

Communication Competence of the Professionals from India & Turkey

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This paper studies the communication competence of the working professionals from India and Turkey. Both these countries have fast growing young populations and rapidly developing economies. There are significant differences between Indian and Turkish respondents, however. Indians perceive that they are easy to talk to, would not argue just to prove they are right, ignore others' feelings, do not make unusual demands on their friends and think that they are effective conversationalists, likable people and flexible. Turkish respondents treat people as individuals, are good listeners; their personal relationships are cold and distant, they try to understand other people and listen to what people say to them.

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Introduction

The communication competence is a multidimensional concept which has over the years constantly been changed and adapted to the context of its use. Initially, the concept of communication competence triggered varying definitions and responses from the scholars and academicians. Gradually they have narrowed down on the definition of communication competence. Lately, a consensus is built among the theoreticians on the basic content of the definition of communication competence. Initially, Chomsky (2006) identified communication competence as an ability to produce grammatically correct sentences in a language which convey the intended semantic meaning as it is. But this is the linguistic perspective on communication which is restrictive in its scope. It does not take into account how “the interlocutor perceives reality, nor the norms that govern social relationships” (Lesenciuc & Codreanu, 2012). As a result, the concept has evolved under the influence of interactionist schools and has grown beyond the realms of linguistics. Hymes (1972:284) unlike Chomsky who focused on the syntactic dimension of communication or Habermas who empha-

sized the semantic view, takes a pragmatic view of communication competence and defines it as a combination of knowledge participants need to make the speech in order to interact at a social level and skill set in order to be successful in communication and the right attitude that they employ by adapting themselves to concrete communication situations. Thus, the concept is redefined as the linguistic instantiation of the knowledge necessary for interaction within a given context that requires ability for the use of such knowledge. There are hosts of scholars who have, over a period of time, contributed to the definition of communication competence. For instance, Spitzberg (1988:68) defined communication competence as “the ability to interact with others with accuracy, clarity, comprehensibility, coherence, expertise, effectiveness and appropriateness”. Friedrich (1994) defined communication competence as “a situational ability to set realistic and appropriate goals and to maximize their achievement by using knowledge of self, other, context, and communication theory to generate adaptive communication performances.” Another definition is that the communication competence is about interpersonal communication and communication skills that specialists view as “specific components that make up or contribute to the manifestation or judgment of competence” (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1989:6). McCroskey (1982:5) attempts to clarify the importance of competence when he writes, “The domain of communicative competence includes learning what are the available means (available strategies), how they have been employed in various situations in the past, and being

able to determine which ones have the highest probability of success in a given situation. Thus, it can be said that communicative competence is dependent on the context in which the interaction takes place. (Cody & McLaughlin, 1985; Applegate & Leichty, 1984; Rubin, 1985). Communication which is successful with one group in one situation may not be perceived as competent with a different group in another situation. Parks (1985:175) defines communicative competence as “the degree to which individuals perceive they have satisfied their goals in a given social situation without jeopardizing their ability or opportunity to pursue their other subjectively more important goals”. This combination of cognitive and behavioral perspectives is consistent with Wiemann and Backlund’s (1980:188) argument that communication competence is: The ability of an interactant to choose among available communicative behaviors in order that he (sic) may successfully accomplish his (sic) own interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line of his (sic) fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation. According to Widdowson (2007:25), the communication competence is not only “a matter of matching different forms of knowledge, but also a matter of complex negotiation of the common knowledge framework within which the linguistic instantiation takes place”.

Based on this brief theoretical background, it can be said that communication competence can be broadly defined as a theory that seeks to understand an individual’s ability to effectively convey meaning within given contexts. Each con-

text demands different set of skills, knowledge and strategy. According to Payne (2005) for instance, communication competence in organizations involves knowledge of the organization and of communication, ability to carry out skilled behaviors, and one's motivation to perform competently. Similarly, intercultural communication competence (ICC) demands for an ability to negotiate cultural meanings while efficiently and appropriately transferring information, namely as the identification and evaluation of multiple identities in a specific communication environment. Therefore, to meet the various communication contextual challenges, the scholars and academicians together have identified some components of communication competence, which are widely accepted and which include grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence.

