Lecture 1

Introduction to Cross Cultural Communication

Description of the Lecture

This material aims at introducing Master One university students to a kind of knowledge and culture about cross cultural communications in relationship with its main requirements such as culture and communication as among prior qualities of successful cross cultural communication. Through this lecture students will become familiar with the definitions assigned to cross cultural communication, the different meanings of each term one by one respectively, the distinctions between each term and the concept as a whole. The emphasis is put on the right definition in regard to cross cultural context. Key content of the lecture includes two sections; the first one deals with the related theoretical matters while the second one presents the likely practical materials and exercises.

Introduction

We live in the world that is becoming a global small village. Advancements in communication technologies increase the opportunities to communicate with people from various cultures and consequently turn the world into something less smaller then globe village to something inside our pocket. As international contacts and cooperation are more regular, the awareness of differences in the process of communication starts playing a crucial role. Being able to transform a word from a native into a foreign language does not guarantee a trouble-free course of a conversation run by speakers from different cultures. To investigate differences in communication and cultures, to be able to recognize the true intention of the interlocutor and correspondent, to see through the culturally specific patterns of communication, it is possible only if the ethnocentric view is abandoned.

The place where we grew up shapes the way we think, feel, and act. Communication and culture influence each other. The cultural patterns from which people come affect the way they communicate. The way they communicate can change the culture they share. The key to effective communication between countries is an understanding of each other's culture, especially the knowledge of how each society conveys meaning. Ignoring cultural differences, norms, and local habits may cause some communication problems or the lack of willingness to cooperate. It is worth remembering that good communication unites, rather than divides.

Experiencing all these various culture differences we do not ask questions such as; *who is right?* Or *who is wrong?* But *how can we see the same thing so differently that it results in not seeing "the same thing" at all?* Therefore, discovering, first of all, one's own and then other cultures is a challenge – nowadays it is a must. It is believed that this handout will help students to understand different people as

well as cultures they come from better, to improve your cross-cultural communication, to develop cross-cultural awareness, and to facilitate cooperation in the diverse environment. In this lecture and document there are a number of issues referring to cross cultural communication from multi-perspectives to help English foreign language students exercise their cross-cultural communication successfully while living, communicating and working in a multi-cultural small world.

1. Issues of Terminology: Cross, Inter, and Multi + Culture

The terms multiculturalism, intercultural and cross-cultural are all common in the literature (Georgiou, 2010: 50), but Fries (2002: 2) states that the terminologies "cross, multi, and inter" do not have the same meaning and they are used differently according to contexts.

1. 1. Cross-cultural Term

Many English speakers favor to use the term "cross-cultural", but Fries himself has entitled his class "intercultural communication" and distinguishes between the two terms. He defines the term "cross-cultural" as follows; (in our usage "cross-cultural" applies to something which covers more than one culture. For example "a cross-cultural study of education in Western Europe" would be a comparison of chosen aspects of education in various countries, but would consider each country separately and would not suggest any interaction between the various educational systems).

1. 2. Intercultural Term

Fries again (2002: 2) defines it as follows; (the term "inter-cultural" implies interaction. From an intercultural perspective, it would be possible to study the experiences of students or teachers who move from one educational system to another, or to examine the interactions of students from different countries enrolled in a specific class. "Culture shock" and "cultural adaptation" are thus intercultural notions).

Moreover, inter in intercultural expresses a relationship and implies that different people are not only present in an educational environment but also come to contact (Geogiou, 2010: 50). Cushner (1988) concurs with this position, advocating that intercultural is an expression of exchanges and cooperation between groups and recognition that a real understanding of cultural similarities and differences is essential in providing a basis for collaboration with others. So, the term intercultural is normative and carries values, it has moral and ethical dimensions for it and it incorporates respect for what is different and underlies a contact, as opposed to cross-cultural which is considered neutral Pavan (2009: 126).

1. 3. Multi-cultural Term

Finally, according to Taylor (2005), "multiculturalism has had an effect of de-emphasizing national differences and highlighting the social diversity of cultural pluralism that exists within one and the same

nation, within one and the same EFL classroom due to differences in ethnicity, social class and gender". (Geogiou, 2010: 50) states that multicultural suggests that groups of many (multi) different cultures coexists in the same space; however, it may imply that people from a variety of backgrounds live side by side but without necessarily interacting with each other. Here, it seems that multiculturalism is often met within the boundaries of the same national limits. Consequently, the dimension of intercultural is wider than multicultural dimension since it is based on the movement towards the other and fosters a better understanding of native and other cultures.

To sum up, the term intercultural refers to the interaction, interchange, and cooperation of different cultures. "Intercultural is best described as an active process of interchange, interaction, and cooperation between cultures emphasizing the similarities and considering the cultural diversity as an enriching elements. It promotes the coexistence between several groups of different cultures".

They go on and advocate that the term intercultural means the process of becoming conscious of one's own culture and cultures of otherness. The aim behind incorporating intercultural learning in EFL classroom is to promote international understanding, solidarity, respect, and cooperation. Intercultural is then a set of processes generated through the interactions of different cultures in which participants show immense readiness to cooperate positively with people who are culturally different from them with a full conscious of their interdependence.

2. Definitions of Key Terms

2. 1. Concept Definition of Culture

The complexity of the construct *culture* and the difficulty in defining it, is evident from the approaches that authors follow to describe it: …"there are many ways of examining cultural differences" (Hodgetts, et al, 1997), "I found leaders struggling with the concept of culture, …the concept is hard to define, hard to analyze and measure, and hard to manage" (Schein, 1992), "it is not directly accessible to observation but (only) inferable from verbal statements and other behaviors" (Levitin, 1973), "no single definition …… is likely to do justice to its complexity" (Williams, 1968), "there are many theories on culture" (De Beer, 1997).

To describe the difficulties we face in understanding culture, Hofstede (1980) compares the construct with the intangibles of the physical sciences, a field where one usually finds that there are definitions on which scholars have virtual consensus. However, according to the General Hierarchy of Systems (Boulding, 1956) in the social sciences man deals with systems that are at a much higher level of complexity, that are much more difficult to define and have consensus on. In discussing culture as "mental programming" Hofste (1980) draws an analogy between the social scientist approaching social reality and the blind men from the Indian fable approaching the elephant: "…… the one who gets hold of a leg thinks it is a tree, the one who

gets the tail thinks it is a rope, but none of them understand what the whole animal is." He concludes that in the study of social reality one would not find objectivity. Social scholars will always be subjective and they should at least try to be "inter-subjective".

