The Impact of Cultural Value Systems on Cross-Cultural Communication Success or Failure

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Abstract – **In a globalizing and rapidly changing world, meeting people from different cultural backgrounds has become more and more common. However, such cross-cultural contacts are not always without problems. Although intra-cultural communication, at least at face value, seems to be easy to handle, cross cultural encounters tend to be usually fraught with a variety of problems. In the present article, we try to examine the problem of communication failure in interactions taking place between people from different cultural backgrounds. More specifically, we argue that cross-cultural encounters face difficulties because in their interpretation of others' message, interlocutors rely on their own value system and the representations they have of the self and the other.**

Keywords – **Self, Other, Communication, Failure, Cross-Cultural, Value System, Representations.**

I. INTRODUCTION

In a globalizing and rapidly changing world, meeting people from different cultural backgrounds has become more and more common. However, such cross-cultural contacts are not always without problems. Although intra-cultural communication, at least at face value, seems to go smoothly and is easier to handle, cross cultural encounters usually fall prey to many problems [17, 31, 59]. These problems cannot be reduced to the lack of linguistic knowledge, but rather to other more important factors. Cross-cultural encounters are made even worse when foreign speakers' native like fluency is not paralleled by a shared knowledge of the cultural values, representations, ways of thinking, acting and speaking which underlie interactions and are usually taken for granted by native speakers [27,28, 32].

The communication problems in question are referred to by a plethora of terms, namely 'communication failure' [40, 46, 70], 'misunderstanding' [30, 56], 'communication non-success' [23, 24], 'socio-pragmatic failure' [60], 'miscommunication' [65], among other things. All these terms point toward the problems to which cross-cultural contacts fall prey, namely that an attempt to express an idea or a proposition (be it via face-to-face or face-to-page interactions) has not been successful. However, it appears that although scholars seem to have agreed on the essence of the term failure in communication, their works vary a great deal in many respects, especially the frame of analysis they adopt and the working definitions they espouse. Before reviewing some of the different treatments of communication breakdown, let us first start by defining the concepts of 'cross-cultural communication" and "communication failure".

II. DEFINING COMMUNICATION FAILURE

Ahmed defined cross-cultural communication as that involving conversation, negotiation and exchanges of information either verbally or nonverbally with people who come from a different cultural backgrounds and value systems, use different ways of communication and follow different societal norms. Too often, these ways of communication, value systems and societal norms are unfamiliar to those belonging to a different speech co-

-munity and subsequently a different culture [2, 12, 53].

According to Mc tears, failure in communication has often been defined broadly and narrowly [40]. In its broad sense, failure indicates any breakdown or failure that occurs in communication between human beings in general. For instance, a breakdown in communication can occur between husbands and their wives when one of the parties no longer shows interest in the other party's concern or activities. In the work environment, the management and the employees can reach a point where communication is not possible anymore, a fact which can result in strikes and a tense atmosphere. Failure or breakdown in communication can also occur between nations and can at times lead to the cessation of diplomatic relations or even to war. What is common in all the above situations is that they depict instances where partners do not accept each other's goals simply because the latter seem to be in conflict with theirs.

In its narrow sense, on the other hand, communication failure centres on the processes and/or strategies whereby information is negotiated and interpreted among speakers and hearers not in such smooth a way as is required [40]. In other words, it designates situations in which the addressee fails to understand, for whatever reason, what the speaker or writer communicates to them because each of them has different underlying cultural assumptions and representations [41, 62].

It is important to note that to consider "success-failure" in terms of a fixed dichotomy would be an oversimplification, in so far as this arises from the assumption that only, "success" constitutes part of the dynamics of communication, whereas "failures" are treated as mere kinds of "dead moments" [20]. This is not true, for, as Giacomi et al pointed out, "success and failure" are not antonyms, but rather too equally important poles or extremes of a continuum within which communication oscillates [20]. When exchanges are smooth and successful, communication is success-oriented. However, when communication problems arise, it is failure-oriented. The result of the fluctuation or oscillation between the two extremes is what has come to be referred to as 'intercultural communication" or cross-cultural communication.

