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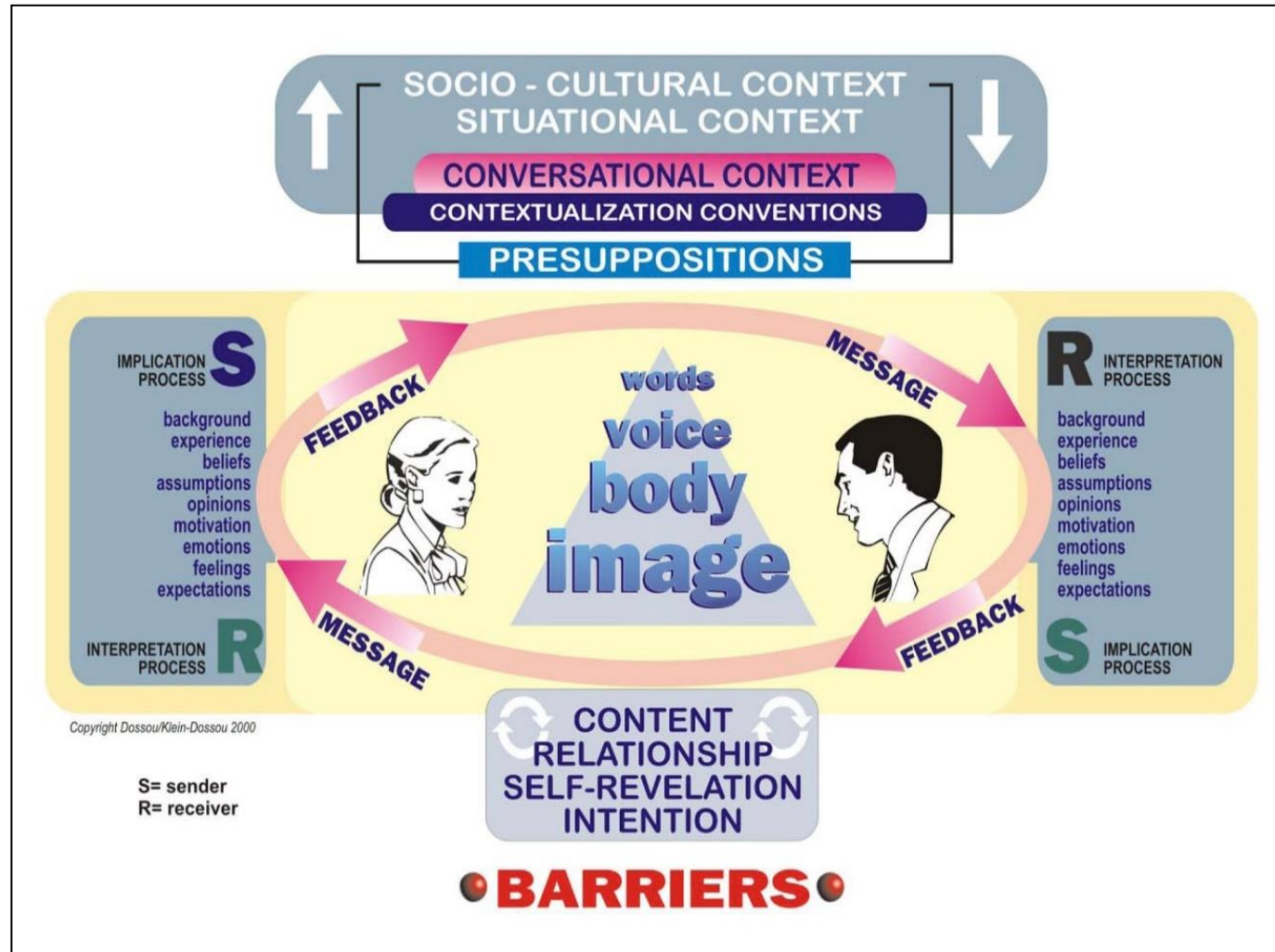
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# Interpersonal Communication in an Intercultural Encounter

## Koffi M. Dossou & Gabriella B. Klein

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# Overall communication model



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# Words as important components of human communication



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# Basic concepts: 4 levels of communication