Culture has much to do with the individual's learning process. No one is born with a specific culture in the way they come into the world with a preference for, for example, right or left-handedness. People are born into a society that teaches them its culture (Schermerhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 1994). Culture therefore, does not exist within one person but belongs to and is shared by a collection of people. It forms the "boundaries" between different groups of people.

On the one hand culture is a perception, but is also descriptive in nature (Robbins and Coulter, 1999). A culture is perceived by individual members on the basis of what they see or hear. It has a shared aspect - members tend to describe their culture in similar terms disregarding their own different backgrounds. Whether they like it or not is not important - the description of their own perception of the culture they belong to is of more importance. It furthermore represents a way of coping with the reality of the environment (Mbau, 1986)

Culture is unique to each society or group of people. It could therefore be regarded as the personality of the group. It constitutes to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual (Smit et al, 1999). Similar to Guilford's (1959) definition of personality as "the interactive aggregate of personal characteristics that influence the individual's response to the environment", Hofstede (1980) views culture as "the interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment". It thus plays a role in determining the identity of a human group. Bohannan (1969) and Barnouw (1973) indicate that cultural traits are even measurable through the use of personality tests. Culture and cultural values could be described by referring to the playing rules of a sports match (Van der Walt, 1997). These rules are not visible but they influence the entire game and the behavior of those participating in it. After naming several examples of cultural differences to explain the analogy, he comes to the following conclusions:

- Culture gives identity - there is no aspect of human life that does not fall under the potential influence of culture.
- Your own culture is normal for yourself. You are normally not aware of your own culture or of the fact that it might be unfamiliar or strange to others.
- One of the best ways to come to grip with one's own culture is to seriously study other cultures. One cannot separate self- understanding from understanding others. "To reach the one, you have to start with the other and *vice versa*".

Schein (1992) brings many of the various aspects together and puts strong emphasis on the shared "taken-for-granted basic assumptions" held by group members. His perspective of culture is that it is a

phenomenon that is undetectable from leadership and that the process of creating, developing, manipulating and changing a culture is much clearer when brought down to the level of the organization. He is convinced that, if we want to understand the complex aspects of organizational life, we should move away from superficial definitions. After discussing the importance of shared learning taking place in a group, he presents a definition for culture which could be regarded as representative of most other points of view: *"***A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved problems of external adaption and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."**

The general conclusion to be drawn from the various explanations of culture is that certain "things" are shared or held in common in groups. There should therefore be a history of shared experience that furthermore implies a certain degree of structural stability in terms of group membership. The "shared things" mentioned above are those phenomena that are commonly associated with culture and include the following:

- **Values:** these are publicly declared tendencies of a group to prefer certain states of affairs over others (Hofstede, 1980).
- **Group norms:** it refers to a mutually agreed upon "rule" or "standard" that guides behavior and that is expected to be followed by team members. They are determined and developed by the collective will of the group's members (Schermerhorn, 1999), normally from interaction between members (Smit et al, 1999) and could include issues such as expected attendance, high performance or levels of commitment.
- **Visible behavioral regularities:** these include the language people use when interacting, customs and traditions as well as certain rituals that are employed – the ways in which the members of a group eat, dress, greet one another or teach their offspring (Schermerhorn et al, 1994).
- **Group philosophy:** Schein (1992) also refers to broad policies and ideological principles that guide a group's actions towards employees, customers and other stakeholders.

Note 1
All in all the term culture embraces everything acquired and learned that makes up the human beings life of a society at both collective and individual levels as a dynamic process to changing circumstances.

Table 1: The Author's Interpretation to the Term of Culture

2. 2. Concept Definition of Communication

This term "communicative" is an adjective word class for the noun "communication". It originates from the Latin word "communicare", which means to share or impart. When used as per its function, it means a common ground of understanding. Communication is the process of exchanging of facts, ideas, opinions, information and a means by which individuals or organizations use for sharing meaning and

understanding with one another. In other words, it is the transmission and interaction of facts, ideas, opinions, feelings or attitudes (Louis, et al. 2013). Communication is an interdisciplinary concept as theoretically it is approached from various disciplines especially linguistics. Thanks to communication people can do great things such as to learn, to be aware of ourselves and others, and to adjust to our environment. Communication is twofold process between two parties –the sender and the receiver. It involves an exchange and progression of thoughts, ideas, knowledge, and information towards a mutually accepted goal (Ibid).

According to Craig Storti (1999, p. 87), "communication…is one of the most common of all human behaviors…." The perpetual presence of communication in everyday life, justifies a deeper look into its actual meaning. What does the term "communication" signify? The authors Nancy Adler (1997, p. 68) and Robert Gibson (2000, p. 18) both define communication as "the exchange of meaning". Contrary to its simple definition, the process of communication is highly complex, multilayered and dynamic (Adler 1997, p. 68). This is due to the fact that communication is always dependent on the perception, interpretation and evaluation of a person's behavior which includes verbal versus non-verbal as well as consciously versus unconsciously sent messages (Adler 1997, p. 68). In other words, the message sent by the message sender never corresponds with the message received by the message receiver. However, this problem and its causes will be looked at in more detail throughout this lecture and module.

2. 3. Cross Cultural Communication

From the previous definitions and explanations to the terms that constitute the term cross cultural communication respectively, it becomes clearly apparent that the meaning of the concept as a whole as follows:

Cross cultural communication refers to the exchange of information between people of different cultural backgrounds. It is a well-studied field of research in several disciplines, including psychology, speech and communication, sociology, anthropology, and business. *Cross-cultural communication* is highly related to a similar term, ***intercultural communication***. In actuality, there is no difference between these terms in the context of communication. However, there is an important and notable difference between cross-cultural and intercultural *research.* The former refers to the comparison of two or more cultures on some variable of interest (e.g., differences between cultures A and B in the expression of emotions). The latter refers to the study of the interaction between people of two cultures (e.g., differences in how people of cultures A and B express emotions when they are with people of cultures B and A, respectively). There is yet a third term, ***intra-cultural communication***, which refers to communication among people within a culture. The bulk of information in cross-cultural communication comes from cross-cultural researches, but has considerable application to our understanding of intercultural and intra-cultural communication processes.