Failure in communication, it is important to remember, is a phenomenon that renders the pursuit of communication temporarily or definitely impossible. In other words, failures of communication are of varying degrees not only in terms of length or duration, but in terms of effects as well [20]. There are short term failures and long term failures. The former can be due to reciprocal problems of comprehension, rather than to the inability of production on the part of the speaker. In such cases, partners tend to use reduced and simplified means to maintain the conversation. The latter, on the other hand, usually correspond to what Giacomi et al have called "dialogue de sourds" [20], in which participants are not in the "same wave-length", with each of them displaying a series of coding and decoding activities, giving the impression that they are fully satisfying the conversational rules when in fact they are not and are talking at cross purposes [58].

As we have already put forward earlier, failures vary in their degree of impact or effect on the course of the interaction. If the divergences in interpretation are deemed to be trivial and minor, communication, then, can proceed giving the impression that it is successful. If, however, the divergences are clearly manifested, the conversation is suspended to give way to what Harper (1987) and Thomas (1984) have referred to as 'meta-linguistic activities' or strategies, i.e., definition, reformulation, requests for clarification and the like, to come into play. When the misunderstanding persists after repairing procedures have been implemented, it is the type of communication failure which results in either topic shift or avoidance or else communication breakdown.

III. TYPES OF COMMUNICATION FAILURE

Scholars, as we have already stated, often speak of different types of communication failure. These types are classified according to their source and scope. Mc Tears, for example, drew a line between "input failures" and "model failures" [40]. Input failures, he explains, occur when the hearer is not able to "obtain a complete and coherent interpretation from an utterance. They are local in origin, deriving usually from problems associated with a single word or phrase and involving perceptual, lexical or syntactic issues". Thus, a mispronounced or misspelt word, an incorrect choice of a lexical item, or a problematic structure can result in the hearer being unable to construct (to compose or frame mentally) and construe (interpret) the speaker's meaning.

By model failures, on the other hand, Mc Tears referred to cases which emerge as a result of the listener's inability to "assimilate the message to a coherent belief model, which, in turn, may be due to the inability to assign the message to an appropriate conceptual framework because of the deficiencies of the listeners' background knowledge or their failure to make necessary inferences and supply the missing information from their schemata [40].

Taking into account Leech's (1983) distinction between grammar, the domain of which consists of linguistic rules in general, and pragmatics, which is essentially concerned with the general conditions of the communicative use of language, Thomas claimed that the term competence is composed of grammatical competence as well as socio-pragmatic competence [60]. To be competent, accordingly, is to have the ability to use language effectively and to understand language used in a context or in a goal-oriented speech situation where speakers intend not only to get their message across but to use their symbolic balance of power in order to achieve certain effects on their interlocutors.

In this connection, Bourdieu put forward that language was more than a means of transferring or sharing information. It is, instead, a means of influencing others and ensuring their obedience. To use his own words "La structure du rapport de production linguistique dépend du rapport de force symbolique entre les deux locuteurs, c'est à dire de l'importance de leur capital d'autorité…. la compétence est donc aussi capacité de se faire écouter. La langue n'est pas seulement un instrument de communication ou même de connaissance mais un instrument de pouvoir. On ne cherche pas seulement à être compris mais aussi à être cru, obéi, respecté, distingué (The structure of the relationship of linguistic production depends on the symbolic balance of power between the two speakers, that is, the importance of their capital of authority. The skill is also ability to be heard. Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge but an instrument of power. We are not only trying to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished)" [11].

Any misuse or conscious dismissal of the conditions and judgements about the fittingness and appropriateness of particular expressions to or in particular situations [19] can result in pragmatic failure. The term pragmatic failure, first used by Leech (1983) as resulting from the (inappropriate) transfer of the norms of one language to another, designates something different from problems induced by grammatical errors or linguistic complexity.

In this respect, Thomas argued that "I reserve the term exclusively for misunderstandings which arise, not from any inability on the part of the hearer to understand the intended sense/reference of speakers' words in the contexts in which they are uttered, but from an inability to recognize the force of the speaker's utterance when the speaker intended that this particular hearer should recognize it" [60].

Pragmatic failure, moreover, encapsulates two distinct areas, namely 'pragma-linguistics' and 'socio-pragmatics' [60, 61]. Before discussing these two areas, two other different, yet related distinctions should be made for convenience. Loveday [35] distinguished between 'symbolizing patterns', which indicated the various channels available for transmitting meaning, including linguistic, paralinguistic and non-verbal forms, and 'framing patterns', referring to the principles which "connect, compose and regulate communication behaviour" [35]. Fillmore also drew a parallel between general pragmatic patterns or large facts and special pragmatic practices or small facts [19]. Large facts include politeness systems, patterns of indirectness and the like. Small facts, on the other hand, cover the areas covered by symbolizing patterns in Loveday's [35] sense above.

