Challenges of Cross-cultural Knowledge Sharing and Managerial Implications

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Abstract: Due to globalization, the importance of diversified work force has been amplified and so is the case of knowledge and knowledge management; due to knowledge being the source of gaining competitive advantage for the organizations. However, this is irony that despite exceeding focus of researchers and practitioners on the analysis of the influence of cultural diversity on various dimensions of organizational performance; very little research has been conducted to understand the factors that impede the sharing of knowledge in culturally diversified teams. The need of conducting research on this objective intensifies by the fact that cultural diversity, despite being effective from a number of organizational performance outcomes; has been posited by researchers as a big hurdle and challenge for the sharing of organizational knowledge; due to the differences of languages, cultural values, knowledge sharing behaviours, modes of communication, cognitive styles and organizational cultural differences. Owing to these challenges, it is very much important for the researchers and practitioners to analyse the factors that negatively affect the sharing of knowledge in culturally diversified organizations, so that the organizations may be able to understand the true picture, plan accordingly and capitalize on the diverse knowledge resources, talents and expertise of their employees. It is expected that this research paper will unveil some key concepts, issues and aspects of the barriers to organizational knowledge sharing in culturally diversified organizations and will open possibilities and avenues to guide the managers and practitioners to reduce the negative effects of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing and convert it into a source of fostering knowledge sharing within organizations. We also hope that this paper will open new venues of research for the researchers and will provide support in making research instruments for conducting research.

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Introduction

We are living in a knowledge era wherein knowledge, its management and sharing is at the core of organizational priorities and foci. In today's knowledge economies, survival of organizations is not possible without a rigorous and thoughtful focus on the acquisition as well creation and leveraging of organizational knowledge and harnessing the diverse knowledge resources of employees available within organizations (Jain et al., 2007; Cabrera & Cabrea 2002). With the passage of time, the firms are realizing that the effective identification, collection, storage and dissemination of knowledge is essential for achievement of their strategic objectives (Alavi, M. & Leidner, 1991). This is mainly due to the widely accepted fact that knowledge is a precious strategic resource that facilitates firms to seek a competitive lead and resilience (Argote & Ingram, 2000; Drucker, 1994). Sharing knowledge, a key ingredient of the realm of knowledge management, refers to a systematic and thoughtful ratification of one's know how, ideas, and expertise towards others (Dube & Ngulube, 2012; Bartol & Srivastava 2002). The traditional concept that "knowledge is power" has been replaced by a recent conviction that knowledge is not power, but power actually lies in the sharing of knowledge and that the value of knowledge does not decrease, rather it increases by sharing (Dube & Ngulube, 2012). That is why, one of the most important considerations of firms with regard to the selection of employees relates to their knowledge resources, capability and temperament of sharing the knowledge within and outside the organizations (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

For achieving these objectives, firms are committed to have state of the art knowledge management systems; not only being capable of locating, collecting, storing; but also creating new knowledge and ensuring smooth and successful transfer of knowledge within the individuals and units, inside and outside the organizational boundaries (Cabrera & Cabrera 2002; Alavi, M. & Leidner, 2001; Argote, L. (1999). Research findings suggest that designing and implementing knowledge management initiatives, systems and processes aligned with the working habits, routines, organizational goals and values are essential for facilitating organizational knowledge sharing (Hickins, 1999; McDermott & O'Dell, 2001).

However, designing and management of efficient knowledge management systems is definitely a very difficult and challenging task for the organizations; especially when it comes to ensuring smooth flow and sharing knowledge within individuals and units, due to numerous behavioural and attitudinal complications resulting from knowledge sharing tendencies and habits of the people working within organizations (Alavi, Kayworth, & Leidner, 2005). These challenges further escalate when it applies to management of knowledge and its sharing in culturally diversified organizations; due to multiplicity of cultural values (Ford & Chan, 2002), language differences (Lauring, 2009), heterogeneity of cognitive and communication styles (Shachaf, 2008; Bhagat et al., 2002) and incompatibility of knowledge sharing priorities and practices of the employees (Zander & Kogut 1995; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000). This is because of the fact that workface diversity, despite being a critical tool for improving organizational performance in a number of areas including, better decision-making, innovation and problem solving; due to mixing of assorted knowledge, talents, work methods and problem solving capabilities of diverse employees (e.g., Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Shachaf, 2008; Richard et al., 2004; Richard, 2000; Gilbert et al., 1999; O'Reilly, Williams, & Barsade, 1997), has been a very challenging and daunting factor for sharing knowledge within organizations. The different knowledge sharing behaviours, trends and tendencies, shaped under the different cultural influences make knowledge sharing process under culturally diverse teams to be a complicated and problematic one (Ford & Cha, 2002; Gupta & Govindarajan 2000). These challenges need serious focus of organizations on two important fronts: design of effective knowledge management systems for culturally diverse employees and the management of cultural diversity within organizations to eliminate or minimize the detrimental effects of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing and to convert diversity instead of a problem, into a supporting tool especially for fostering knowledge sharing (Fong et al, 2013). With respect to design and implantation of knowledge management systems, cultural diversity increases the responsibility of the designers of knowledge systems to design the knowledge systems for the diversified organizations keeping in view the nature, depth and breadth of cultural diversity in the organizations (Ardichvili et a., 2006; Chow et al., 2000). They need to design the knowledge management systems, which might be especially capable of incorporating the needs, values, proprieties and preferences of the employees belonging to diversified cultural backgrounds. Extant literature presents a number of research studies on multiple aspects of cultural diversity (e.g.,