Cross-cultural communication is a field of study that looks at how people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures. Cross cultural communication is imperative for individual and companies that have a diverse workplace and participate in the globe economy, interactions, and communications. It is also important for everyone to understand the factors that are parts of an effective, diverse communications. This cultural way of communication endeavors to bring together unrelated areas such as cultural anthropology and establishes areas of communication. Its core idea is to establish and understand how people from different cultures communicate with each other.

Note 2
Cross cultural communication is the ability to step beyond one culture to the second then to the third and so on successfully in a situation when many cultures come into interaction.

Table 2: The Author's Definition to the Term of Cross Culture Communication

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3. The Components of Cross Cultural Communication

3. 1. Culture

There are two related crises in today world. The first and most visible is the population and environment crisis. The second, more subtle but equally lethal, is human kinds relationships to its extension, institutions, ideas, as well as the relationships among the many individuals and groups that inhabit the globe. If both crises are not resolved, neither will be. Despite our faith in technology and our reliance on the extensive use of the mind for solutions, there are no technical solutions to the most of the problems confronting human beings. Furthermore, even those technical solutions that can be applied to environmental and population problems cannot be applied rationally until human transcends the intellectual and cultural limitations imposed by our institutions, our philosophies, our cultures. Compounding all of this is the reality of culture.

3. 2. Elements of Culture

While culture is composed of countless elements (food, shelter, work, defense, social control, psychological security, forms of governing, social harmony, purpose in life, education, traditions, social norms, music, economy, architecture and so on), there are some elements that relate directly to this lecture. Understanding these will enable you to appreciate the notion that while all cultures share a common set of perceptions and behaviors. These particular aspects often distinguish one culture from another. We introduce these early in our analysis of cultural communication because these aspects will become major topics and even criteria of distinctions among cultures.

3. 2. 1. Religion

We begin with one of the most important of all components of culture—religion. For thousands of years religion has been used by people to assist them in understanding the universe, natural phenomena, what to die for, what to live for, how to live, and how to dwell among other people. The influence of religion can be seen in the entire fabric of a culture since it serves so many basic functions. These functions include "social control, conflict resolution, and reinforcement of group solidarity, explanations of the unexplainable and emotional support." In many ways religion is like culture itself, since it provides the followers of the faith with a set of values, beliefs, and even guidelines for specific behaviors. These guidelines consciously and unconsciously impact everything from business practices (the Puritan work ethic), to politics (the link between Islam and government), to individual behavior (codes of personal ethics). This multidimensional aspect of religion, and its relationship to culture, means that to understand any culture you must also

understand how the members of that culture provide explanations for how the world operates and how they believe they fit into that process.

3. 2. 2. History

Over two thousand years ago the Roman orator Cicero remarked, “History provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.” Cicero was correct; all cultures believe in the idea that history provides stories about the past that serve as lessons on how to live in the present. These stories also help cement people into what is called “a common culture.” This “common culture” creates a strong sense of identity. As these descriptions of significant historical events get transmitted from generation to generation, people begin to perceive “where they belong” and where their loyalties lie. These stories of the past also provide members of a culture with large portions of their values and rules for behavior. History highlights the culture’s origins, “tells” its members what is deemed important, and identifies the accomplishments of the culture of which they can be proud. While all cultures use history to transmit important messages about that culture, each set of messages is unique to a particular culture. The “lessons” of the Holocaust, the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the motivation behind the building of the Great Wall of China, the Indian and Pakistani Conflict of 1947, and the events of September 11, 2001, are stories that carry a unique meaning and varied level of importance for their respective cultures. These events also help explain contemporary perceptions held by members of those cultures. In short, the study of history links the old with the new while serving as a pointer for the future.

3. 2. 3. Values

Values are another key feature of every culture. Bailey and Peoples emphasize the role values play in culture when they write, “Values are critical to the maintenance of culture as a whole because they represent the qualities that people believe are essential to continuing their way of life. It is useful to think of values as providing the ultimate standards that people believe must be upheld under practically all circumstances.” The connection between values and culture is so strong that it is hard to talk about one without discussing the other. As Macionis notes, values are “culturally defined standards of desirability, goodness, and beauty that serve as broad guidelines for social living.” The key word in any discussion of cultural values is “guidelines.” In other words, values help determine how people within a particular culture ought to behave. To the extent that cultural values differ, you can expect that participants in intercultural communication will tend to exhibit and to anticipate different behaviors under similar circumstances. For example, while all cultures value the elderly, the strength of this value is often very different as you move from culture to culture. In the Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and American Indian cultures, the elderly are highly respected and revered. They are even sought out for advice and counsel. This is in stark contrast to the United States, where the emphasis is on youth.

3. 2. 4. Social Organization

Another feature found in all cultures is what we call “social organizations.” These organizations (sometimes referred to as social systems or social structures) represent the various social units within the culture. These are institutions such as family, government, schools, tribes, and clans. The basic premise that underlies all these organizations is the need for and reality of interdependence. As Lavenda and Schultz point out, “Human interdependence means that we cannot survive as lone individuals but need to live with others.” This “living with others” means that there are patterned interactions that are “rule governed,” which all members of these organizations have learned and display. These social systems establish communication networks and regulate norms of personal, familial, and social conduct. “They also establish group cohesion and enable people to consistently satisfy their basic needs.” The ways these organizations function and the norms they advance are unique to each culture. Nolan underscores the nature of these organizations in the following illustration: “Social structures reflect our culture, for example, whether we have kings and queens, or presidents and prime ministers. Within our social structure, furthermore, culture assigns roles to the various players—expectations about how individuals will behave, what they will stand for, and even how they will dress.”

3. 2. 5. Language

Language is yet another feature that is common to all cultures. In fact, as Haviland and his associates note, “Language is fundamental to the functioning of human culture.” Language and culture are connected in a number of ways. Whether they are English, Swahili, Chinese, or French, most words, how they are used, the meanings assigned, the grammar employed, and the syntax bear the identification marks of a specific culture. Bailey and Peoples further develop the important role language plays in the existence of a culture when they write: “Language underlies every other aspect of a people’s way of life—their relationship with the natural environment, family life, political organizations, worldview, and so forth. Most socialization of children depends on language, which means language is the main vehicle of cultural transmission from one generation to the next.”