Why This Study

Globalization and informatization has triggered intercultural communication across the globe. Communicating with other cultures characterizes today's business, classroom and community (Gitimu, 2012). Thus, intercultural communication competence is becoming more relevant in the increasingly multicultural communities that we live in. It is obvious that the art of knowing how to communicate in a globalized and technologized social context should be a workplace skill that is emphasized. Targowski and Metwalli (2003) viewed this millennium as era that global organizations will increasingly focus on the critical value of cross-cultural communication process, efficiency and competence

and cost of doing business. Working with colleagues, customers or clients from different cultural backgrounds, with different religions, values, and etiquettes can occasionally lead to problems. The potential pitfalls cross-cultural differences present to companies are extensive (Raina, 2012). Cross-cultural differences manifest in general areas such as in behavior, etiquette, norms, values, expressions, group mechanics and non-verbal communication. These cross-cultural differences then impact management styles, corporate culture, marketing, HR etc.

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Lately, international business in India grew manifold at the rate of 7% annually. The performance of the stock market in India in comparison to the other international bourses, has drawn all the more attention of the international business organizations and multinationals. It is attracting people from different geographical locations- the US, UK, Europe, Africa, China, Japan etc. especially in the present regime. Therefore, it will be of interest to find out how Indian professionals perceive their communication skills while interacting with foreign nationals, when English in India is not a native language. Prasad and Darrad (2003) for instance, noted with respect to health care professionals that communication with non-English patients was still unsatisfactory and there is need for more research to overcome some of the barriers in the intercultural communication.

The present study aims at comparing the communication skills of professionals from India and Turkey because the latter too like India has a fast growing young population and a rapidly developing economy. In Turkey, again like India, English is not a mother tongue, although Turkish people generally see themselves as Europeans- a popular metaphor for Turkey is as a bridge between Europe and Asia. As such the cultural differences between the Europeans and the Turkish people are not so great as compared to others. The cultural difference between the professionals coming from England and Turkish speaking are perhaps not as great as between someone from England and Japanese professionals (Peltokorpia, 2008). However, some research studies have indicated that the Turkish participants' willingness to communicate and self-perceived communication competencies were low, they were found to be most competent communicators when they communicated with their peers, and least competent with strangers (Asmalýa, Bilkib & Duban, 2015). This finding may be considered an expected result due to the fact that people generally feel less anxious with peers and most anxious with strangers. The possible reason why Turkish participants' willingness to communicate was considerably low could be related to several different reasons such as their introvert personality, their previous experiences with foreign people or inadequate capability of speaking English (Demirciođlu & Cakir, 2015; Asmalýa, Bilkib & Duban, 2015). In Turkey, English is a foreign language that people learn mainly for instrumental reasons, as it gives the promise of access to better schools,

better universities and ultimately better jobs. Especially in Turkey, the growth of the tourism sector as an important source of employment means knowing another language is an advantage for a widening number of occupations even in those spheres that do not require university education. Therefore, having adequate competence in foreign language especially in English, will not only give them access to the international academic and business community, it is also "an exclusion mechanism" (Holly, 1990). If you do not know English, some gates are closed to you.

Thus, in this highly competitive and globalized business-socio-eco system, it becomes imperative that the professionals develop adequate global-culture approach so it provides them an understanding of broad differences in communication among cultures so that their business objectives are met successfully and at the same time avoid any kind of unpleasant situation (Zaidman, 2001). Hence, this study will help us understand and at the same time identify the communication competency of the professionals from India and Turkey.

Research Question & Design

An exploratory research design was used to find out the self-perceived communication competence of the working professionals from India and Turkey.

Sampling

Respondents, both in India and Turkey, were majorly drawn from IT/ITES, telecom and financial institutions. The sample in both

the countries was not restricted to one specific sector or industry as the purpose of the study was to find out the communication competence of working professionals across different sectors. In India, with the help of institutionally available resources, a list of National Capital Region (NCR)-based organizations was prepared and over 200 companies operating from the region were contacted, out of which 34 organizations agreed to participate in the survey. HR managers of these organizations were contacted telephonically, through e-mail and personal visits. After receiving formal approval, these organizations were requested to circulate the survey among employees with the request to return the responses directly to the researcher. The data for the study were collected by means of self-administered questionnaires delivered in person to all the respondents. Similarly, in Turkey, data was collected from white collar employees working in 41 private organizations located in major cities in Turkey. The survey produced 146 usable responses from India and 134 from Turkey. The age in both the samples ranged from 20 years to 40 years corresponding to freshers till about 20 years of work experience being represented in the sample for adequate coverage of a wide range of respondents' experiences.

