

ETHNOCOMMUNICOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The study of ethnocommunicology has shown great possibilities for promoting sustainable development. With an eye towards how they impact the production of knowledge, transfer, and comprehension, ethnocommunicology is the study of communication behaviours within different cultural groups. This research has shown how ethnocommunicology improves understanding among many stakeholders, enables culturally appropriate communication, and helps communities to be active participants in the construction of a sustainable future. According to the paper, there are obstacles on the road to combine sustainable growth with ethnocommunicology. The paper underlined that it is essential to eliminate power inequality, identify epistemological differences, and provide efficient means of recording and exploit this valuable knowledge. Luckily, new communication technologies provide interesting opportunities. Indigenous people may exchange information, participate in conversation, and make sure their opinions are heard by means of online resources, smartphone applications, and social media channels. Ethnocommunicology may act as a bridge by using these abilities to overcome obstacles and promote cooperation, thereby supporting culturally sensitive solutions, and finally guiding the way for a more fair and sustainable society for everyone.

Keywords: *Ethnocommunicology, sustainable development, new media, culture, society.*

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development, defined as the development that meets the needs of the present generation without imposing them on the future generations (Brundtland Commission, 1987) and has to be pursued in a comprehensive way. Achieving this objective depends mostly on communication, hence the area of ethnocommunicology provides insightful analysis of how to interpret and incorporate ancient knowledge systems into modern development projects.

Focusing on how these activities impact production of knowledge, transfer, and comprehension, ethnocommunicology delves into the communication practices within particular cultural groups (Scollon&Scollon, 2003.). For decades, indigenous people have been able to effectively manage resources because of their evolved intricate communication mechanisms and knowledge systems (Agrawal, 2001). Examining these conventional means of communication helps ethnocommunicators to record and distribute this important information, therefore promoting a better awareness of how indigenous people have evolved to fit their surroundings and guaranteed long-term survival. This information may subsequently be included into projects aimed at sustainable development, therefore encouraging environmentally sensible and culturally suitable behaviour. For example, documentation of traditional farming methods that support soil health and biodiversity has been much aided by ethnocommunication research (Pretty, 2003). This information may guide the creation of environmentally friendly agricultural initiatives catered to certain cultural settings and situations.

The Concept of Ethnocommunicology

At the junction of anthropology and communication studies, ethnocommunicology is a dynamic area providing a multifarious prism to view communication behaviours within particular cultural groups. Depending on the scholar's point of view, the word "ethnocommunicology" itself has many connotations. Pioneer in the discipline, Gumperz (1982) characterises it as the "ethnography of communication" (p. xv). This method stresses the need of really immersing oneself in a cultural group in order to see communication techniques in their natural surroundings. Gumperz (1982) pointed out that researchers may find the underlying cultural presumptions and beliefs influencing communication styles by transcending mere observations.

According to Carey (1989) ethnocommunicology is "The study of communication as culture". This concept stresses how cultural identity is shaped and reflected upon via communication. Knudsen (2006) interprets ethnocommunicology as "the study of communication in its cultural context, focusing on the

special means by which individuals of a given culture produce, preserve, and confer their shared meanings via communication. This definition emphasises the need for common meanings and communication techniques within a society.

From a wider standpoint, Shin (2009) defines ethnocommunicology as "the study of how communication shapes and is shaped by culture, focusing on the particular ways that members of a specific culture use communication to develop, preserve, and confer their shared relationships, identities, and meanings. This term broadens Knudsen's viewpoint by considering the role of communication in constituting relationships and identities. The term notes that communication actively generates cultural meanings as well as reflects them, therefore impacting relationships and identities within a given culture.

These definitions explain how ethnocommunicology fills in for cultural anthropology and communication studies. It clarifies the unique ways societies communicate with one another and make sense of the world by means of communication.

Principles of Ethnocommunicology

Ethnocommunicology rests on several key principles, which are:

- **Culture-Specificity:** Different societies have somewhat different communication strategies. Practices seen as courteous in one culture might be seen as insulting in another. Effective communication depends on one knowing about cultural norms (Samovar et al., 2016).
- **Symbolic Meaning-Making:** Communication goes beyond words to include the production and understanding of culturally significant symbols. Within a certain culture, silence, rituals and gestures may have great importance (Scollon & Wong, 2009).
- **Interconnectedness:** Communication practices are not independent entities. They are finely spun into the larger economic, political, and social fabric of a society (Hymes, 1972).

Applying these fundamental ideas, ethnocommunicologists may provide insightful analysis of many communication events via the following:

- **Understanding Nonverbal Communication:** By examining how proxemics (use of space), facial expressions and gestures vary among cultures, ethnocommunicologists help to promote intercultural competency (Samovar et al., 2016).