3. 3. Characteristics of Culture

We begin this section with this obvious, yet often overlooked, truism: The seven billion people in the world are both alike and different from each other. You can find that same amalgamation among cultures. While this lecture basically focuses on the differences that influence communication, it is useful to examine a series of characteristics that all cultures have in common. We believe an examination of these traits is useful for a number of reasons. First, “A careful study of these characteristics helps us to see the importance and the functions of culture itself.” Second, as we review these commonalities the strong connection between culture and communication will become apparent. Most experts agree: “The heart of culture involves language, religion, values, traditions, and customs.” These are the very topics treated throughout this lecture.

Finally, this may be the first time you have been asked to seriously look at your own culture. As Brislin points out, “People do not frequently talk about their own culture or the influence that culture has on their behavior.” Remember, most of culture is in the taken-for-granted realm and below the conscious level. Learning about culture can be an energizing awakening as you develop understanding of your actions and the actions of others. Shapiro offered much the same pep talk when he wrote: “The discovery of culture, the awareness that it shapes and molds our behavior, our values and even our ideas, the recognition that it contains some element of the arbitrary, can be a startling or an illuminating experience.

3. 3. 1. Culture is Learned

Perhaps the most important characteristic of culture is that ***it is not innate; it is learned and acquired***. Imagine what a confusing place this world must be to a newborn. After living in a peaceful environment for nine months, the infant is thrust into this novel place called “the world.” It is a world filled with sights, sounds, tastes, and other sensations that, at this stage of life, have no meaning. As the psychologist William James notes, what greets the newborn is a bubbling, babbling mass of confusion. From the moment of birth to the end of life you seek to overcome that confusion and make sense of the world. It is culture that assists you in that sense-making process. “When an infant is born, he or she enters a cultural environment in which many solutions already exist to the universal problems facing the human population. The child merely needs to learn or internalize those solutions in order to make a reasonable adjustment to his or her surroundings.” In some ways this entire lecture is about how and what members of particular cultures have learned, and how that “learning” might influence intercultural communication.

When we speak of “learning,” we are using the word in a rather broad sense. We are talking about both informal and formal learning. ***Informal learning*** is often very subtle and normally takes place through interaction (your parents kiss you and you learn about kissing—whom, when, and where to kiss), observation (you observe your parents kneeling at church and learn about correct behavior in a religious setting), and imitation (you laugh at the same jokes your parents laugh at and you learn about humor).

The ***formal*** teaching of a culture is far more structured and is often left to the various social institutions of the culture, such as schools, mosques and churches. When a school system teaches computer skills, American history, or mathematics, it is giving the members of a culture the tools and information the culture deems important. When a child has a Sunday school lesson focusing on the Ten Commandments, he or she is learning about ethical behavior. As you might expect, it is often difficult to distinguish between informal and formal learning, since culture influences you from the instant you are born. In addition, much of cultural learning is subconscious, and in most instances you are rarely aware of many of the messages that it sends. This unconscious or hidden dimension of culture leads many researchers to claim that culture is invisible. There is even a well-respected book about culture by Edward T. Hall, titled *The Hidden Dimension*.

The title is intended to call attention to the important premise that the “messages” and “lessons” of culture are so subtle that you seldom see them “coming in” or getting acted out. Most of you would have a

difficult time pointing to a specific event or experience that taught you to stand when an important person enters the room or how to employ direct eye contact during a job interview. The roles of silence and space, the importance of attractiveness, your view of aging, your ability to speak one language instead of another, your preference for activity over meditation, or your preference for using one mode of behavior over another when dealing with conflict are all rooted in culture. Try to isolate where you learned what is considered "cool" in your culture. You might be able to point to what you think is "cool," but telling someone how you learned to be "cool" would be a near-impossible task.

While you could readily recognize how you learned to solve a specific chemistry problem, you would have a much harder time with your culture's more subtle "teachings." Reflect for a moment on the learning that is taking place in the following examples:

- A young boy in the United States whose grandfather reminds him to shake hands when he is introduced to a friend of the family is learning good manners.
- An Arab father who reads the Koran to his daughter and son is teaching the children about God.
- An Indian child who lives in a home where the women eat after the men is learning gender roles.
- A Jewish child who helps conduct the Passover ceremony is learning about traditions.
- A Japanese girl who attends tea ceremony classes is learning about patience, self-discipline, and ritual.
- A fourth-grade student watching a film on George Washington crossing the Delaware River is learning about patriotism and fortitude.

In these examples, people are learning their culture through various forms of communication. That is why, earlier in this lecture, we said that culture is communication and communication is culture. Wood establishes this important link between culture and communication when she writes, "We learn a culture's views and patterns in the process of communicating. As we interact with others, we come to understand the beliefs, values, norms, and language of our culture." A number of points should be clear by now. First, learning cultural perceptions, rules, and behaviors usually takes place without your being aware of it. Second, the essential messages of a culture get reinforced and repeated. Third, you learn your culture from a large variety of sources, with family, schools, church, mosque, and community being the four most powerful institutions of culture. Let us look at a few of the specific ways those institutions "teach" their most essential messages.

3. 3. 2. Learning Culture through Proverbs

Even before a very young child can read, he or she is hearing "lessons about life" transmitted through proverbs. "Whether called maxims, truisms, clichés, idioms, expressions, or sayings, proverbs are small packages of truth about a people's values and beliefs." Proverbs are so important to a culture that there are even proverbs about proverbs. A German proverb states: "A country can be judged by the quality of its proverbs." And the Yoruba of Africa teach that "A wise man who knows proverbs, reconciles difficulties." Both of these proverbs emphasize the idea that you can learn about a people through their proverbs. These

proverbs—communicated in colorful, vivid language, and with very few words— reflect the wisdom, biases, and even superstitions of a culture.