Cummings, 2004; Dadfar & Gustavsson, 1992; Cox, 1991). However, very little work is done to gather the existing literature on the influence of cultural heterogeneity on knowledge sharing and especially on the factors that impede the sharing of knowledge within culturally diversified organizations (Lauring & Slemer, 2012; Siakas, et al., 2010). Substantial number of research studies with discouraging findings on cross-cultural knowledge sharing within culturally diversified organizations and the breadth and depth of the detrimental effects of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing, call for serious attention of researchers and practitioners to dig out the reasons and factors that hinder the knowledge sharing within culturally diverse teams (e.g., Li, 2010; Lauring, 2009; Dulaimi, 2007; Finestone & Snyman, 2005; Ardichvili, et al., 2006; Ford & Chan, 2002). This is very essential, since without proper and rigorous understanding of the factors that negatively affect intercultural knowledge sharing, it will be very difficult for the organizations to develop efficient knowledge management systems in culturally diversified work-settings, consisting of individuals from various parts of the world and belonging to various cultural and societal backgrounds. Moreover, the management of cultural diversity for organizational knowledge management may not be possible without proper comprehension of the salient issues and facets of inter-cultural knowledge sharing. Hence, this research offers a reasonable comprehension to understand as to why and how cultural diversity negatively affects knowledge sharing and which factors paly critical role in impeding sharing of knowledge in culturally diversified organizations. Another significant contribution of this research is that in the managerial implications sections, authors of this article have suggested some very productive, relevant and effective suggestions to manage cultural diversity for organizational diversity.

Impact of Cultural Diversity on Knowledge Sharing

Workforce diversity refers to the presence of dissimilar and heterogeneous employees working in organization (Richard, 2000). Although workforce diversity encompasses various facets including demographic, functional and cultural etc., but the focus of this article will remain on cultural dimension of workforce diversity (Hambrick et al., 1998) which has been the most important dimension of diversity in organizations. Diversity offers the required variety that the organizations need to possess to perform successfully in challenging volatile

global scale. Diversified teams provide access to new information and since knowledge creation depends on enrichment of new ideas (Rosendaal, 2009) therefore, workforce diversity tends to be a big source of creating new knowledge due to the availability and mixing of different experiences, insights, perspectives and viewpoints (Sole & Edmondson, 2002). However, cultural diversity in organizations, due to variation in cultural values and differences of inter-personal communication related problems can constraint the face-to-face contact within employees and that can negatively affect the process of knowledge sharing. Gibson & Gibbs (2006) for example, note that diversified structure of teams can be unfavourable to innovation, validating Brown & Eisenhardt's findings (1995). That is why, cultural diversification is a paradoxical concept when it applies to knowledge exchange and based on this views of researchers also differ about the impact of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing. One camp of researchers posits cultural diversity as a positive and contributory factor for knowledge sharing due to the availability of diverse viewpoints, insights and expertise of diversified workers (e.g., Hass, 2006; Cabrera et al., 2006; Cummings, 2004; O'Reilly et. al; 1997). Another group of scholars (Puck, Rygl & Kittler 2006; Ruggles, 1998) posits it as a serious barrier to organizational performance. Extant literature posits cultural diversity as an adverse factor for knowledge sharing (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Holden, 2002; Edwards & Kidd, 2003) and according to Fong et al (2013) for instance, transfer of knowledge can be very difficult if the sharer and recipient of knowledge don't not belong to common culture and set of values, beliefs and perceptions.

The findings of the existing research studies on the influence of cultural diversity have documented cultural dissimilarity as a hostile factor for sharing of knowledge, due to a number of factors and reasons (Michailova, & Husted, 2003; Ford & Chan; 2002). Although the findings of some research studies have been encouraging, (e.g., Fong et al. 2013; Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Lauring & Slemer 2012; O'Reilly et. al; 1997), but still majority of the studies on organizational learning and knowledge management (e.g., Hambrick et al., Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; and Hutchings & Michailova, 2004) signpost that organizational knowledge creation and sharing is deeply affected by cultural differences and individual employees' norms and values. Other studies have found cultural diversity as a serious impediment towards knowledge sharing (e.g., Lauring, 2009; Willkesmann et al, 2009; Peltokorpi; 2006; Dulami, 2007; Finestine & Snyman, 2005). Moreover, different research studies have focused

on one or two aspects that impede the knowledge sharing in culturally diversified organizations. No study has endeavored to collect the details from existing literature and available empirical findings to present a holistic and comprehensive analysis of the factors that impede knowledge sharing in culturally diversified organizations. Although researchers have identified multiple factors that negatively affect the knowledge sharing within culturally diverse teams, there are mainly five factors that make the knowledge sharing complicated and problematic when it is seen from inter-cultural point of view. These five factors include: language differences; communication differences; cognitive differences, behavioural differences and organizational cultural differences.