Tools Used & Data Collection

The communication competence scale by Wiemann (1977) was used to measure the communication competence of the working professionals from India and Turkey. The scale developed by Wiemann (1977:198) measures communicative competence, an ability "to choose among avail-

able communicative behaviors" to accomplish one's own "interpersonal goals during an encounter while maintaining the face and line" of "fellow interactants within the constraints of the situation". The scale included 36 Likert-type items to assess five dimensions of interpersonal competence-interaction management, empathy, affiliation/support, behavioral flexibility, and social relaxation with interaction management playing a central role. The competent communicator as per Wiemann (1977) is thus described as empathic, affinitive and supportive, and relaxed while interacting; he is capable of adapting his behavior as the situation within an encounter changes and as he moves from encounter to encounter. The manner in which the interaction is managed contributes, in part at least, to his fellow interactants' perceptions of his competence. Thus, Wiemann (1977) scale met comprehensively the purpose of the present study.

Calculating the CCS

The communication competence scale by Wiemann (1977) has provided with the manual \ scoring key in order to calculate the communication competence score (CCS) as follows:

1. Add your responses to items 4, 8, 11, 12, and 28 = _____
2. Add your responses to all other items
3. Then, complete the following formula:
30 - total from Step 1 = _____
+ total from Step 2 = _____
Your total CCS score = _____

Based on this formula, the CCSs for Indian and Turkish respondents were calculated. The findings are:

India

Mean CCS	133.09
Median CCS	133.00
Mode CCS	129.00

Turkey

Mean CCS	133.779
Median CCS	133.00
Mode CCS	125.00

There is hardly any difference in the mean CCS. Both the countries have a very similar self-reported CCS thus respondents in both these nations perceive themselves to be effective communicators.

Independent Samples t-test

To reveal item-wise differences, the data was subjected to independent samples t-test based on the two distinct groups – Indian and Turkish samples.

Table 1 Group Statistics

	Nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q1	India	146	4.28	.702	.058
	Turkey	134	4.20	.773	.067
Q2	India	146	4.16	.685	.057
	Turkey	134	4.03	.949	.082
Q3	India	146	3.77	1.254	.104
	Turkey	134	4.33	.874	.075
Q4	India	146	3.85	.949	.079
	Turkey	134	3.93	.819	.071
Q5	India	146	3.81	.779	.064
	Turkey	134	3.84	.748	.065
Q6	India	146	3.95	.698	.058
	Turkey	134	4.04	.857	.074
Q7	India	146	4.00	.954	.079
	Turkey	134	4.43	.780	.067
Q8	India	146	4.14	.994	.082
	Turkey	134	3.60	1.215	.105
Q9	India	146	4.22	.765	.063
	Turkey	134	3.72	.978	.084
Q10	India	146	3.65	1.229	.102
	Turkey	134	2.89	1.288	.111
Q11	India	146	3.88	1.054	.087
	Turkey	134	3.78	1.199	.104
Q12	India	146	4.23	.962	.080
	Turkey	134	4.63	.571	.049
Q13	India	146	3.70	1.011	.084
	Turkey	134	3.82	.713	.062
Q14	India	146	4.01	.766	.063
	Turkey	134	4.04	.703	.061
Q15	India	146	4.03	.637	.053
	Turkey	134	4.21	.661	.057
Q16	India	146	3.95	.877	.073
	Turkey	134	3.90	.852	.074

