospel*. Baker Academic.