Language Differences

One of the most frequently discussed reasons of ineffectiveness and unsuccessfulness of knowledge sharing in culturally diversified teams in the available research studies relates to the difference of languages. A number of researcher studies have evidenced language barrier being one of the most serious and most repeatedly mentioned problems of cross-cultural knowledge sharing as reported by the respondents (e.g., Li, 2010; Lauring, 2009; Dulaimi, 2007; Firestone & Snyman, 2005; Ardichvili, et al., 2006; Ford & Chan, 2002; Husted & Michailova 2002). Keeping in view the high frequency of reporting of language based problems by respondents in cross-cultural research studies, if one may posit it as number one problem of cross-cultural knowledge sharing, then it might not be wrong. Because language barriers not only block the sharing of knowledge, but can also create lots of mistakes, confusions, misunderstandings, and frustrations among the organizational members. According to Freely & Harzing, (2003, p. 39) "Language interfaces in these businesses will trigger problems of miscommunication, uncertainty, mistrust and conflict and unless these problems are professionally managed, they will bring detrimental consequences for the business and its relationships". This has been a general observation that individuals mostly prefer to share the knowledge or receive the information in the language which they can easily understand since; according to Finestone & Snyman, (2005), language covers the total concept of culture. That is why, Simonin (1999) argue, "The lack of fluency in a partner's native language may constitute the single greatest obstacle since even well codified knowledge remains inaccessible" (p. 472-473). Lack of understanding of language according to Michailova (2000) reduces the possibility of understanding the corresponding party's

behaviour. Hence, language remain at the core of communication related problems and misunderstandings occurring in inter-cultural work setting and deeply influences the process of learning and sharing of knowledge. The language not only requires the understanding of same language of communication, but it requires complete command and thorough understanding of the language, to be able to successfully transfer knowledge in multi-cultural working environment. This is because, some research studies have shown that in certain cases some individuals despite being able to possess reasonable comprehension of a foreign language failed to successfully transfer knowledge, because they were not possessing complete command of that language, as it has been observed that certain words and jargons are used differently within different cultures (Ford & Chan, 2002). That is why, Welch & Welch, (2008, 355) argue that "In a general sense, a multinational's ability to transfer knowledge is related to its stock of language capital, reflected in the aggregate possession of relevant foreign language skills by its employees".

These details present the intensity of the impact of language on knowledge sharing in diverse teams. However, the irony is that despite such detrimental effects of language issue, the firms don't take it that much serious. In order to mitigate the language related problems, some multi-national companies fix up one official language of communication among the members of all nationalities and cultural backgrounds. By adopting some central or official language, companies feel that they have resolved the problem, but actually, they seem to be bitterly mistaken by adopting a standardised official language, since the standardisation of language gives birth to a number of further complications. These complications result into a number of additional evils including, biases, conflicts, sense of insecurity and sense of inferiority conflict among the members of the cultures who do not tend to be efficient in speaking that language. A number of research studies have found multiple detrimental effects of adopting a "lingua franca" or central language. First of all, Marschan-Piekkari, et al, (1999a,1999b) discussed the negative issues, problems and complications of the adoption of central language (English) in a Finnish company Kone Elevators. After Marschan-Piekkari, et al. a number of other researchers have highlighted the problem of the adoption of a central language (e.g., Tange & Lauring, 2009; Welch & Welch, 2008; Welch et al., 2005; Freely & Harzing, 2003). A most frequently posited negative aspect of adopting a central official language relates to the vulnerability of organizations at the hands of those employees who are fluent speakers

and experts of the official language and in many cases firms and their subsidiaries seem to be helpless at the hands of those employees who possess mastery in the official language especially in case those employees are working in such subsidiaries which are located in non-English countries. Based on these factors, trend of centralized language not only creates the dominance of a particular group of employees (Welch & Welch, 2008; Welch et al., 2005), but at the same time, it creates a sense of insecurity and inferiority complex among the employees who might be experts of their relevant field, but only due to being weak at the official language might not be able to properly contribute towards the betterment of the respective organizations (Marschan-Piekkari, et al, 1999a; Tange & Lauring, 2009). It is due to these problems of adaptation of a central official language that the most eminent researchers in the domain of underlying implications of language diversity and its management, Marschan-Piekkari, et al (1999b) argue that "In response, it could be argued that an important first step is recognition at the highest levels of the multinational that the language challenge goes beyond the decision to accept a common company language, requiring a more strategic approach to language management" (p.389). This has been noticed in many language-based studies in cross-cultural knowledge sharing that many capable employees fail to understand the proceedings of central meetings and presentations of their respective organizations, if the proceedings of the meetings are held in the languages they don't understand. They either remain silent without contributing in those meetings or only keep on nodding heads without getting any sense of the talks or presentations being given in those meetings. As noted by Tang and Lauring (2009, p.22) "Employees may fear that informal exchanges will expose any linguistic inadequacies, which indirectly undermines their professional status, and this can motivate a withdrawal from conversations involving unfamiliar registers. As a consequence, the communicative behaviours of language clustering and thin language can be linked to language users". Some other organizations use the services of expatriates and language experts for resolving language based issues, however, these expatriates also create their own problems adding to complexity and frustration.