Q17	India	146	4.21	.707	.058
	Turkey	134	4.48	.657	.057
Q18	India	146	3.95	.927	.077
	Turkey	134	3.90	.903	.078
Q19	India	146	3.97	.770	.064
	Turkey	134	4.06	.932	.081
Q20	India	146	4.02	.921	.076
	Turkey	134	3.79	1.090	.094
Q21	India	146	3.74	.863	.071
	Turkey	134	3.39	.965	.083
Q22	India	146	4.20	.571	.047
	Turkey	134	4.45	.556	.048
Q23	India	146	3.86	1.021	.085
	Turkey	134	4.13	.916	.079
Q24	India	146	3.66	.950	.079
	Turkey	134	4.28	.791	.068
Q25	India	146	4.15	.708	.059
	Turkey	134	4.19	.631	.055
Q26	India	146	3.83	.935	.077
	Turkey	134	3.88	.910	.079
Q27	India	146	4.09	.642	.053
	Turkey	134	4.12	.786	.068
Q28	India	146	4.12	.854	.071
	Turkey	134	3.96	.839	.073
Q29	India	146	3.83	1.059	.088
	Turkey	134	3.78	1.067	.092
Q30	India	146	4.10	.651	.054
	Turkey	134	3.70	.867	.075
Q31	India	146	4.14	.705	.058
	Turkey	134	3.94	.882	.076
Q32	India	146	3.95	1.029	.085
	Turkey	134	3.94	.847	.073
Q33	India	146	4.27	.698	.058
	Turkey	134	4.16	.824	.071
Q34	India	146	3.71	.863	.071
	Turkey	134	3.99	.766	.066
Q35	India	146	3.95	.923	.076
	Turkey	134	3.82	.916	.079
Q36	India	146	4.15	.678	.056
	Turkey	134	4.21	.823	.071

Note: Items 4, 8, 11, 12 and 28 are negatively worded and hence their scores have to be seen as 5 meaning 'strongly disagree' to 1 meaning 'strongly agree'.

First of all, Table 2 is reviewed. Initially Levene's F test for equality of variances is seen. If the significance value in column 3 is greater than 0.05 we accept, at 95% confidence level, the null hypothesis of this test that variances of the two

groups are equal and we look for independent samples test significance in the 6th column in the top row of that variable. If the significance value is less than 0.05, we look for the independent samples test significance in the 6th column correspond-

Table 2 Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	Lower	Upper
Q1	Equal variances assumed	2.010	.157	.883	278	.378	.078	.088	-.096	.251
	Equal variances not assumed		.879	269.110	.380	.078	.089	-.096	.252	
Q2	Equal variances assumed	15.796	.000	1.368	278	.173	.135	.098	-.059	.328
	Equal variances not assumed		1.349	240.183	.179	.135	.100	-.062	.331	
Q3	Equal variances assumed	10.362	.001	-4.373	278	.000	-.561	.130	-.818	-.305
	Equal variances not assumed		.669	-4.373	259.730	.000*	-.561	.128	-.814	-.309
Q4	Equal variances assumed	.183	.669	-.735	278	.463	-.078	.106	-.288	.131
	Equal variances not assumed		.178	-.739	276.972	.460	-.078	.106	-.286	.130
Q5	Equal variances assumed	1.825	.178	-.255	278	.799	-.023	.091	-.203	.157
	Equal variances not assumed		.000	-.256	277.423	.798	-.023	.091	-.203	.156
Q6	Equal variances assumed	19.821	.000	-.999	278	.318	-.093	.093	-.276	.090
	Equal variances not assumed		.213	-.991	256.886	.323	-.093	.094	-.278	.092
Q7	Equal variances assumed	1.556	.213	-4.134	278	.000*	-.433	.105	-.639	-.227
	Equal variances not assumed		.000	-4.170	274.411	.000	-.433	.104	-.637	-.228
Q8	Equal variances assumed	15.568	.000	4.084	278	.000	.540	.132	.280	.800
	Equal variances not assumed		.000	4.050	257.502	.000*	.540	.133	.277	.803
Q9	Equal variances assumed	13.526	.000	4.825	278	.000	.504	.105	.299	.710
	Equal variances not assumed		.690	4.775	251.612	.000*	.504	.106	.296	.712
Q10	Equal variances assumed	.159	.690	5.030	278	.000*	.757	.150	.461	1.053
	Equal variances not assumed		.004	5.020	273.228	.000	.757	.151	.460	1.054
Q11	Equal variances assumed	8.668	.004	.798	278	.426	.107	.135	-.158	.373
	Equal variances not assumed		.002	.793	265.840	.428	.107	.135	-.159	.374
Q12	Equal variances assumed	9.773	.002	-4.122	278	.000	-.394	.096	-.582	-.206
	Equal variances not assumed		.011	-4.208	239.273	.000*	-.394	.094	-.578	-.210
Q13	Equal variances assumed	6.595	.011	-1.114	278	.266	-.117	.105	-.325	.090
	Equal variances not assumed		.202	-1.130	261.189	.259	-.117	.104	-.322	.087
Q14	Equal variances assumed	1.638	.202	-.430	278	.668	-.038	.088	-.211	.136
	Equal variances not assumed		.432	-.432	278.000	.666	-.038	.088	-.211	.135

