



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, THEOLOGY, HUMANITIES & EDUCATION

NHEC432: Intercultural Communication

END OF SECOND SEMESTER EXAMINATIONS

APRIL/MAY 2026

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DURATION: 3 HOURS

INSTRUCTIONS

1. This paper contains **TWO** sections (Section A and Section B).
2. Section A is **COMPULSORY**.
3. Answer **ANY TWO (2) questions** from Section B.
4. Start each question on a new page in your booklet.
5. Credit will be awarded for logical, systematic and neat presentation
6. Do not repeat material.

SECTION A: COMPULSORY

INSTRUCTION: Answer Question 1.

Question 1

Pepsi's China Slogan Mishap (1980s Global Campaign Disaster)

In the 1980s, PepsiCo launched its iconic "Come Alive! You're in the Pepsi Generation" campaign worldwide to compete with Coca-Cola. The energetic slogan resonated in Western markets, emphasizing youth and vitality. However, during the 1987 Taiwan/China market entry, literal translation into Mandarin Chinese produced "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead". This catastrophic misinterpretation tapped into deep Chinese cultural taboos around ancestor veneration and death, turning a vitality message into necromancy.

The cultural catastrophe unfolded on a number of different levels: *the linguistic trap*. The English expression "Come alive" idiom translated directly without cultural vetting. Mandarin "huo" implies resurrection, while (ancestors) evoked Qingming Festival grave-sweeping rituals—profoundly sacred; *market context*: China was emerging from Cultural Revolution; Western brands symbolized modernity, but insensitivity signaled disrespect. Taiwan (test market) amplified backlash via word-of-mouth; *Immediate Fallout*: Billboards, TV ads, and store displays mocked nationwide. Sales plummeted 10-15% in key cities; consumer boycotts formed. PepsiCo pulled campaign within weeks, costing millions in lost revenue and rebranding. The internal response from the company was the immediate dispatch of translators, apologists with local partners disavowed responsibility. The mandarin statements framed as "translation errors" and not cultural ignorance were insufficient for offended consumers demanding respect. To recover from this mishap, Pepsi switched to neutral "pepsi Generation" visuals, invested in local creatives and in the long term, the company established in Beijing a marketing hub with native linguists. The impact on the Business was huge – there was an estimated loss was \$10-20 million (1987 dollars), delayed China dominance where Coke capitalized on this mishap, "PepsiCo zombies" memes endured in contrast to response in Taiwan where the backlash was minimal, highlighting Western ethnocentrism, there was a strategic shift with Pepsi globalization undergoing a mandatory cultural vetting in China.

* *necromancy (a form of magic or supernatural practice that involves communicating with the dead, often to predict the future, gain insight or manipulate the spirits).*

Questions

- (a) What specific linguistic-cultural mismatch caused Pepsi slogan to evoke necromancy? [10 marks]
- (b) How did China's post-cultural Revolution context amplify the backlash? [10 marks]
- (c) How did Pepsi's apology framing demonstrate continued insensitivity? [5 marks]
- (d) How did the error violate Chinese collectivist communication norms? [5 marks]
- (e) Comment on the ultimate lesson learned from this mishap in terms of intercultural communication. [10 marks]

SECTION B

INSTRUCTION: *Answer ANY TWO (2) questions.*

Question 2

Discuss the rise and development of intercultural communication using suitable examples.

[30 marks]

Question 3

Assess the challenges that arise in intercultural communication due to globalization. Exemplify.

[30 marks]

Question 4

Over 24 years ago, researcher, Gordon Allport wrote the following in his now classic *The Nature of Prejudice*:

“See that man over there?”

“Yes”

“Well, I hate him”

“But you don’t know him”

“That’s why I hate him”

- (a) Why does lack of knowledge or familiarity breed hate?
- (b) Examine why people might experience “hate” when encountering others from a new or unfamiliar culture or group. Support your answer with relevant and appropriate examples.

[30

marks]

Question 5

Discuss Hofstede's cultural dimension model illustrating with relevant examples. **[30 marks]**

END OF PAPER