Pragma-linguistics, then, is similar to Loveday's [35] symbolizing patters and Fillmore's [19] small facts, in so far as it describes the "study of the more linguistic ends of pragmatics, where we consider the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" [33]. Pragmatic failure, therefore, is induced by the inappropriate transfer of the verbal and non-verbal channels from one language to another. The inappropriate carrying over of speech act strategies [51] and paralinguistic or prosodic features [13, 57, 59] from one language to another can serve as illustrations [5, 26].

Socio-pragmatics, on the other hand, is related to the social and cultural conditions placed on language use. As Thomas explained, "it is cross-cultural mismatches in the assessment of social distance, of what constitutes an imposition, of when an attempt to a face threatening act should be abandoned, and in evaluating relative power, rights and obligations, etc which cause socio-pragmatic failure" [60]. Pragma-linguistic failure is basically a linguistic problem, stemming from differences is the linguistic encoding of pragmatic forces; socio-pragmatic failure, however, is induced by cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate language use [28, 29].

In the present article, we confine ourselves to the socio-cultural aspects of communication failure; that is, the type of communication failure that can be systematically explained in terms of differences in the cultural values and principles governing language production and perception/interpretation as well the representations interact ants have of themselves and of others. We confine ourselves to cultural misunderstandings which can be correlated with cultural differences, although it is sometimes not easy to draw an absolute and clear-cut distinction between the two aspects [9, 35 and 60].

Every piece of discourse has a three-level message: what is said, what is meant and what is understood. According to Lyons, a piece of discourse can be "communicative" or "informative" [36]. It is communicative if its sender seeks to develop in the receiver knowledge that they did not previously have. It is "informative" if it helps the receiver to know something of which they were not previously aware, regardless of whether that was the sender's intent or not.

Therefore, to say that a piece of discourse is communicative amounts to saying it is meaningful for the sender. The word 'informative', however, refers to another aspect of meaning (i.e., that created by the receiver). In other words, informative means meaningful for the receiver in the sense that it goes beyond the sender's intent or aim. Meaningfulness, it should be clear, implies choice from both sender and receiver's point of view, with sender's meaning involving the notion of 'intention', whereas receiver's meaning involves the notion of value and/or significance [33, 36].

In this connection, Becker invoked what he called the language paradox. He said that understanding a piece of discourse, be it written or oral, that was "distant in time and space, or conceptual world, is a utopian task, a task whose initial intention cannot be fulfilled in the development of its activity"; such intention could be satisfied only with approximations contradictory to its initial purpose. The activity of language is utopian in the sense that a person can never convey only what they want to convey. Hearers and readers will interpret what they hear and their interpretation will, as a result, be both deficient and exuberant: deficient because it says less than it wishes to say and exuberant because it says more than it plans to.

It follows from this that much of what people communicate is unspoken or unsaid. People rely more on previous knowledge and previous experience to interpret what they see, hear and read, a fact which results either in a more elaborated or distorted version of reality. This can explained by the fact that (i) people are never passive receivers or blank slates, (ii) discourse in general does not have a meaning, but only a potential for meaning (and this meaning is negotiated through the interaction between reader/ speaker and the discourse in question and (iii) the more readers/ speakers and their interlocutors share the same background, the easier and consistent their interpretation will be [28].

In other words, the version of reality that people have goes through different filters and is always biased. To explain this, Housni et al, and Biad argued that what people have were "representations of reality, rather than reality itself" [10, 29]. Biad, citing Edgar Morin, defined representation as "a comprehensive, systematic, stable and permanent mental structure resulting from a construction process based not only on the impact of reality on our senses and memory but also on the fantasies that make us prefer some aspects to others" [10].

People build their representations based not only on their perception and internalized knowledge (i.e., schemata), but also on the fantasies that influence their preference of certain aspects to others. The reason for people's non-objectivity can be ascribed to the fact that they have what Morin called "a fantasmatic understanding/ perception of reality; that is, their perception and understanding of reality are based on imaginative scenes and desires" [42].