Q15	Equal variances assumed	13.377	.000	-2.248	278	.025	-.174	.078	-.327	-.022
Q16	Equal variances not assumed	2.606	.108	-2.245	273.831	.026*	-.174	.078	-.327	-.021
Q17	Equal variances assumed	2.562	.111	.481	277.101	.632	.050	.104	-.154	.253
Q18	Equal variances not assumed	2.312	.129	.481	277.101	.631	.050	.103	-.154	.253
Q19	Equal variances assumed	16.489	.000	-3.245	278	.001*	-.265	.082	-.426	-.104
Q20	Equal variances not assumed	13.593	.000	-3.255	277.951	.001	-.265	.082	-.426	-.105
Q21	Equal variances assumed	7.076	.008	.516	278	.606	.057	.110	-.159	.272
Q22	Equal variances not assumed	10.592	.001	.517	277.002	.606	.057	.109	-.159	.272
Q23	Equal variances assumed	.625	.430	-8.855	278	.393	-.087	.102	-.288	.113
Q24	Equal variances not assumed	.852	.357	-8.848	258.652	.397	-.087	.103	-.289	.115
Q25	Equal variances assumed	2.594	.108	1.908	278	.057	.230	.120	-.007	.466
Q26	Equal variances not assumed	12.834	.000	1.894	261.365	.059*	.230	.121	-.009	.468
Q27	Equal variances assumed	2.256	.134	3.202	278	.002	.350	.109	.135	.565
Q28	Equal variances not assumed	1.043	.308	3.187	267.678	.002*	.350	.110	.134	.566
Q29	Equal variances assumed	25.249	.000	-3.693	278	.000	-.249	.067	-.382	-.116
Q30	Equal variances not assumed	8.432	.004	-3.698	276.999	.000*	-.249	.067	-.382	-.116
Q31	Equal variances assumed	1.772	.184	-2.332	278	.020*	-.271	.116	-.500	-.042
Q32	Equal variances not assumed	1.043	.308	-2.343	277.855	.020	-.271	.116	-.499	-.043
Q33	Equal variances assumed	2.594	.108	-5.963	278	.000*	-.626	.105	-.833	-.419
Q34	Equal variances not assumed	12.834	.000	-6.010	275.446	.000	-.626	.104	-.831	-.421
Q35	Equal variances assumed	2.256	.134	-5.39	278	.590	-.043	.080	-.202	.115
Q36	Equal variances not assumed	1.043	.308	-5.42	277.766	.589	-.043	.080	-.201	.114
Q37	Equal variances assumed	12.834	.000	-4.69	278	.639	-.052	.110	-.269	.166
Q38	Equal variances not assumed	8.432	.004	-4.70	277.037	.639	-.052	.110	-.269	.165
Q39	Equal variances assumed	2.256	.134	-3.355	278	.723	-.030	.085	-.199	.138
Q40	Equal variances not assumed	1.043	.308	-3.352	257.411	.725	-.030	.086	-.200	.139
Q41	Equal variances assumed	2.256	.134	1.658	278	.098	.168	.101	-.031	.368
Q42	Equal variances not assumed	1.043	.308	1.660	276.689	.098	.168	.101	-.031	.367
Q43	Equal variances assumed	25.249	.000	.414	278	.679	.053	.127	-.198	.303
Q44	Equal variances not assumed	8.432	.004	.414	275.624	.679	.053	.127	-.198	.303
Q45	Equal variances assumed	1.772	.184	4.452	278	.000	.406	.091	.226	.585
Q46	Equal variances not assumed	1.043	.308	4.399	245.947	.000*	.406	.092	.224	.587
Q47	Equal variances assumed	8.432	.004	2.141	278	.033	.204	.095	.016	.391
Q48	Equal variances not assumed	1.772	.184	2.121	254.339	.035*	.204	.096	.015	.393
Q49	Equal variances assumed	1.043	.308	.043	278	.965	.005	.113	-.218	.228