Proverbs are learned easily and repeated with great regularity. Because they are brief (a line or two), their influence as "teachers" is often overlooked. Yet, many religious traditions use proverbs to express important messages about life. The Proverbs in the Old Testament represent a collection of moral sayings and "wisdom" intended to assist the reader to behave in a particular and honorable way. Chinese philosophers such as Confucius, Mencius, Chung Tzu, and Lao-tzu also used proverbs and maxims to express their thoughts to their disciples. These proverbs survive so that each generation can learn what a culture deems significant. "Proverbs reunite the listener with his or her ancestors." Seidensticker notes that "proverbs say things that people think important in ways that people remember. They express common concerns." The value of proverbs as a reflection of a culture is further underscored by the fact that "interpreters at the United Nations prepare themselves for their extremely sensitive job by learning proverbs of the foreign language" that they will be interpreting. As Mieder notes, "Studying proverbs can offer insights into a culture's worldview regarding such matters as education, law, business, and marriage." Roy offers a summary as to why understanding cultural proverbs is a valuable tool for students of intercultural communication. "Examination of these orally transmitted traditional values offers an excellent means of learning about another culture because these over-repeated sayings fuse past, present, and future. These sayings focus our attention on basic principles accepted within the culture."

Because all people, regardless of their culture, share common experiences, many of the same proverbs appear throughout the world. For example, in nearly every culture some degree of thrift and hard work is stressed. Hence, in Germany the proverb states, "One who does not honor the penny is not worthy of the dollar." In the United States people are told, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Because they value silence, the Chinese have a proverb that says: "Loud thunder brings little rain." Taking responsibility for one's actions is also a universal value. Hence, in English, it is "God helps those who help themselves." For Indians, the proverb is "Call on God, but row away from the rocks." However, our concern is not with the commonality of cultural proverbs, but rather the use of these proverbs to teach lessons that are unique to that particular culture. By examining some of these proverbs you will be able to accomplish two purposes at once. First, you will discover the power of proverbs as a teaching device. Second, an examination of proverbs will help you learn about other cultures' worldviews, beliefs, values, and communication patterns.

The following are but a few of the hundreds of proverbs and sayings from the United States, each of which attempts to instruct about an important value held by the dominant culture.

- **Time is money; Strike while the iron is hot, Actions speak louder than words, and He who hesitates is lost.** These proverbs underscore the idea that, in the United States, people who do not waste time and make quick decisions are highly valued.

- **God helps those who help themselves, Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and No pain, no gain.** These three sayings highlight the strong belief held in America that people should show individual initiative and never give up.
- **A man's home is his castle.** This expression not only tells us about the value of privacy, but also demonstrates the male orientation in the United States by implying that the home belongs to the man.
- **The squeaky wheel gets the grease.** In the United States people are encouraged to be direct, speak up, and make sure their views are heard.

The following are a few proverbs from some non-U.S. cultures. While we could have selected thousands of proverbs to illustrate our point about the link between these sayings and the teaching of key elements of a culture, we have selected but a few that stress important values associated with intercultural communication.

- Many cultures prefer **silence** over an abundance of talk. They believe silence is associated with wisdom. Tanzanian: *The wisest animal is the giraffe; it never speaks.* Thai: *A wise man talks a little, an ignorant one talks much*. Peruvian: *From the tree of silence hangs the fruit of tranquility.* Hopi Indian: *Eating little and speaking little can hurt no man.*
- Respect for the wisdom of the **elderly** is found in many collective cultures. Chinese: *To know the road ahead, ask those coming back*. Spanish: *The devil knows more because he's old than because he's the devil.* Portuguese: *The old man is the one who makes good food.* Greek: *The old age of an eagle is better than the youth of a sparrow.* Nigerian: *What an old man will see while seated, a small child cannot see even standing.*
- Many cultures teach the value of **collectivism** and **group solidarity** over individualism. Chinese: *A single bamboo pole does not make a raft.* Ethiopian: *When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion*. Japanese: *A single arrow is easily broken, but not ten in a bundle*. Russian: *You can't tie a knot with one hand.* Brazilian: *One bird alone does not make a flock.* For many cultures there is the belief that **fate**, rather than one's own devices, controls much of life. Japanese: *One does not make the wind, but is blown by it*. Spanish: *Since we cannot get what we like, let us like what we can get*. Mexican: *Man proposes and God disposes*. Or, *I dance to the tune that is played*.
- Cultures that place a premium on **education** use proverbs to assist in the teaching of this important value. Jewish: *A table is not blessed if it has fed no scholars*. Chinese: *If you are planning for a year, sow rice: if you are planning for a decade, plant a tree; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.*
- Some cultures stress **social harmony** over direct confrontation. Chinese: *A harsh word dropped from the tongue cannot be brought back by a coach and six horses*. Japanese: *The spit aimed at the sky comes back to one*. Korean: *Kick a stone in anger and harm your own foot.*

- **Privacy** is a key value is some cultures. Here again you can observe the use of proverbs to teach that value. German: *Sweep only in front of your own door*. Swedish: *He who stirs another's porridge often burns his own*.

3. 3. 3. Learning Culture through Folktales, Legend, and Myths

While the words *folktales*, *legends*, and *myths* have slightly different meanings, we use the three words interchangeably because they all deal with narratives that are intended to transmit the important messages each culture seeks to teach its members. "Often such tales are described as 'cultural history.'" These "tales" are frequently simple morality lessons focusing on good and evil and right and wrong. However, in many instances "Myths, legends, and folktales also provide a way of addressing the existential questions people have asked throughout time." Hence, these stories "are designed to explain some of the really big issues of human existence such as where we came from, why we are here and how we can account for the things in our world." These three narrative forms are used in a variety of settings (such as at home, in school, and at church), at all stages of language development (oral, written, etc.), and at each stage of life (infancy, childhood, and adulthood).

The customs, traditions, and beliefs expressed in folktales link people to their history and root them to their past. Thus, "these cultural components are passed on through generations in the retelling of the tales." Rodriguez mentions some of the specific purposes of these stories that help contribute to their longevity: "Folktales are not only regarded as some of the best keepers of our language and cultural memories, they are also great helpers in the process of socialization, they teach our children the sometimes difficult lessons about how to interact with other people and what happens when virtues are tested or pitted against one another." Whether it tells of Pinocchio's nose growing longer because of his lies, Columbus's daring voyage, Captain Ahab's heroics as he seeks to overcome the power of nature, Abraham Lincoln learning to read by drawing letters on a shovel by the fireside, Robin Hood helping the poor, or Davy Crockett as the courageous frontiersman fighting to save the Alamo, folklore constantly reinforces important cultural lessons. In passing, observe that some of these lessons are very subtle. Notice as an example, the built-in gender bias in these few examples. In each story, males are the main characters and heroes. When females appear in cultural stories ("Cinderella," "Snow White," "Little Red Riding Hood," and many others), they are often portrayed as submissive and docile.