The 'construction' that people have, Edgar Morin further said, is then projected on reality and forms a kind of loop that connects them to this reality. The said loop is both selective and additive; it is selective in the sense that part of reality is always eliminated or passes unnoticed (i.e., people keep only the aspects they want to keep); it is additive in so far as people add to it and supplement it by drawing from their internalized knowledge or schemata to fine tune it with their representations of reality [37]. This very fact means that all people's perceptions are somehow hallucinations and fantasies.

By the same token, the Franco-Chinese writer Gao Xingjian, cited in Biadpostulated that a representation was usually what was closely related to the represented; if they thought of something beautiful, they would see beauty in it, but if, in their hearts and minds, they nurtured pernicious and destructive thoughts, they would see nothing but complete devastation" [10].

If anything at all can be inferred for the above, it is that a person's cultural values and their scripts or schemata shape the way they see the world and therefore impacts their communication and perception patterns. They tend to use their own cultural logic to judge and evaluate others' verbal or nonverbal behavior. When referring to oriental societies and discussing patterns of behavior and other phenomena, some occidental

scholars place values and judgments. They describe Arab societies, for example, in terms of chaos, disorganization and absurdity. However, when they refer to Western societies, they invoke such things as organization, order and rationalism.

IV. MOROCCAN CULTURAL VALUES

According to Parker, any "attempt to define 'Arab culture' must recognize Islam as its foundation [49]. Even those who no longer observe all its tenets remain loyal to its basic concepts and give Islam its proper respect". The same holds true for most Moroccans; their verbal and nonverbal behaviour, their thought patterns and cultural values derive from and can explain through the Islamic doctrine and the Holy Koran.

A close observation of Moroccan people's oral and written language use will certainly make clear the role of Islamic religion in their daily life and in their personal relationships. Although the topics raised have nothing to do with religion, Moroccan participants tend to constantly allude to God, or to words having something to do with God and religion. A logical question pertains to the justification or motivation of this constant reference to religion in Moroccan people's language use, even if, as we have already seen, the topics discussed are not directly related to religion.

Several explanations can be advanced to account for this. Some scholars [9,16], for example, argue that this cannot be taken as a true reflection of people's personalities-that they are devotees of Islam- and the abundant use of religious words shows the ease with which God can be invoked. There may be some truth in this claim, but it is important to remember that, as we have already pointed out earlier, Islam is a capital element in Moroccan people's culture, and it is, thus, part and parcel of their daily activities and interactions and is manifested in different ways.

One of the basic values defining the Moroccan character (and probably the Arab culture in general) is the tendency to refer to fatalism. Moroccan's conception of the relationship between God and man is special, and finds its origin in the Koran. In this connection, Parker wrote that his religious heritage went far to explain [the Moroccan] student's attitude of fatalism towards events in his and in society around. In his culture, God is revered as truly omnipotent; all things happen as God wills [49].

This is clear from the belief that when something happens to one, whether or not one is responsible for bringing it about, it is due to God, ancestors and other supernatural powers. If what happens to one is something good and desirable, it is interpreted as God's 'grace' in response to one's good deeds. If, however, what happens to one is bad, it is considered as a manifestation of God's 'wrath' and punishment in reaction to one's wrong doings and ignorance of God's directives [1]. Success, for example, is not something that the individual is responsible for bringing about; instead, it is something that occurs thanks to God's 'Grace' and parents' prayers, as is shown by the use of the following expressions / rdat llah w lawaldin/ (God's and parents' 'grace'). This is also shown by a host of other formulaic expressions used to congratulate somebody on their achievements or acquisitions. This indicates that Moroccan society seems to insist on the insignificance of the individual and their role [1].

What Moroccan society lays emphasis on, as another value, is what might be referred to as the 'sense of togetherness' or 'sense of community'. Moroccans, that is, tend to allocate more importance and value to the group or community instead of the individuals [8, 50]. Individual rights are relegated to a secondary or even a

tertiary position. This very fact is clearly reflected in the degree of closeness between members of the family and society and also in the sort of mutual obligation they usually portray, although this may sometimes appear to be ideal. In the case of members of the family, there seems to be a certain interdependence and closeness that is striking to foreigners. Family bonds or blood ties are very strong [8, 18, 66]. The father's authority is still overwhelming to the extent then even his married sons and daughters cannot disobey him or contradict him. Moreover, instead of the so-called social security organisations in Western cultures, in Moroccan culture, it is sons and brothers who are supposed to help their parents and their younger brothers and sisters and take charge of their living, education and health care expenses. Members of the family have a certain feeling of obligation and commitment so much on the moral level as on the material and financial level towards each other.

