

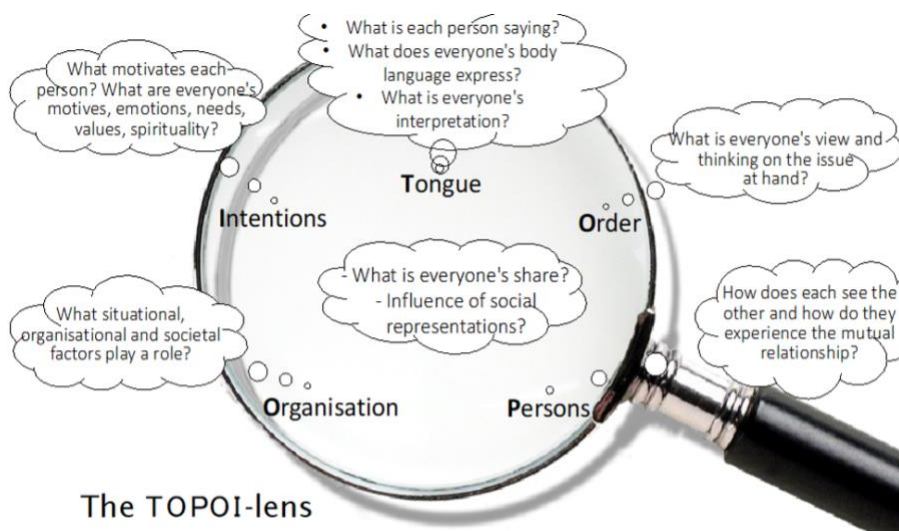
Introduction to the TOPOI model:

Hoffman's (2024) article challenges traditional approaches to intercultural communication and competence, which often rely on culturalist theories that reduce individuals to stereotypes based on national or ethnic backgrounds. He critiques the works of scholars like Geert Hofstede and Erin Meyer, arguing that these approaches oversimplify the complexity of human interaction by focusing on schematic cultures rather than individual uniqueness. Hoffman advocates for an "inclusive communication" approach that emphasizes the importance of recognizing both equality and diversity among individuals. He proposes that communication should focus on the actual people involved, considering their unique identities, life stories, and the specific contexts in which interactions occur. This approach humanizes communication, treating people as complex individuals rather than representatives of their culture.

To support this inclusive approach, Hoffman introduces the TOPOI model, a practical tool for analyzing and addressing potential misunderstandings in communication. The model focuses on five areas—Tongue, Order, Persons, Organization, and Intentions—where differences may arise. Unlike culturalist models, TOPOI is not bound by cultural or national labels but offers a broader perspective on communication, acknowledging the many factors that influence interactions.

Participant Instructions:

1. Read the TOPOI Model article from Hoffman (2024) entitled "[Inclusive Communication. Beyond intercultural communication and competence: 'Cultures don't meet, people do.'](#)"
2. Discuss in the large group:
 - What are the main critiques Hoffman raises about traditional culturalist approaches?
 - Think of a time when you used a culturalist approach in an intercultural exchange. What were your internal perceptions? What happened?
 - What are the pros of using the culturalist approach? What are the drawbacks of a culturalist approach?
 - In what ways does Hoffman argue for diversity competence?
3. Review the TOPOI model as a large group.



(Hoffman, 2024)

4. Continue the discussion with the following questions:
 - How do the five areas of the TOPOI model influence communication outcomes?
 - How can focusing on individuals rather than cultural stereotypes change the dynamics of communication?
 - How could the TOPOI model have influenced outcomes within the intercultural exchange you previously considered?
 - How might your own communication style and biases affect your ability to communicate inclusively?
5. Apply the TOPOI Model and proceed with the case study and instructions below.

Case Study 1:

Maria, a nurse in a multicultural urban hospital, is assigned to care for Mr. Chen, an elderly patient with limited English proficiency. During a routine check-up, Maria asks Mr. Chen if he has been experiencing any pain. Mr. Chen nods and says "No," but appears visibly uncomfortable. Maria interprets this as confirmation that Mr. Chen is not in pain and proceeds with the check-up. Later, Mr. Chen's daughter arrives and expresses concern that her father has been in pain for days but did not want to burden the nurse. Maria realizes that the communication breakdown may have been due to cultural differences in expressing pain and discomfort.

Group Discussion: Break into small groups and discuss the case using the TOPOI model to analyze where the miscommunication occurred in the interaction between Maria and Mr. Chen.

- Tongue: How did language barriers and non-verbal cues contribute to the misunderstanding?
- Order: How did different communication patterns (e.g., indirect communication style) affect the interaction?
- Persons: What assumptions did Maria and Mr. Chen make about one another's communication based on their own cultural backgrounds?
- Organization: How might the healthcare system's protocols or environment have influenced the interaction?
- Intentions: What were Maria's intentions, what were Mr. Chen's intentions, and how might they have been perceived differently by one another?

Role-play: After discussing the TOPOI analysis, role-play a follow-up conversation between Maria and Mr. Chen's daughter, applying the TOPOI model to ensure clear and culturally sensitive communication.

6. Debrief: Reconvene as a large group and discuss the role-play experiences:
 - What strategies were effective in bridging the communication gap in your role-play?
 - How did the TOPOI model guide your role-play?
 - What is your greatest takeaway from this activity?
 - How might you apply this takeaway in future interactions?