The stories that are passed from generation to generation are entertaining and captivating, but in nearly all cases they are also used to stress moral messages. Americans revere the tough, independent, fast-shooting cowboy of the Old West; the Japanese learn about the importance of duty, obligation, and loyalty from "The Tale of the Forty-Seven Ronin"; and the Sioux Indians use the legend of "Pushing up the Sky" to teach that people can accomplish much if they work together. For the Australian Aborigines, the tale of "The Secret Dreaming" is the story of why the land is sacred and how people are the caretakers of that land. Scandinavian children are confronted with an endless array of strange looking trolls as they listen to and

read stories such as “The Boys Who Met the Trolls in Hedal Woods.” In each story they encounter the trolls and learn lessons for life, ranging from the importance of brushing their teeth to never telling a lie. Mexican mothers and grandmothers tell the Mayan folktale, “The Story of Mariano the Buzzard,” to teach children to work hard and not be lazy. And the Chinese folktale, “The Taoist Priest of Lao-Shan,” teaches young children how giving in to temptation results in a great deal of humiliation.56

A common theme in many folktales and myths is the superhero, usually a male protagonist who defends family and country. The United States is not the only country with characters such as Superman, Spiderman, and The Ironman. The Irish still admire the mythical warrior Cu Chulainn. In one of his most famous exploits he single-handedly fights the armies of Queen Mebh of Connacht and wins the battle that saves Ulster. Greeks learn about Hercules, Jews learn about Samson, and Norwegians learn about Thor. In Zaire, children are told the Myth of Invincibility. In this tale, young boys learn that if they wrap green vines around their heads, their enemies’ weapons cannot hurt them.57 Shiite Muslims pass on a seventh century story of how the Prophet Muhammad’s grandson, knowing he was going to die, fought to his death. In the story of Hanukkah it is told how, in the second century, a small band of Jews defeated a much larger army. That historic victory, known as the Maccabean Revolt, is commemorated even today with festive religious and family events. Heroic feats are also at the core of the story of Mexico’s *Cinco de Mayo*, celebrated as a national holiday. Here the historical story tells how on May 5, 1862, a small Mexican armed force defeated a much larger and better-equipped invading French force. In each of these stories, as Ferraro points out, “The heroes and heroines who triumph in folktales do so because of their admirable behavior and character traits.”

As we have been indicating, stories can tell you about what was, and still is, important to a group of people. Erdoes and Ortiz make this same point as they write of stories in American Indian culture: “They are also magic lenses through which we can glimpse social orders and daily life: how families were organized, how political structures operated, how men caught fish, how religious ceremonies felt to the people who took part, how power was divided between men and women, how food was prepared, how honor in war was celebrated.” We conclude this section on myths, folktales, and legends by reminding you that they are found in every culture and deal with ideas that matter most to that culture— ideas about life, death, relationships, and nature. Because these stories offer clues to culture, Campbell urges you not only to understand your story but also to read other people’s myths. We strongly concur with Campbell: When you study the myths of a culture, you are studying that culture.

3. 3. 4. Learning Culture through Arts

It has been suggested that art is a mirror image of a society. Historians and anthropologists would agree that art is a powerful influence on all cultures. You saw that during the demonstrations in Egypt in 2011. At that time thousands of people surrounded Egypt’s most famous museums in an effort to save the country’s national treasures. Egyptians engaged in this action out of a deep sense of cultural pride. During World War II, the importance of art to a culture was illustrated when the occupying forces of Germany and

Russia looted each other's national art treasures. Each side believed that by destroying the art of a people you were, in part, destroying that culture. So important is art to a country's history and identity that in 2010, Egypt, Greece, and Italy launched an international campaign to retrieve their cultural treasures taken by the German government during WWII. And in an essay titled "Understanding America through Art," George Will praises the travelling art exhibition sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities called "Picturing America" as a way for Americans to understand "the nation's past and present."

Since the beginning of history, art has provided a reflection of how a collection of people saw the world. The earliest Egyptian, Roman, Greek, Chinese, and Mayan artworks tell a story of how those people lived, what they valued, and even their worldview. The scrawling on ancient cave walls informs us of what people were thinking and feeling thousands of years ago. Long before people could read, it was art that recorded and carried the crucial messages about a culture. Simply take a trip to any museum in the world and you will see how art, be it painting or sculpture, is not only a creative expression of beauty, it is also a method of passing on the culture. It is as if artists tell you stories about their culture. Strickland highlights the critical effect of these "stories" when she writes: "Art's goal can be communication or expression, a way of interacting with and trying to make sense of the world. All art grows out of a specific climate and culture, giving expression to the ideas and emotions of a particular time and place." Nanda underscores Strickland's idea that culture and art are linked by noting that "art forms do not merely reflect a society and its culture, but also heighten cultural integration by displaying and confirming the values that members of a society hold in common…. The arts make dominant cultural themes visible, tangible, and thus more real."

Having established the nexus between culture and art, we offer a few examples to illustrate our point. We begin with African art and mention two major themes depicted in their art—children and nature. According to Ferraro and Andreatta, much of the art of Africa reflects the important social value of having children. Hence, "prominent breasts on female figures are a major theme in much of the wood sculptures from West Africa." You can observe nature's role in the symbolic art of Africa by looking at masks, figures, and jewelry. Here you will see a great many animals on display. These objects demonstrate a strong belief that everything in nature is related and alive. For centuries, the Chinese have seen the connection between art and the transmission of cultural values. The Chinese have long "thought of art as a means of reminding people of the great examples of virtue in the golden ages of the past." You can learn about one of those Chinese virtues by examining the subject matter of Chinese paintings. In Asian cultures most art depicts objects, animals, and landscapes, rather than focusing on people. It even attempts to highlight spiritual concerns. According to Hunter and Sexton, Chinese art often represents "Buddhist and Taoist concerns with the mind in meditation, with the relative insignificance of human striving in the great cosmos, and with the beauty of nature." American and European art, however, often emphasizes people. Whether in portraits of a single person or pictures of an entire family, people are the main focus. This disparity reflects a difference in views: Asians believe that nature is more powerful and important than a single individual, whereas, Americans and Europeans consider the individual to be at the center of the universe. In addition, in Western

art the artist tries to create a personal message. This is not the case with most Asian artists. As Campbell notes, “Such ego-oriented thinking is alien completely to the Eastern life, thought, and religiosity.” The rule of the Asian artist is not to “innovate or invent.”