The sense of community is also reflected in the relationship between members of the society. Moroccans, for example, appear to give a high value to personal relationships, although at the expense of individual rights. A person may even sacrifice their own opinions to conform or be in the same lien with that of the group. This is explicitly stated by Parker who noted that "personal relationships are extremely important [to them]. They observe the [Western] rush to experience everything and to acquire everything as laying waste to the truly important matters in life" [49].

This closeness and interdependence make people feel sort of obliged to help each other (if possible). To help a brother, a sister, a relative, a friend or a neighbour does not seem to be considered a favour, but a duty, as it were. Parker showed this, arguing that "to his two or three friends, [the Moroccan] will give generously of himself and his time. On each side there will be a sense of affection, of closeness and of mutual obligation in time of need...American friendship....appears to him shallow and uncommitted" [49].

What we notice at this point is that Moroccan people seem to be more group-oriented. They favour a sense of togetherness rather than individualism, a fact which is also reflected in the use of politeness formulas [7, 16]. According to them, what is important is not to worry about preserving one's personal territories, but rather to accomplish one's duties and commitments vis-à-vis the family, group and society.

Another important feature characterizing Moroccan culture is the sex or gender differences. While men represent power, security and protection for women, women seem to hold a secondary place or position [43, 50, 66]. Support for this point can arise from an examination of lexical items, such as /**stər**/ (protect) and /**ɣətti**/ (cover) which are used when people talk about marriage. This shows that although marriage is one of the common practices in all human societies, it differs in its implications and interpretations from one society to another. In Moroccan society in particular, and Arab societies in general, for example, marriage is not usually seen as a relationship between a man and a woman in which love is not a prerequisite and a condition, but a result. It is usually negotiated by parents with little, if any, consideration of the partners' wishes. The two parties, moreover, do not seem to have equal importance in this institution. Instead, there is an inclination to believe that power relationship exists between the two them.

The words /**stər**/ and /**ɣətti**/ (protect and cover, respectively) used to talk about marriage as well as the word /l3ar/ (conditional curse and shame) have many implications. One of these implications is that before marriage, the girl (or female character) is seen as though she were 'naked', not physically, but socially and/or morally. Her nakedness, as it were, needs to be covered and protected. In fact, it appears from this that females, according to society's beliefs, are usually exposed to people's blame and reproach. Marriage, accordingly, is conceived of as

a kind of preservation, security and protection of the girl's self-respect, chastity and dignity. Getting married, a female is sort of endowed with certain immunity from society's blame and reproach. This, I think, provides an explanation for why the male's family are sometimes seen as having a more or less privileged position vis-à-vis that of the female and also for why a woman in Moroccan traditional society accepts subordination, respects her husband and nearly holds him in 'reverence'.

It is important to remember that in such societies by protecting their sister, wife or daughter, men are in fact protecting themselves and their own reputation, so to speak. This can be accounted for in terms of the notion of "self" or "self-image", "face". In other words, in Eastern societies in general and Arab societies in particular, and given the sense of community and togetherness, and the tribal nature of families, a person's "self" is not defined in terms of personal success, achievements and merits, but in terms of a ramification of relations with the family entourage as well. In other words, defining a man's "self-image" goes beyond this to include the view, attitudes and opinion of society vis-à-vis the female members in his family [50].

In this connection, Phelan argued that in Arab cultures, especially the rural areas and small cities that did not undergo rapid cultural change, a man's honour was closely and intricately related to the female members in the family [50]. Therefore, an "insult to them is a reflection on him. A woman can be dishonoured merely by a lustful glance from another man's eyes, so a husband who lets his wife or sisters go out alone is putting his good name in danger and lowering himself socially"

Trying to lay more emphasis on the vital role of family ties in defining a person's "self" or self-image", Loveday argued that the family is important because "families are tied together in a functional interlocking complex [and] the accompanying network satisfies many of the same functions that our government satisfies" [35]. Therefore, sisters and all other female characters in the family represent a sacred link between families and since they are like judges in Anglo Saxon cultures, they have to remain above and beyond any reproach from society.