1. Verbal communication = use of linguistic forms
2. Paraverbal communication = use of the voice
3. Non-verbal communication = use of the body
4. Visual communication = use of any visual element on the individual and in the situation: forms/shapes, colors and symbols

NB: visual communication is NOT non-verbal communication

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# Basic concepts: 2 communication channels:



## 1) acoustic-auditory channel:

verbal & paraverbal messages

## 2) visual communication channel:

non-verbal & visual messages

# Basic concepts: 4 planes of communication

- **Objective content** is what the sender intends to communicate to the receiver.
- **Self-revelation** is the information that the sender reveals about him/herself/themself.
- **Intentions** are the objectives the sender wants to obtain from the receiver.
- **Relationship**, the information about the relation between the sender and the receiver



# Basic concepts: situation – interlocutor - objective



**Good communication is oriented toward:**  
**the situation**  
**the interlocutor**  
**the objective.**

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# Basic concept: communication barrier (1)

## Barriers in communication occur when (1):

1. the plane of the content is not clear
2. interlocutors are not speaking about the same thing
3. the message is not (fully) understood
4. communication partners do not have the same level of information



# Basic concept: communication barrier (2)

## Barriers in communication occur when (2):

1. misunderstandings happen on the plane of the relationship
2. the two planes, that of the content and that of the relationship, are inverted
3. the messages on the plane of the content are in contradiction with the messages on the plane of the relationship