As already indicated, art is a relevant symbol, a forceful teacher, and an avenue for transmitting cultural values. We need only look at the art on totem poles to see what matters to American Indians of the northwestern United States. The carvings on these poles chronicle how deeply these people are concerned about their ancestors, family, history, identity, wildlife, and nature. “Erected in front of the homes of chiefs, these poles are inscribed with symbols that are visual reminders of the social hierarchy.” This Indian art, whose purpose is to tell stories, is very different from the art of Islam. Since the Koran forbids the depiction of human figures; calligraphy, geometric designs, pottery, and carpets are esteemed fine art. Even inscriptions from the Koran are a form of art. It should be clear from our brief discussion of art that “through the cross-cultural study of art—myths, songs, dances, paintings, carvings, and so on—we may discover much about different worldviews and religious beliefs, as well as political ideas, social values, kinship structures, economic relations, and historical memory.”

3. 3. 5. Learning Culture through Mass Media

Obviously, this is not a lecture about mass media or folktales or art. We examine mass media simply as a way of calling your attention to the many “teachers” and “messages” used to pass on culture. When we speak of mass media, we are talking about those media that are created, designed, and used to reach very large audiences. The impact of these devices on a population, particularly young people who are learning about culture, is now common knowledge. While mass media are used for a host of reasons, we are concerned with this mode of communication as a purveyor of culture. Wood amplifies this view when she writes, “Mass media is a major source of information and about who we are and should be, and we form impressions of people, events, issues and cultural life.” As a means of presenting this “cultural life,” mass media transmit images and stories that contribute to a sense of cultural identity while at the same time shaping beliefs and values. Mass media are, as Williams notes, “mass social learning.”

The over-abundance of media in daily life is perhaps most evident when applied to young people. A report by the Kaiser Family Foundation highlights the overwhelming number of cultural messages young people receive in the following summary: Two-thirds of infants and toddlers watch a screen an average of two hours a day. Kids under age 6 watch an average of 2 hours a day of screen media, primarily TV and videos or DVDs. Kids and teens 8-18 years spend nearly 4 hours a day in front of a TV screen and almost two additional hours on a computer (outside of schoolwork) playing video games estimated that by the time a student graduates from the twelfth grade he or she will have spent more time watching television than in the classroom. It is easy to understand how these images affect attitudes and perceptions toward leisure time, gender, sexuality, race, the elderly, and drugs and alcohol. In blatant and in subtle terms children are told what is and is not important. Delgado offers a summary of the power of mass media outlets by noting that

they “help constitute our daily lives by shaping our experiences and providing the content for much of what we talk about (and how we talk) at the interpersonal level.”

Perhaps the clearest explanation of the role mass media plays in learning about culture is found in Cultivation Theory, which was developed by Gerbner and Gross. This theory is directly linked to the learning of culture, since at its heart is the idea that television helps shape future perceptions. Specifically, the theory asserts that over time television fosters the viewers’ notion of reality. The words “over time” are important to Cultivation Theory since “the greater the amount of television you watch, the more your worldview comes to accord with the beliefs, values, and attitudes you see on the screen.” Because the messages you receive are so diverse, and come from a host of sources, it is difficult to make a direct cause-and-effect link to television’s role in the socialization process. Yet there are thousands of studies that attempt to document the part television plays in the life of young children. The Kaiser Family Foundation and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry offer the following summary of how television viewing among young children gets reflected in their perceptions of the world.

Extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness. In addition, children who watch more than four hours of TV a day have lower grades in school and are often overweight. Television viewing takes the place of activities such as playing with friends, being physically active, reading, and doing homework. Gender roles are also learned and reinforced by mass media. Although there are many exceptions, most studies reveal that in the United States men are valued over women. Women are seen as caring, emotional, socially skilled, and family oriented, while men are taken to possess the opposite set of traits. These same characteristics are stressed by most of the mass media.

We conclude our description of the initial, and perhaps most important characteristic of culture, by reminding you of a few key points. First, children are born without any cultural knowledge. However, because they have the biological “tools” necessary to learn, they quickly discover that the sounds and actions around them have meaning. The same learning process applies to the cultural attributes and characteristics that confront them. In short, the location of your birth sets the tone for what you learn and what you will not learn. Second, most of the behaviors we label as “cultural” are automatic, invisible, and usually performed without our being aware of them. For example, in North American culture, women “are more likely than men to initiate hugs and touch that express support, affection, and comfort, whereas men more often use touch to direct others, assert power, and express sexual interest.” What we are suggesting is that these—and thousands of other behaviors—are learned consciously and unconsciously and are performed almost habitually. Third, it is important to repeat that the methods of learning culture we have mentioned are only a few of the many ways culture “is taught.” Space constraints have forced us to leave out many subtle yet powerful “teachers.” For example, sports are much more than simple games.

Football in America is popular because it illustrates important themes of the culture. Notice the inconspicuous messages contained in some of the language surrounding the broadcasting of a professional football game. You will hear statements such as “he has the killer instinct,” “they are all warriors,” “he is a

real head hunter," "they are out for blood," and "they all play smash-mouth football." You can observe in every culture a variety of activities that have significant meanings that go beyond the actual endeavor. There are "lessons being taught" by Spanish bullfighting, Japanese gardens, French wine, German symphonies, and Italian operas. These cultural metaphors represent and teach, according to Gannon, "the underlying values expressive of the culture itself.