Some might argue that this is ideal; however, ideal as it may be, it remains partly true and suitable to account for Moroccan people's behavioural and verbal patterns. Ideal cultural values, it is said, are also as genuine as real ones. "Honour killings" in many Middle Eastern and other Eastern cultures , which can in no case be described as a practice or a part of Islam, constitute another example of the fact that the "self-image" of a person is intricately related to social and family background rather than to individual achievements and merits. They are said to be justified by a person's desire to "regain the family's honour lost after a daughter or sister has shamed the family, as it were. Most of this is said to be just make- believe.

In this respect, Hall, cited in Loveday, says that people in the West consider some behavioural patterns in the East, such as the killing of one's sister or daughter merely because she was intimate with a man, as uncivilized because they judge them using their own logic. According to him, what Westerners often fail to see and "have difficulty accepting is that such patterns fit into larger ones [......]. What is being guarded is not the sister's [or daughter's] life (though she may be deeply loved), but a centrally located institution without which society would perish or be radically altered. This institution is the family" [35].

A further explanation to this very fact is by invoking anthropologists' distinction between "shame societies" and "sin or guilt societies" [45, 48, 49]. In shame societies, people feel most anxious about not what is right or

what is wrong, but about the opinion of others. "Guilt or sin societies", on the other hand, pay more attention to what is wrong, right, good and bad, regardless of society's or others' opinion. Whereas in shame societies acts are judged externally, in sin societies they are judged internally.

This being the case, and based on the preceding statements, it follows that Moroccan society is a "shame culture" in which "social morality prevails above personal morality. Thus, concepts of right and wrong, sin and shame derive not from the individual determination of appropriate behaviour, but from what society in general dictates as the social norm" [49]. In other words, it is how society views things that counts, not how things really are, nor how the individual sees them. Shame in front of society is a strong conditioning in the sense that people rely on external sanctions for good behaviour, not on internalized individual convictions [45,48].

As we have already stated above, the notion of "self" or "self-image" is not determined in terms of the individual's own accomplishment and merits, but rather in terms of social and family backgrounds. The family, moreover, represents a crucial part of the frame of reference, as is usually the case with business and/ or social transactions, such as weddings and rentals. A landlord or a would-be father -in-law would often ask about the family of the person who intends to rent a house or who comes to ask for a girl's hand. What this implies is that it is not enough for an individual to tell about his job, business, property, assets and the like, but they should also tell who their parents and family are.

The reason for this is in keeping with what we have already seen about the role of family ties. Getting to know and trust an individual requires knowing who their parents and family are. This further confirms that priority is given to a person's history and family in determining that person's self. Personal achievements and success are relegated to a secondary position because, according to Moroccan cultural values, they (success and personal achievements) are something that one is not responsible for bringing about. In other words, as we have already pointed out earlier, it is believed that such things as material success and personal achievements are due to the intervention of God and the contribution of ancestors and parents and it would, therefore, be unwise to judge somebody on something they did not cause to happen.

What is striking in this point is that the individual does not represent the central element in Moroccan society; instead, the individual is only a small portion of a huge body and the individual's importance depends to a large extent on the whole body. The 'self', thus, does not consist of an individual's rights for non-imposition, but of the acceptability of the individual by society.

We have confined ourselves to these values, not because they are the only ones, but because they more or less represent some of the values that make up the core cultural system of Moroccan society. Of course, there are other values, which seem to be more regional. The values described above, moreover, are usually documented in sociological surveys and ethnographies [1, 8, 50].

V. ANGLO-SAXON CULTURAL VALUES

As we have already seen earlier, the categorization of Anglo-Saxon cultural values is carried out with the aid of and on the basis of some sociological surveys [14, 45, 48, 54]. Most of these works, which are essentially based on public opinions, list about fourteen values or characteristics defining the Anglo-Saxon character and determining their world view. In this research, however, we limit ourselves to only some of them for the sake of comparing them with some Moroccan ones.

The most important value in Anglo-Saxon culture, it is argued, is extreme independence. It is highly valued by people who are ready to do anything to preserve it. In this connection, Valdes said that Anglo-Saxons "typically hold their individual independence in high esteem and will defend their right to maintain it. So basic to them that they assume it is a universal attitude, although in many other countries, it is society or family that comes first, not the individual, and independent thought, far from being encouraged, may be dangerous to one's welfare" [63].