Cognitive Differences

Another critical factor, which makes inter-cultural knowledge sharing problematic, relates to the difference of cognitive styles especially with respect to receiving and processing of knowledge. For example, Bhagat et al. (2002) have noted there are substantial differences

among the thinking styles of different societies and the receiving, accepting or rejecting and processing of the knowledge tends to be deeply affected by the different thinking styles of different nations. Bhagat et al (2002) have identified three main features of cognitive styles including: "Tolerance for ambiguity", "signature skills", and "holistic versus analytical" modes of cognition, which affect the mechanism of cross-cultural sharing of knowledge. Exchange and acceptance of tacit knowledge according to Szulanski (1996) requires a high degree of tolerance for causal ambiguity. In the view of Bhagat et al (2002) individuals belonging to horizontal individualist societies (e.g., Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Australia) are more expected to carry a higher degree for tolerance of ambiguity and, hence, can more likely to accept and share tacit knowledge which tends to be highly personalized being embedded into human mind. The second feature of cognitive style as promote by Leonard (1995) are "signature skills" (Leonard, 1995). "Signature skills" refer to individuals' distinctive skills and capabilities, approaches and stances and methods and tools of resolving problems, seeking information and accomplishing tasks and they tend to be emotionally attached to the same Leonard (1995). Substantial variations in the signature skills of the individuals engaged in the process of information sharing might hinder the flow as well effectiveness of knowledge exchange among culturally distinctive individuals. According to Bahagat et al (2002) these signature styles tend to be the characteristic hallmarks of vertical individualists (e.g., England, USA and Germany etc.); since it tends to be imperative for the members of vertically individualist societies to see themselves different to others. Third factor of cognitive style as discussed by Bhagat et al (2002) refers to "holistic" vs "analytic" styles of thinking. According to historians, scholars and ethnographers, Western societies, tend to possess a fundamental tendency of locating causation of behaviour within individuals, whereas in Eastern societies, the fundamental approach is to find causation in the whole context of behaviour which according to some researchers, is called "situational-ism" or "contextualism" (e.g., Triandis, 1995; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Holistic versus analytic style of thinking relates to the tendency of analysing the entire fold of knowledge, compared to tendency of analysing each piece of information separately. According to researchers the individuals who use analytic perspective tend to accept and retain knowledge after careful inspection, while those who use a holistic approach quickly accept and retain knowledge as component of a larger whole from an associative point of view (Nisbett & Norenzayan, 2001; Choi, et al., 1999). For example, this carries empirical evidence that with regard to processing

of information, people from individualist societies tend to possess "objective" stance by keeping "themselves" as "independent" to immediate external setting and expecting information being separate from its context (Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). On the contrary, in collectivist societies people try to adopt "subjective" approach while receiving the information and try to seek context-driven clues from the received information and perceive "themselves" as "interdependent" within the immediate social setting (Triandis, 1995, Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kagitcibasi, 1997). Second, when the information links to company history, norms and values, in-group and out-group factors; then collectivists tend to show their especial interest and attention toward that kind of knowledge, whereas, individualists tend to show their enthusiasm in accepting and retaining the type of information which links to individual personality characteristics, like behaviors actions and reactions regarding an object, person or event (Bhagat, et al., 2002). Individuals belonging to individualist societies seek rationality in the given knowledge as compared to members of collectivist societies (Triandis, 1998). Third, from sense making point of view, collectivists prefer contextual and historical information as compared to individualists. With regard to type of information, collectivists prefer tacit information whereas individualists prefer written, codified or explicit information (Triandis,1998; Kagitcibasi, 1997).