# Basic concept: communication barrier (3)

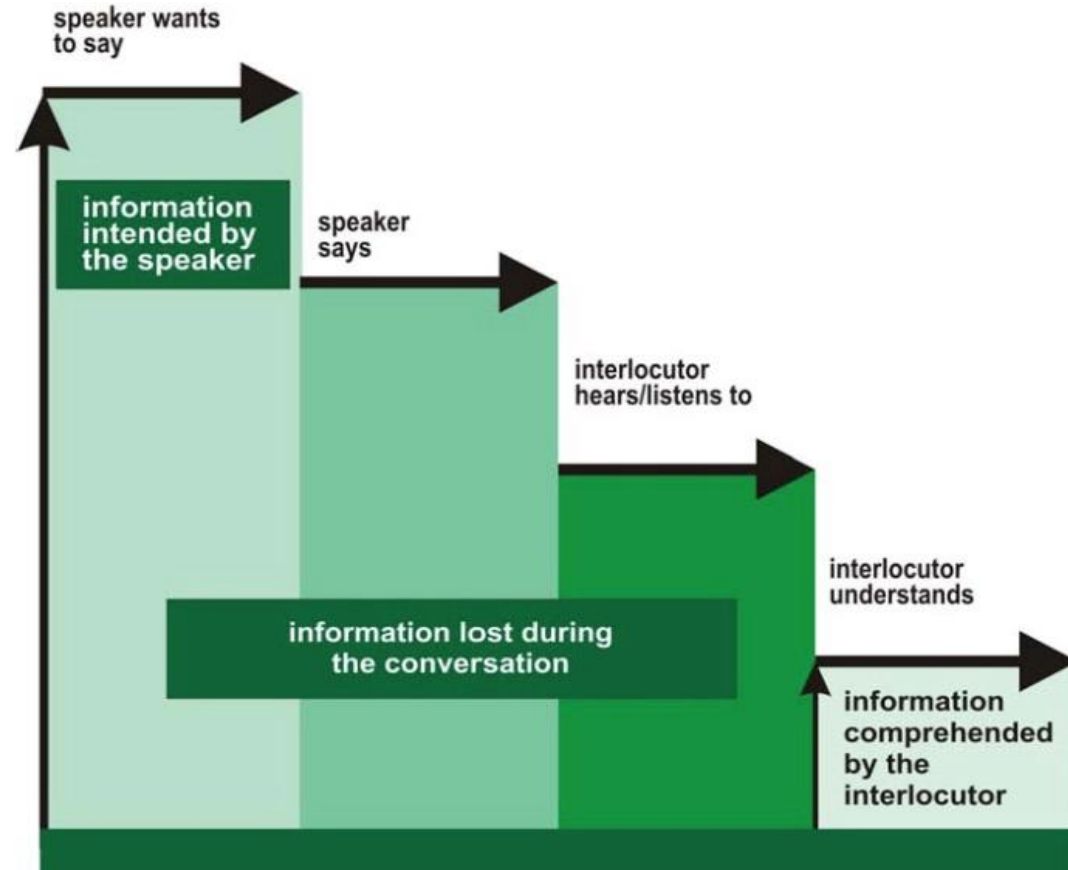


## Barriers in communication occur when (3):

1. interlocutors' prejudices determine the dialogue
2. only the information that confirms the prejudice is perceived
3. interlocutors' values are challenged and feelings hurt
4. communication partners' experiences, cultural and ideological backgrounds are noticeably different.

# Basic concept: information

## Information intended vs information comprehended:



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# Basic concept: verbal messages

These are messages expressed in words. The words, the sentences and the construction of the whole discourse are relevant.

Discourse may be **spoken** as well as **written**.

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# Basic concept: paraverbal message

This refers to how words, sentences, and discourse are perceived through the interplay of:

- pauses
- volume
- pitch registers
- intonation contours
- speed
- stress
- rhythm

➤ **TONE** = perception of these elements

# Basic concept: non-verbal message

facial expressions

gestures

the direction of our eyes / eye contact

mouth and lip movement

posture

proximity

the way of moving the body

This involves visible **behaviour**, which transmits (un)intentional messages without words, i.e. the use of body language:



# Basic concept: non-verbal message

## Audible symbols

laughing	weeping
clearing one's throat	coughing
sighing	yawning

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# Basic concept: visual message

This comprises:

- colours
- forms / shapes
- symbols

on and around the interlocutors

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# Basic concept: visual message

Exterior appearance

clothing: form and colour

hair style

jewellery

status symbols

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# Basic concept: meaning of messages

The deepest meaning of any message depends on the following personal factors:

- social position
- communicative and social networking
- norms, beliefs, orientation, and the values of the socio-cultural world in which the subject acts each time
- subjective experience
- concrete situation.

# Basic concept: feedback

= receiver's reaction to a message

Factors influencing the reaction / feedback:

- immediate perception of the facts
- interpretation
- feelings
- background knowledge
- socio-cultural context
- situational context
- conversational context

The greater the relevance of cultural difference is, the less foreseeable the reaction, the feedback.

# Basic concept: socio-cultural context

The socio-cultural context is the broader context in which the interaction takes place; the socio-cultural context involves different aspects of people's cultural background involved in the communication process, i.e. religion, beliefs, sayings, traditions, rituals, symbols, habits, behaviour patterns etc.

**Context acts as a frame of reference for assumptions and implications, on one side, and the interpretation of the message on the other.**



# Basic concept: situational context

The situational context is the more narrow context established by the physical and social situation, by socially defined times and places, and related to participants' roles. A communicative situation has the aim to resolve recurring matters of social life. Social situations are pre-constructed in a larger socio-cultural context with regard to what types of situations really exist in a society and how they are initiated and performed.

# Basic concept: conversational context

Every speech act is situated in a conversational context. To take part in a conversation means therefore, to know who has the floor and which participants are the listeners.

The conversational context is neither static nor predefined. It is dynamically developed by the participants throughout the interaction.

Signalling the different participation roles (speaker, listener, bystander) is culturally influenced.

# Basic concept: contextualization cue

To let the receiver know how the content of our utterances is to be interpreted, we use “contextualisation cues”.

The means may be:

- verbal (e.g. code-switching)
- paraverbal (whispering)
- nonverbal signals (e.g. laughing).

Also, contextualisation cues are different in different societies and cultures.

# Basic concept: culture

- a set of dynamic and transformative processes
- culturally (and socially) different habits, behaviour patterns, values, mental representations
- “specific mindsets that are socially predetermined and through which individuals personally come in contact within a historically determined context” (translation from Italian, Seppilli/Guaitini Abbozzo 1974:30)

# Basic concept: intercultural communication

If the background and the respective mindsets are not shared, misunderstandings can easily occur, and negotiation of meaning is required to reach a common understanding.