Underlying this value allocated to 'independence' is a set of other cultural assumptions held by Anglo-Saxons. One of these assumptions is that individualism is much more emphasized. There is even a certain praise of the autonomy of individuals. Unlike Moroccan culture, in Anglo-Saxon cultures, usually classified as Horizontal societies, what others think and say is often of little significance; instead of conformity to and identification with the group, Anglo-Saxon culture values individualism and privacy [48].

In contrast to the notion of 'fatalism' in Moroccan culture, there is a corresponding value in the Anglo-Saxon societies: the value of free will and self-determination. According to English native speakers, what befalls a person is due to their own responsibility, doings and efforts. The individual's future is in their hand. They can determine it themselves and plan to achieve it in advance, relying on themselves and their own capacities. Guerin et al observed that the Anglo-Saxon character or "Adam" referred to a "radically new personality, the hero of the new adventure; an individual of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritance of family or race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources" [25].

It appears, therefore, that the family, important as it may be, does not represent an important frame of reference for an Anglo-Saxon. Generally, as Valdes had rightly observed, asking a person about their family in an Anglo-Saxon society might discomfit them, especially in contexts such as, for example, those involved in a landlord and a person intending to rent a house in the sense that this would be taken as an insult to their self-respect and independence [64]. The 'self' in Anglo-Saxon cultures, as a result of this, is defined taking into account the individual's personal achievement and later development, regardless of their family background, birth, rank or class. The greater the distance between the starting point and later accomplishment, the greater and most important the success, as is usually signalled by slogans, such as "from the log cabin to the white house" [14, 25].

There seem to be different reasons for this. First, it is widely held that, apart from social and educational influences, people are basically the same and should, thus, be judged according to their own merits, merits which are usually revealed through people's actions. Second, because of individual values, such as free will and self-determination, the individual's success or achievement is seen as something the individual is fully responsible for bringing about. When something happens to a person, be it good or bad, this is not due to any external factors, but to the person's own actions and efforts, except of course in cases of force majeure. This once again shows the praise and importance of the individual's autonomy and the value of self-reliance and independence.

Another characteristic of English societies is that of equality between the sexes; no gender difference is taken into consideration in people's assessment. Although men and women are assigned different roles by society, they are equal from all other pints of view. The value of equality is very crucial and capital and derives from the

belief that, as we have already pointed out, educational and social influences put aside, people are basically the same. They should, therefore, be judged according to their own merits and achievements, not depending on their gender, as is usually put forward in the literature [14, 15, 25, 58].

Marriage, moreover, is seen in different terms in the Anglo-Saxon culture. According to Robertson, marriage is seen as an institution made up of a couple, united by requited and reciprocal love; it implies equality of both spouses, each of whom is entitled to respect from the other [54]. The choice of a mate is usually left to the individual, and no relationship of power or dominance prevails between the partners. This is because, unlike in Arab cultures in general and Moroccan culture in particular, in Anglo-Saxon culture, women benefit from a certain degree of financial independence and free-will. This, in turn, is due to the fact that in such a culture, everybody is judged according to their own achievement, not in terms of their association with or relation to others.

However, pointing out the differences in cultural values between the two societies and cultures concerned by the present study does not necessarily amount to saying that one culture is better, more humane or more 'civilized' than the other. The differences are simply due to the existence of what Gumperz and Wierzbicka referred to as a different "cultural logic" [26, 67, 68]. Also important to remember here is that these are general and sometimes ideal assumptions; there may be similarities between the two cultures. In other words, there may be Moroccans having similar cultural values as those of Westerners and vice-versa. This is usually explained in terms of the contact between cultures and the mutual influences that may ensue, especially with the emergence of globalization and development of new communication technologies.

Just as in the case of languages, when two cultures come into contact, they tend to influence each other. Besides, this influence tends to often be unidirectional because of the power and dominance relationships prevailing between the two cultures, as is the case with Morocco, a former colony of the French empire, in relation with Western culture.

To put this differently, it is often reported that dominated cultures tend to be more likely to adopt the cultural values of the dominating culture. Althouadi, invoking Ibn Khaldoun's theory of dominance, explained this by saying that the dominated cultures felt entrapped by what was called "psychological underdevelopment", a fact which made them develop an inferiority complex vis-a-vis the dominating cultures with which they were in contact; struggling to bridge the gap and free themselves of the inferiority complex, they tended to adopt the other group's cultural values and behavioural patterns [6].