Behavioural Differences

There are multiple behavioural differences with respect to knowledge sharing within culturally diversified teams. However, certain types of behaviours have been documented in different research studies. Referring to the cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism as discussed by Triandis, (1989) and Hofstede, (1980) and many others scholars, Fong et al. (2013) posit societies by keeping a higher score on individualism, might be less favorable to stimulate knowledge sharing; since individualists mostly tend to believe in self being and depend on themselves instead of others, hence, they usually do not feel inclined to receive or share knowledge with others. For instance, one of the most obvious and very frequently discussed issues in inter-cultural knowledge sharing refers to the trend of in-group and out-group biases toward knowledge sharing. This has been evidenced in a number of studies (e.g., Chow et al., Lauring, 2009; Finestone & Snyman, 2005; Wilkesmann, 2009; Dulami, 2007 and Peltokorpi, 2006). Although group-based biases in knowledge sharing are generally noticed in most of the nations of the world (Chow et al., Lauring, 2009; Finestone

& Snyman), but, these kinds of trends are more widely observed among Eastern and collectivist cultures as compared to Western or individualist societies. For example, the studies (e.g., Lauring, 2009; Peltokorpi; 2006; Voelpel and Han 2005) have found group-based biases in cross-cultural studies on knowledge sharing. Another noticeable issue, which stands as a serious impediment to knowledge sharing among diverse teams, is the tendency of controlling the flow of knowledge with oneself. This is observed in high power societies where the big bosses by virtue of their power and position in the organizations tend to possess control on the flow and dissemination of knowledge towards individuals and organizational units and hence blocks the smooth flow of knowledge e.g., (Khalil & Seleim, 2010; Bengoa et al., 2012; Peltokorpi, 2006). Third noticeable factor is that of hoarding the knowledge and deliberately not sharing. Extant research has found mainly three main reasons for this. First reason is that many individuals don't share the knowledge due to fear of upper management. They remain fearful and uncertain about the consequences of their shared knowledge as to how their superior bosses will react on that. This has been evidenced in the study of Peltokorpi (2006) wherein it was found that the Japanese employees did not share information with their Nordic colleagues due to fear of the upper management and similar trends were found in the inter-cultural studies of Dulaimi (2007) and Wilkesmann (2009). Second important reason of hoarding trends as observed in cross-cultural knowledge sharing behaviour relates to the commonly hold notion that knowledge is power and source of organizational influence. The research tells that the members of the societies with high masculine values of completion and assertiveness mostly involve in knowledge hoarding trends. For example, the research studies of (e.g, Zhang et al., 2014; Li, 2010; Chow et al., 2000) evidenced many cases wherein individuals from masculine values oriented societies like Japan, China, etc. tried to restrict the sharing of knowledge keeping in view that knowledge is power. Third reason is lack of trust as evidenced in the study of Ford and Chan. For example, one interview quote from the study of Ford and Chan epitomise this: "Most people share information, but there are some people who hold onto it. [Because] knowledge is the weapon for the company. Give everyone the weapon to fight the enemies [competitors], but some hold onto their weapon because they can't trust and think maybe they will beat me with it" (Ford & Chan, 2002, p.19).

Communication Differences

Apart from the issue of language and cognitive styles, another important reason of cultural diversity being barrier to knowledge sharing refers to the different styles of communication being observed in different cultures. The difference of communication styles generally creates numerous problems, confusions and frustrations among the member of the diversified teams, leaving knowledge sharing problematic and less effective (Brett et al., 2006). For example, the study of Shachaf (2008) found cultural diversity to be a big barrier to knowledge sharing resulting in additional complexities due to heterogeneity and variation among the organizational members. The differences of cultures and languages gave rise to miscommunication jeopardizing trust, unity, and team identification. Particularly, lack of proficiency and comprehension both in written or spoken language produced difficulties in verbal and nonverbal communication, requiring organizational members to spend more time and effort to understand the messages and this resulted in increased organizational cost on communication from both sender as well receiver's ends. For example, due to communication problems, many respondents reported that instead of direct face-to-face communication or telephonic conversation, they preferred writing emails.

While socializing with others, people learn different styles of interaction, shaped under the rules, norms and values of their respective cultures (Gudykunst et al., 1996). These patterns of interaction provide foundations for communication styles of individuals. To put is more specifically, communication styles encompass "the way one verbally and Para verbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood" (Norton, 1978, p. 99). These communication modes differ across cultures. A simple way to understand difference of communication styles is to refer to differentiation between low- and high-context communications as explained by Hall's (1976). According to Hall (1976), low context cultures generally use direct and explicit communication style as compared to high context cultures. Shachaf (2008) while referring to Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Nishida (1996) has identified four different styles of communication among the different nations of the world. These are "Direct vs Indirect", "Succinct vs Elaborate"; "Contextual vs Personal" and "Instrumental vs Affective". The communication modes refer to individual employees' intentions and preferred approaches toward verbal communication. "Succinct" or concise vs "elaborate" or detailed mode relates to the amount of information being provided by

communicator in the process of communication. Elaborate communicators generally provide more than needed information in communications and succinct communicators avoid lengthy details while communicating with others (Gudykunst, et al., 1996). Third communication style is contextual vs personal. The contextual style tends to be formal, incorporating social and organizational settings and focusing on the differences in individuals and organizations, while keeping social context intact; whereas personal style presumes equality and similarity among parties engaged in interpersonal communication (Gudykunst, et al., 1996). For example, in Eastern culture, there are different words while talking to someone being younger or older; like in Urdu language if you want to use the word "you" for elderly person, then you will say "Aap" and when you want to address a person of your age or younger to you, then you will use the word "Tum". These kinds of differences are found in other languages also, but, in case of English language, there is no word other than "You" while talking to someone being younger or older. In Eastern cultures, there tend to be different or politer styles of talking and responding while talking to elders in terms of age, rank or organizational positions, even by different words against the word "You" are used in interpersonal communication. The fourth mode of communication is instrumental vs affective. Instrumental mode of communication can also be called explicit which tends to be goal oriented, focused on sender, conveying clear message without giving unnecessary details or personal emotional feelings to make receiver understand the whole picture. On the other hand, affective mode tends to be process oriented; focused on receiver which includes lots of additional sentences and personal emotional feelings which might be deemed unnecessary for the receiver (Gudykunst, et al., 1996).