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# Basic concepts: implication & interpretation



- Background
- Experience
- Beliefs
- Assumptions
- Opinions
- Motivation
- Emotions
- Feelings
- Expectations

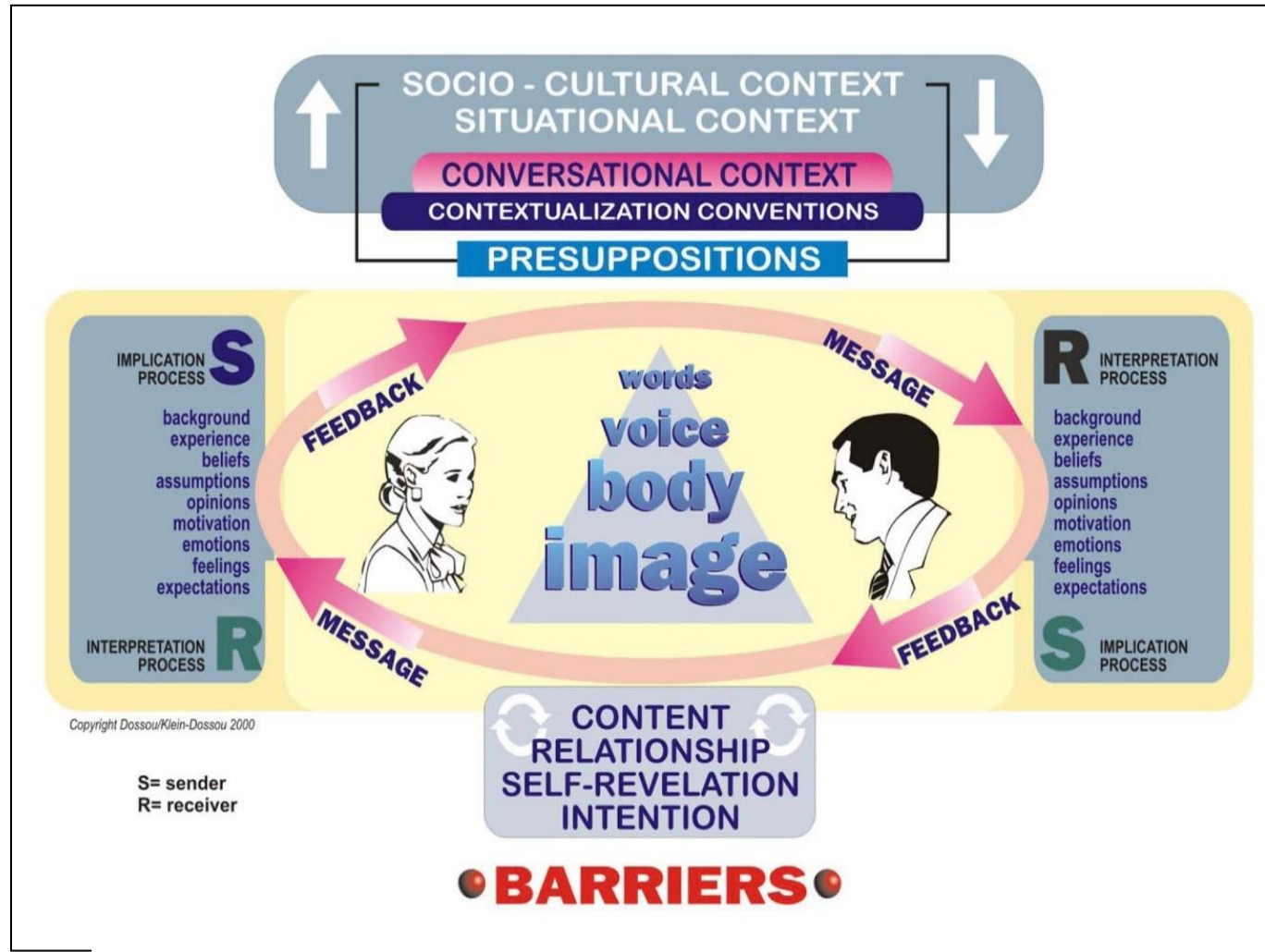
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# Integrated communication model



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# READING



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