- **Deciphering Media Consumption:** Examining how different societies interact with different media formats helps ethnocommunicologists to expose cultural preferences and values (Thussu&Dissanayake, 2009).
- **Steering Intercultural Conflict:** By helping to spot communication patterns that fuel intercultural conflict and create strategies for more successful communication, ethnocommunicologists may contribute to peace (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Sustainable Development

In recent years, sustainable development has become a major idea encouraging people to discover methods to satisfy their own needs without jeopardising the capacity of future generations to satisfy their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). This is a difficult idea with social, financial, and environmental aspects that calls for careful balance between development and the welfare of the planet. Three linked foundations define sustainable development:

1. **Environmental Sustainability:** This pillar is mostly concerned with preserving ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources of the Earth. It stresses behaviours that cut pollution, save resources, and slow down global warming (Meadows et al., 2002). Among them include using sustainable agriculture, safeguarding endangered species, and renewable energy sources.
2. **Economic Sustainability:** This pillar seeks for economic development that satisfies all demands without surpassing the carrying capacity of the planet. It advances sensible economic policies with regard for social and environmental effects (Pearce et al., 1989). Examples include supporting resource efficiency, investing in green technology, and guaranteeing fair distribution of income.
3. **Social Sustainability:** This pillar attends to the social component of development. It aims for a fair and equal society wherein everyone has access to fundamental requirements like healthcare, education and good living conditions (Robinson, 2004). It promotes cultural variety, female equality, and social justice.

These pillars are interdependent; progress in one area cannot come at the expense of the others. For instance, economic development should not come at a cost to the environment (ecological sustainability), and economic benefits should be distributed fairly to promote social sustainability.

Examples of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is not just an abstract concept. Below are some real-world examples:

- **Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA):** This initiative connects farmers directly with consumers, promoting local food production and reducing the environmental impact of transportation.
- **Green Building Design:** This approach employs sustainable materials and practices to minimize energy consumption and environmental impact in buildings.
- **Renewable Energy Initiatives:** Countries investing in solar, wind, and geothermal energy are transitioning towards a more sustainable energy future.

Rather than a goal, sustainable development is an always changing road. It calls for ongoing flexibility, creativity, and teamwork. Accepting the ideas of sustainable development would help us to guarantee a good planet and a rich future for the next generations.

Ethnocommunicology as a Bridge between Cultures and Knowledge Systems

The quest for sustainable development calls for a comprehensive knowledge of the interactions of many civilisations with their surroundings. Ethnocommunicology turns out to be a vital link that leads one into the communication strategies supporting conventional knowledge systems and their possible support to sustainable development goals.

As its name indicates, ethnocommunicology is the study of communication within certain ethnic groups. Still, its range goes beyond simple definition. It clarifies the complex ways communication influences how knowledge is generated, shared, and finally built within a society (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). Emphasising this, Hymes (1972) defines ethnocommunication as "the study of those communicative performances and competencies that are consistent factors in the social life of human societies, focusing on how the social organisation and particular ecology of that community shapes these performances and competencies" (p. 127). This emphasises how closely communication is ingrained in a cultural setting, where behaviours are not separate events but rather quite finely spun into the social fabric.

Scholars have added more on the fundamental principles of ethnocommunication. For example, Gumperz (1982) stresses the need of "communication ethnography," in which one deeply immerses oneself in a cultural group to learn their communication methods in their natural surroundings. By use of this anthropological method, researchers may go beyond mere observations to expose the underlying values and cultural assumptions guiding communication patterns (Gumperz, 1982).

According to Scollon&Scollon (2003) "codes" are another fundamental idea in ethnocommunication. These "codes" include not just linguistic aspects (e.g., dialect, language.), but also particular rites, customs of storytelling, and even nonverbal signals. Through code analysis, ethnocommunicators may better grasp how different cultural groups pass on information across generations.

The Crucial Role of Ethnocommunicology in Sustainable Development

Reaching sustainable development as described by the Brundtland Commission (1987) as "meeting the requirements of the present without jeopardising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 43) calls for a multifarious strategy. Fostering cooperation and information sharing depends mostly on communication; hence, the area of ethnocommunicology provides priceless perspectives in this direction. Ethnocommunicology creates a link between modern development initiatives and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) in sustainable development. Ethnocommunicology helps to promote sustainable development in the following aspects:

- **Understanding Indigenous Knowledge Systems:** Many indigenous communities have thrived in their environments for generations through practices informed by TEK. TEK encompasses a vast body of knowledge about local ecosystems, resource management, and sustainable practices passed down through generations (Berkes, 2009). Ethnocommunicology helps researchers and development practitioners understand how these communities communicate and document their TEK, facilitating its integration into development projects.
- **Fostering Culturally Appropriate Communication:** Research on ethnocommunication underlines the need of using culturally sensitive communication techniques (Chen, 2012.). Understanding the communication habits and preferences of a community helps development programs be planned and carried out in ways that appeal to the target audience. This guarantees efficient communication of information and raises the possibility of project success.
- **Empowering Local Communities:** Participatory development is advocated in ethnocommunicology. By means of research on communication strategies inside communities, development initiatives become more inclusive, thereby enabling local voices to be heard and their expertise to be appreciated (Mudimbe-Boyi, 2015). This helps people to accept accountability for sustainable resource management and enables communities to own development initiatives.
- **Conflict Resolution and Negotiation:** Often times, sustainable growth entails handling difficult environmental and social problems. Between many stakeholders—including NGOs, indigenous groups and government agencies—ethnocommunication skills are very vital in enabling

discourse and negotiation. Through bridging communication barriers and promoting intercultural understanding, ethnocommunicology may assist negotiate problems and identify solutions that would benefit all the engaged parties.

- **Preserving Cultural Heritage:** Research on ethnocommunication aids in the documentation and preservation of maybe lost knowledge systems and indigenous communication methods. This include learning about indigenous customs, storytelling, music and other cultural manifestations reflecting important information about sustainable living and the environment.
- **Promoting Biodiversity Conservation:** Many indigenous people have rich cultural links to their local ecosystems. Studies of ethnocommunication may expose how these groups see certain animals or environments and discuss biodiversity. This information may guide initiatives for conservation and support cooperative management techniques.
- **Disaster Risk Reduction:** Living in and adjusting to difficult surroundings is something that indigenous people frequently have great expertise. Research on ethnocommunication helps to record their customs of early warning systems, catastrophe readiness, and post-disaster rehabilitation. These realisations might be included into contemporary catastrophe risk reduction plans to raise community resilience.
- **Countering Misinformation and Promoting Environmental Awareness:** Using ethnocommunication techniques helps to correct false information regarding environmental problems. Development professionals may design culturally appropriate communication campaigns that support sustainable practices and environmental awareness by knowing how different cultures absorb and distribute knowledge.
- **Evaluating Development Projects:** From a communication aspect, ethnocommunication research helps one assess the success of development efforts. This helps to pinpoint places where communication plans failed and guide future efforts in corrections. Clear, culturally relevant communication guarantees that development initiatives may be more inclusive and powerful.

Ethnocommunicology is essential in the achievement of sustainable development. Encouragement of cross-cultural contact, helps traditional knowledge to be included into contemporary development plans. This method produces more inclusive, culturally relevant, and finally sustainable future solutions.

Ethnocommunicology: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Development

Ethnocommunicology provides a useful prism to guarantee culturally suitable solutions, encourage cooperation among stakeholders, and support sustainable development. While new communication

technologies provide great possibilities, merging ancient knowledge systems with contemporary development methods offers difficulties.

Challenges of Integrating Traditional Knowledge

- **Epistemological Differences:** While traditional knowledge systems can include experiential and spiritual elements, western scientific knowledge stresses objectivity and empirical evidence (Agrawal, 1995). This disparity may make successful integration difficult.
- **Power Dynamics and Marginalization:** Historical power imbalances may cause contemporary organisations to devalue traditional knowledge (Langham, 2002.). It is essential to find means to guarantee fair involvement and respect of indigenous voices.
- **Documentation and Standardization:** Many times handed down orally or via experience, traditional knowledge is difficult to record and incorporate into accepted development models (Berkes, 2009).

Opportunities with New Communication Technologies

- **Empowering Indigenous Communication:** Social media platforms and mobile apps allow indigenous communities to control their narratives and share their knowledge directly with a wider audience (Aikenhead& Hunt, 2006). For example, The Tebtebba Foundation uses online platforms to share indigenous knowledge and advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples
- **Promoting Participatory Communication:** Interactive platforms can facilitate dialogue between communities, development practitioners, and policymakers, fostering co-creation of sustainable solutions (Hujala&Leinonen, 2010).
- **Preserving and Disseminating Traditional Knowledge:** Mobile apps can be used to document traditional knowledge in audio, video, or text format, ensuring its preservation and transmission to future generations (Robinson, 2012).

Conclusion

The exploration of ethnocommunicology has revealed its immense potential in promoting sustainable development. This paper has revealed how ethnocommunicology fosters understanding between diverse stakeholders, facilitates culturally appropriate communication, and empowers communities to be active participants in shaping a sustainable future. However, the path to integration isn't without its challenges. Bridging the gap between traditional knowledge systems and modern development approaches requires

acknowledging epistemological differences, addressing power imbalances, and finding ways to effectively document and utilize this valuable knowledge. Fortunately, new communication technologies offer exciting opportunities. Social media platforms, mobile apps, and online resources empower indigenous communities to share their knowledge, participate in dialogue, and ensure their voices are heard. By harnessing these tools and navigating the challenges, ethnocommunicology can act as a bridge, fostering collaboration, promoting culturally sensitive solutions, and ultimately paving the way for a more just and sustainable world for all

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