The global cross-cultural study of Shachaf (2008) based on the employees of a MNC from different countries and nationalities including: American, German, Chinese, French, Japanese, Israeli etc., offers some excellent examples of the practical application of the above mentioned four different styles of verbal communication used among culturally diversified employees. Considering the first communication style, "Direct vs Indirect", for example, Israelis and Americans in the study of Shachaf (2008) were of the opinion that their Eastern colleagues including Chinese and Japanese were not direct in their communication. This means that their responses tended to be confusing, lacking clarity to understand their actual meaning. That is why; their colleagues mostly used to reassure and wait for getting

clarification from them and always felt frustrated while communicating with Chinese and Japanese. For example, this extract from an American respondent illustrates this: "I am a direct person . . .I'm not as patient with this trying to read into what people are saying. And in some cultures, looking at body language is very important". (Shachaf, 2008, p.135). For instance, Japanese while speaking English can create confusion for others being influenced by Japanese protocols of politeness. In cross conversation, Japanese instead of plainly disagreeing with a request, mostly say: "I will think about it". This may make the receiver of the reply as hopeful, whereas it actually means, "there is no way I am going to do anything about it" (Holden et al. 1998). These kinds of conversation styles create confusions for listeners. With regard to being "Succinct vs Elaborate", here again American and Israeli respondents mentioned said that their Chinese and Japanese colleagues mostly seemed to be succinct or brief in their communication. They mostly avoided usage of more number of words and details in their talks in many cases they seemed silent, which caused frustration among their colleagues and also sometimes misinterpretation even. Chow et al. (2000) gave similar kinds of comments for Chinese in an inter-cultural research comparing knowledge sharing behaviours of Chines and US in virtual teams. Additional to other reasons, Chinese' and Japanese' general weak comprehension of English might be a reason behind their succinct communication style. However, in the Shachaf's study (2008) unlike Chinese and Japanese, British respondents for example found Israelis as more direct and detailed in their conversation and more talkative. With reference to being "Contextual vs Personal", in the interviews for example, Japanese and German respondents posited English language as more personal than their own languages saying that they could not maintain social structure while talking English as compared to when they talked in their own languages. Their inability to maintain the social structure was frustrating. For example, one Japanese respondent in the interviews mentioned "because we have some cultural expressions that are more special polite expressions. . .But in Japan, maybe more complicated or strict expressions exist for how polite you are speaking. . .depends on the age of the person. . .so conversation is the same unless there is an older person. With [an older team member], I would speak differently?" (Shachaf, 2008, p.135). The fourth communication style is "Instrumental vs Affective". This is generally observed that Asian people e.g., Japanese tend to adopt affective style of communication as compared to Western or Europeans (Gudykunst, & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Their conversation tends to include an emotional content which to many might be

treated as unnecessary or time wasting and the same were the impressions of American participants in the study of Shachaf (2008) wherein Americans reported that many of the Japanese messages contained unnecessary details mentioning that those messages of Japanese did not contain a "to do" factor. This resulted in misinterpretation and embarrassment by American; especially when their Japanese counterparts sent the similar kinds of messages to a number of managers in different hierarchical positions. Moreover, the Japanese focus on relationship building, emanating from process orientation, created conflicts and confusions in the eyes of their American counterparts and according to Shachaf (2008) each of these communications style differences created frustration, confusion and complications among the diversified employees.

Another noticeable issue in the domain of cross-cultural communication is that of translating knowledge from one language to other as noted by Venzin (1998), knowledge is "generated in different language systems, cultures and contexts and if any of these elements change, knowledge also changes". Based on the above explanation, it is quite rational to say that translation in fact, is akin to a kind of transfer of knowledge, which aims at eliminating language barriers among people by forming a shared cognitive ground among them. However, the translation of knowledge from one language to other is full of issues, challenges and constraints. With regard to cross-cultural translations, at least two factors are important: "interference", which refers to indiscreet errors from an individual's personal background and second relates to "lack of equivalence", which refers to deficiency of words or concepts that can be equivalent to produce the meaning or sense of certain words in other languages (Holding & Kortzfleisch, 2004).