VI. IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES ON COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE UNDERSTANDING

Cultural values, as has been pointed out, tend to have a direct bearing on communication (i.e., language production and reception) styles. If interactants from different cultural backgrounds do not take this into account, their interactions will be fraught with difficulties. It should be noted that these difficulties concern not only face-to-face, but also face-to-page interactions. The notion of face theory, as an example, interferes with the way people use language in face-to-face interactions. Its constituents are defined in terms of other cultural values and assumptions, a fact which makes conflict inevitable because of the different values participants in cross-cultural encounters bring with them. Anthropological research has shown that 'face', especially its

negative aspect, is Anglo-centric and is even alien to many other cultures. According to Matsumoto, for example, Japanese society does not support the notion of negative face [39]. In other words, negative face is based on individual rights and a desire for non-imposition, thus, presupposing that the basic unit of the society is the individual.

In Japanese society, however, this is not the case. Such things as individual rights and non-imposition are not culturally valued; instead, it is group-membership and status sensitivity that is central. Matsumoto further noted that a person's self-image or importance was not assessed as an individual, but as a group member having certain relations with and obligations towards the other members of their group [38]. Individuals are considered as fractions, deriving their self-identity from the group. Also Markus & Kitayama [(38] made it clear that in non-western cultures, the "emphasis is on attending to others, fitting in, and harmonious interdependence with them".

Loss of face, thus, does not necessarily mean that a person's personal territory has been intruded upon and encroached, but it is rather associated with the perception by others that the person concerned has not comprehended, not acknowledged and, one might add, not complied with the requirements of the social relations and with the hierarchical structure of the group [45, 48]. Given the fact that culture is not a random collection of elements, but rather a coherent and systematic whole comprising mutually interdependent elements, we cannot have contradictory assumptions coexisting in the same culture.

Similarly, in the light of the brief discussion of the cultural values and tendencies in both groups, we can say that the notion of 'face' may have different constituents and specifications in the two cultures. While the negative aspect of it, for example, which is based on the praise of privacy and of the so-called personal territories and individual rights, is supported in Anglo-Saxon culture, a culture where such things are highly valued, in Moroccan culture this is by no means the case. The concept of 'face' seems to be even alien to Moroccan culture, a culture, where, as has already been stated, does not lay emphasis on individual rights, non-imposition, and independence, but rather on the sense of 'togetherness', solidarity and mutual obligation. Sometimes, one may find cases in whose explanation they are tempted to invoke 'negative' face; however, one will soon get to refute it because of the more fundamental cultural values and ideas that crop up and that are not compatible with the notion of negative face.

Given the fact that the two cultures have different cultural tendencies, the conversational and communicational rules may be relative. Some of the rules may be highly valued than others in one culture, but not necessarily in the other. This is explained in terms of the fact that, as stated by Nuguchi, "although all cultures permit variations within the hierarchy, all cultures have a point of equilibrium, so to speak, at which the various forces exerted by the rules reach some delicate balance and conversation proceeds in the smoothest manner. This point of equilibrium is not, however, the same for all cultures" [47].

In other words, since the negative aspect of face is a central element in Anglo-Saxon culture, native speakers of English will strive to maintain and attend to it. Moroccans, on the other hand, will tend to be more concerned with their place in society and their obligations vis-a-vis the other members of society. Thus, an interaction involving native speakers of English and native speakers of Moroccan Arabic presents a potential for communication failure. Each of them will assume that communication will proceed according to their culturally - determined point of equilibrium, a fact which implies a clash between their interactional norms. This concerns

face-to-face interactions. The same holds true for face-to-page interactions to which we turn immediately below.

VII. CONCLUSION

If at all something can be inferred from this, it might be that the values of a society and the representations people have of themselves and the other influence the world view of members of that society and condition their communication and interpretation patterns. They are usually taught (by their culture) to react in a particular way to some events and behavioural patterns; however, when they encounter a different set of values and representations, they tend to develop misconceptions and feelings of contempt for the actors of the target culture. It, therefore, clearly appears that cross-cultural differences in such values and conceptions can lead to different reactions and judgements of the same symbolic event and can ultimately lead to misunderstanding or communication failure.

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