Q33	Equal variances not assumed	4.809	.029	.044	274.848	.965	.005	.112	-.216	.226
	Equal variances assumed			1.131	278	.259	.103	.091	-.076	.282
Q34	Equal variances not assumed	1.251	.264	-2.788	261.632	.263	.103	.092	-.078	.283
	Equal variances assumed			-2.802	277.695	.006*	-.273	.098	-.465	-.080
Q35	Equal variances not assumed	4.278	.040	1.130	278	.260	.124	.110	-.464	-.081
	Equal variances assumed			1.130	276.282	.260	.124	.110	-.092	.341
Q36	Equal variances not assumed	10.051	.002	-.648	278	.517	-.058	.090	-.235	.119
	Equal variances assumed			-.643	258.334	.521	-.058	.091	-.237	.120

Note: * p < 0.05 (95% confidence).

ing to the bottom row of that variable (equal variances not assumed).

By this procedure, out of a total of 36 items on the scale, there are 16 items where there is a significant difference between the self-perception of Indian and Turkish respondents. These items are:

There are 16 items where there is a significant difference between the self-perception of Indian and Turkish respondents.

I treat people as individuals, I am a good listener, My personal relationships are cold and distant, I am easy to talk to, I won't argue with someone just to prove I am right, I ignore other people's feelings, I understand other people, I listen to what people say to me, I usually do not make unusual demands on my friends, I am an effective conversationalist, I am supportive of others, I do not mind meeting strangers, I can easily put myself in another person's shoes, I am a likable person, I am flexible, and I generally say the right thing at the right time.

From Table 1, items where Indian respondents agreed more strongly are:

I am easy to talk to, I won't argue with someone just to prove I am right, I ignore other people's feelings, I usually do not make unusual demands on my friends (at 94% confidence level), I am an effective conversationalist, I am a likable person, and I am flexible.

From Table 1, items where Turkish respondents agreed more strongly are:

I treat people as individuals, I am a good listener, My personal relationships are cold and distant, I understand other people, I listen to what people say to me, I am supportive of others, I do not mind meeting strangers, I can easily put myself in another person's shoes, and I generally say the right thing at the right time.

Conclusions

From the data analysis, it can be concluded that Indians try to project themselves as more likeable and try not to offend others. At the same time, they come out as more self-centered. On the other hand, Turkish people emerge as having introvert personality. This could be traced to the fact that Turkey throughout, in its modern history, has identified more with the West, especially with Europe, while maintaining a lower profile in her relations with the Muslim Middle East from which much of its cultural heritage is derived. It is said that Turkish people do not belong to one single civilization, but to a heterogeneous cultural construct that embraces Eastern and Western values (Mardin, 1997: 12). They appear to be more individualistic when it comes to dealing with business which could be attributed to their geographical closeness to the European world. They display as having more empathy towards others, treat others as individuals and support others. But, their personal relationships are cold and distant which could be attributed to the fact of what is said about the Turkish people: one has to win Turkish people's trust before doing business with them. In fact, a business relationship is a personal relationship and it is therefore important to establish ones' credibility and win over their trust for moving forward in doing business with them. Thus, Turkish people prefer to maintain an appropriate amount of interpersonal space with people they do not know. Otherwise, personal space is closer for Turks as they come from the collectivistic culture (Atay & Ece, 2009). Also, the results indicate that Turkish

people are rather experienced in working with foreign businesses.

Limitations & Directions for Future Research

The major limitation of this study could be the limited sample size which cannot be said to be the representative of the whole population of either India or Turkey, though it may indicate in general the communication behavior of both the Indians and the Turkish people. Also, various variables like age, experience, gender etc. could have been used to throw light on the communication skills of people from India and Turkey.

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