Interference refers to the usage of words, which despite looking same in different languages, mean differently. For instance, the word "licence" in French language does not always mean the same as in case of English word license. Among others, it can refer to degree awarded by some university or sports federation's membership (Thody & Evans, 1985). Almost every learner of foreign language, up to a large extent, is influenced by the grammatical structures, vocabulary pronunciation issues among his and other learning language. In certain situations, these differences may be so serious that they can create literal ambiguities making a person unintelligible. For example, a French speaker having an inadequate grip on English might say,

"I work here since three years" Whereas he might be indenting to say that "I worked here for three years". Sometimes the interference can result in amusing scenes. For example, in Arabic languages, there is no alphabetical letter, which can produce the sound of "P", so Arabs generally use "B" instead of "P" and it will look interesting while talking to them. For example, when an Arab will speak, he or she will say "Brogram" for "Program" and "Brobosal" for "proposal", due to not being able to produce the sound of "P". Once an Arab wanted to park the car somewhere in a building; so he asked the security guard "Sir can I bark (park) here? The security guard replied, "Yes you can bark but don't bite please". Often some foreigners feel difficulty to differentiate between the sound of 'u' and 'a' alphabets of English, for instance, in the words like "butter" and "batter". An English man while talking to a Russian said "We have a lot of Russians in England". The former shocked and replied: "You still have rations in England?" (Holden et al., 1998). The above-mentioned confusions are observed into countless everyday cross-cultural communications. Some of these might be ignored, others might be overcome and still some others may result in complications and distortion of the true meaning and sense, one may want to convey to someone else.

Finding the "equivalence of a word" of one language in other, is also a very important issue of consideration for knowledge managers, especially when it comes to cross-cultural interactions. As Sager (1994) notes: "Translation consists of producing in the target language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message, firstly with respect to meaning and secondly with respect to style". This offers a valuable insight into cross-cultural conversion. For instance, there is no straight equivalent of the American English word 'manager' in European languages. The words 'der Manager' and 'le manager' in French and German and French languages respectively, don't convey real sense of the word "manager", because, there is a trend of depersonalizing "manager" into an abstract noun meaning "management" in these languages. Likewise, the Danish word "ledelse" connotes "leading", but without the essence of a sense of business leadership from American perspective. In the same way the word "marketing" is difficult to translate in many languages e.g. Japanese and especially the languages of the former socialist world (Holden, 1998). Therefore, in such languages, the word "marketing" retains its original English form, overlaying distinctive nuances in each of these languages.

Organizational Cultural Differences

Additional to national culture, organizational cultural differences also draw drastic impact on knowledge sharing within diversified teams. Different employees come from different organizational cultural backgrounds with different sets of values, norms, rules, practices and methods; protocols of meeting, greeting, talking in individual settings and collective settings developed under the influence of their respective organizational cultures. All these facets of organizational culture vary from firm to firm and influence the process of social exchange and social identification between management and employees among employees. Proper awareness and adaptability of individuals regarding these organizational protocols and etiquettes create a sense of belongingness among the members of diversified teams and cultivate the grounds of healthy relationship among them and unawareness and negligence regarding these values, rules and norms create confusions and frustrations which lead to misunderstandings at the very outset and result in the weakening of interpersonal relationship and later-on making the sharing of knowledge less conducive and ineffective among diverse members of the teams. A sense of social identification and belongingness among the members of diversified teams is very essential. There is empirical evidence (Rosendaal, 2009) which suggests that a sense of social identification among the members of culturally diversified teams reduces the feelings of strangeness among them and generates a collaborative thinking among them. That is why, at the conclusion of their study on the effects of cultural diversity on a number of organizational performance related outcomes including knowledge sharing, Rosendaal, (2009) note that "The outcomes of this research suggest that the darker side of diversity can be compensated by a stronger identification. Support for this suggestion is found by Van der Zee et al. (2004). Their research shows that culturally diverse teams only can perform effectively and exchange information if they are able to develop a common social identity. After an often-difficult starting period with conflicts and communication problems, the more diverse teams can even develop a stronger common identity" (p.12).

Organizational culture also includes the concept of "Social Knowledge" as highlighted by Buckley et al (2005) in their cross-cultural study within multi-national enterprise perspective.

Social knowledge refers to the awareness of the behavioural patterns of the teammates and invites to being sensitive to the cultural patterns of colleagues. According to Buckley et al (2005), the sharing of knowledge in culturally diversified organizations "depends on social knowledge (Sohn, 1994; Grant 1996), which is a mutual understanding of behaviours" (Buckley et al, 2005, p.47). While explaining their concept of social knowledge, they further posit that "Our concept of corporate social knowledge has much in common with ideas that are already widely discussed in the literature on the knowledge-based approach to the firm, such as common knowledge," "routines," "conventions," "organizational capital," and "social capital." "It is different from organizational culture in that corporate social knowledge is a tool to interpret, understand, and predict the behaviours of others, while organizational culture is a set of collective understandings and values within the firm" (Buckley et al, 2005, p. 48). They very wisely argue that "with a command of corporate social knowledge, outsiders can be perfectly capable of understanding a company without being culturally socialized. The essence of the difference between corporate social knowledge and organizational culture can best be expressed by an example. A Western manager does not need to share the same organizational culture as his Chinese colleagues or subordinates in order to be well equipped to work with or manage them. What is important, however, is that he or she understands how his or her Chinese colleagues think, and what matters to them—be sensitive to them. At its most basic, being sensitive enables the foreign manager not to offend his or her colleagues and, at a higher level, to motivate and encourage them better" (Buckley et al, 2005, p. 48).

Managerial Implications

This research has a number of implications for managers and practitioners which can help mitigate the detrimental effects of cultural diversity on knowledge sharing. First and foremost, is the openness to cultural diversity. The organizations themselves and their employees need to show welcoming stance towards cultural diversity and try to prepare themselves and their employees in the same lines (Fong et al., 2013; Pinjani, & Palvia, 2013). As Fong et al (2013) after the conclusion of their study on the impact of multi-culturalism on knowledge sharing recommend "openness to cultural diversity is essential for knowledge sharing. Instead of becoming overly concerned about the differences in the national cultures, managers should

develop a good mechanism that can leverage diverse views and perspectives, help employees to be open to diversity, and view it as an advantage. They should inculcate openness to diversity as a key aspect of the corporate culture, regardless of differences in the national culture of their foreign subsidiaries" (p.41).

Second, cultivation of trust among employees is indispensable; since without the presence of trust it is very difficult to dream any effective sharing of knowledge within culturally diversified organizations (Simonin, 1999; Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). In the existing research studies, cultivation of trust has been one of the most frequently recommended agenda items for managing knowledge sharing within diversified organizations (Fong et al., 2013; Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Ford & Chan, 2002). This is because trust works like hidden soothing factor to cure the organizational members against their apprehensions and biases toward their colleagues who don't belong to their culture or speak their languages. Trust fosters knowledge exchange since it increases partners' readiness to help partners through contributing knowledge to them (Lane et al., 2001). Kaser and Miles (2002) suggest that when the workers might be belonging to different cultural groups and implying lower levels of trust, "management has to provide opportunities for workers to interact with others to develop high levels of trust, conversation, co-operation for knowledge sharing".

Third, with regard to communication related difficulties, nothing can be a better remedy than proper training. By carefully planned and organized training programmes, the difficulties of communication differences can be eliminated up to a large extent (Fong et al, 2013). However, training needs to be provided on regular basis by experts and masters of the relevant fields and knowers of the salient communicational differences and problems of the (Ford & Chan, 2002). As far, the issue of mitigating language barriers, a good way as suggested by Ford and Chan (2002), is strong patience, attention, active listening and careful understanding; hence organizations should try to improve the listening skills of employees by training session and workshops. Many respondents and managers in the study of Ford and Chan (2002) recommended that a sense and thinking of understanding other person and active listening helped them in overcoming language barriers. Additional options to mitigate the language based barriers are for example, adopting a central language and then giving

proper and in-depth training of that language to employees or to give training to employees to make them learn some important languages being spoken in their organizations.

Fourth, in order to mitigate the negative behaviours of hoarding and restricting knowledge, some organizational motivational practices can be considered. Although existing research studies have not been in favour of financial incentives, however, intrinsic motivations can be more effective than extrinsic or financial rewards (Voelpel and Han, 2005; Bock. et al., 2005). For example, sharing of knowledge can be made an integral part of the company's "employee performance evaluation programs" and promotions of the employees can be linked with their frequency, amount and quality of shared knowledge. Some organizations ask their employees to give points of accreditation to their colleagues, who share knowledge with them (McDermott & O'Dell, 2001). Keeping in view the excessive observations of researcher's and complaints of the diversified employees regarding unmingling of organizational members with colleagues belonging to other ethnicities (Lauring, 2009; Dulaimi, 2007; Willkesmann et al, 2009) it might not be a bad idea to announce the annual awards like "Most social employee of the year". This is very important, since in most of the organizations, people remain stick to their cultural groups and talk to other cultural group members only within confined boundaries of organizational meetings and essential formalities, whereas knowledge sharing cannot be effective unless the feelings of strangeness are eliminated from among the organizational members.

Lastly, in order to achieve the real implementation of all above mentioned recommendations, organizations need to have a strong organizational culture (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2005). The creation of a strong organizational culture that may encourage knowledge sharing and provide a conducive learning environment, with adequate managerial responsiveness and supports is a key requirement. This has been argued by a number of researchers (e.g., Straub et al. 2002; Ford & Chan, 2002) that organizational culture is more powerful than national and ethnic culture in shaping up social identification of employees and moulding their knowledge sharing behaviours. Hence, a learning organizational culture characterised by the values of mutual trust, cooperation, mutuality of goals and a sense of cohesiveness, with a common sense of social identity among the organizational members may be able to mitigate

the effects of cultural diversity and minimize the impact of negative behaviours toward knowledge sharing.

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