3. 3. 6. Culture is based on Symbols

Our discussion of how culture is transmitted from generation to generation allows for an easy transition to our next characteristic—*culture is based on symbols*. The relationship between culture and symbols is made apparent by Ferraro when he writes, "symbols tie together people who otherwise might not be part of a unified group." Bailey and Peoples expand on the link between symbols and culture in the following: Just as we learn norms and values as we grow up, we learn the meanings that people in our culture attach to symbols. The understandings people share about symbols and their meaning affect the patterns of behavior found in a culture. In fact, if individuals did not agree that certain kinds of behaviors communicate certain meanings; social interaction would be far more difficult than it usually is.

The portability of symbols allows people to package, store, and transmit them. The mind, books, pictures, films, computer memory chips, and videos enable a culture to preserve what it deems important and worthy of transmission. This makes each individual, regardless of his or her generation, heir to a massive repository of information that has been gathered and maintained in anticipation of his or her entry into the culture. Cultural symbols, as we have noted, can take a host of forms, encompassing gestures, dress, objects, flags, and religious icons. However, it is words, both written and spoken, that are most often used to symbolize objects and thoughts. Notice the link between symbols and culture in the definition of the word *symbol* advanced by Macionis: "A symbol is anything that carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share culture."

It is language that enables you to share the speculations, observations, facts, experiments, and wisdom accumulated over thousands of years—what the linguist Weinberg called "the grand insights of geniuses which, transmitted through symbols, enable us to span the learning of centuries." Bates and Plog offer an excellent summary of the importance of language to culture: Language thus enables people to communicate what they would do if such-and-such happened, to organize their experiences into abstract categories ("a happy occasion," for instance, or an "evil omen"), and to express thoughts never spoken before. Morality, religion, philosophy, literature, science, economics, technology, and numerous other areas of human knowledge and belief—along with the ability to learn about and manipulate them— all depend on this type of higher-level communication. So important are symbols to the study of intercultural communication that we have set aside in lecture of verbal and nonverbal communication (verbal messages) and (nonverbal messages) to further develop this connection between symbols and human behavior and culture.

3. 3. 8. Culture is an Integrated System

Throughout this lecture we have isolated various aspects of culture and talked about them as if they were discrete units. The nature of language makes it impossible to do otherwise; yet in reality, it is more accurate to perceive culture from a holistic perspective. Hall says it this way: "You touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected." Ferraro and Andreatta expand on Hall's premise when they point out that "cultures should be thought of as integrated wholes, the parts of which, to some degree, are interconnected with one another. When we view cultures as integrated systems, we can begin to see how particular cultural traits fit into the whole system and consequently, how they tend to make sense *within that context*."

Values regarding materialism stem from a variety of sources (history, family, and religion) and can influence family size, work ethic, use of time, and spiritual pursuits. A complex example of the interconnectedness of cultural elements is the civil rights movement of the United States in the 1960s. This movement brought about changes in housing patterns, discrimination practices, educational opportunities, the legal system, and career opportunities. In more recent times, in the last decade of the twentieth century you can observe how the convergence of "new technologies" mingled with a host of other cultural values, attitudes, and behaviors. Modes of communication brought about by digital technology and the Internet has produced and influenced issues concerning privacy, language, and the use of face to- face communication.

We conclude this section on the characteristics of culture by reminding you that the pull of culture begins at birth and continues throughout life—and some cultures say even after life. Using the standard language of her time (sexist by today's standards), the famous anthropologist Ruth Benedict offered an excellent explanation of why culture is such a powerful influence on all aspects of human behavior. What is intriguing about Professor Benedict's quote is that although she wrote it over sixty years ago, it is as true today as it was then. Actually, it would be accurate if she were describing events forty thousand years ago. The life history of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in his community. From the moment of his birth the customs into which he is born shape his experience and behavior. By the time he can talk, he is the little creature of his culture, and by the time he is grown and able to take part in its activities, its habits are his habits, its beliefs his beliefs, its impossibilities his impossibilities. Every child that is born into his group will share them with him, and no child born into the opposite side of the globe can ever achieve the thousandth part.

The important point to take away from our entire discussion of culture is eloquently expressed in the following sentences: "God gave to every people a cup, a cup of clay, and from this cup they drank life.... They all dipped in the water, but their cups were different." This lecture is turning around about how those "different cups" influence how people perceive the world and behave in that world.

3. 3. 9. Culture is shared

Your culture is shared with other people who have been exposed to similar experiences. While your personal experiences and genetic heritage form the unique *you*, culture unites people with a collective frame of reference. "Culture is to a human collective what personality is to an individual." Nolan reaffirms this idea when he suggests that "culture is a group worldview, the way of organizing the world that a particular society has created over time. This framework or web of meaning allows the members of that society to make sense of themselves, their world, and their experiences in that world." It is this sharing of a common reality that gives people within a particular culture a common fund of knowledge, a sense of identity, shared traditions, and specific behaviors that are often distinct from other collections of people.

Haviland and his associates explain this "sharing" process: "As a shared set of ideas, values, perceptions, and standards of behavior, culture is the common denominator that makes the actions of individuals intelligible to other members of their society. It enables them to predict how other members are most likely to behave in a given circumstance, and it tells them how to react accordingly." What this sharing of experiences means is that culture allows for the behaviors of one individual to be comprehensible to the other members of that culture. Chiu and Hong offer an excellent summary of some of the activities and perceptions that grow out of a shared way of experiencing the world: Shared knowledge gives rise to shared meanings, which are carried in the shared physical environment (such as the spatial layout of a rural village, the subsistence economy) social institutions (e.g., schools, family, the workplace), social practices (e.g., division of labor), the language, conversation scripts, and other media (e.g., religious scriptures, cultural icons, folklores, idioms).

We have tried to convince you that culture is a powerful force on how people view the world and interact in that world. To further that idea let us now **(1)** define culture, **(2)** explain the basic functions of culture, **(3)** highlight the essential elements of culture, and **(4)** discuss the major characteristics of culture.

Lecture 03

3. 3. 11. Culture Defined

The preceding discussion on the topic of culture should enable you to see that culture is ubiquitous and complex. It is also difficult to define. As Harrison and Huntington note, "The term 'culture,' of course, has had multiple meanings in different disciplines and different contexts." These meanings "range from complex and fancy definitions to simple ones such as 'culture is the programming of the mind' or 'culture is the human-made part of the environment.' " The media also use the word to portray aspects of individual sophistication such as classical music, fine art, or exceptional food and wine. You also hear the words

"popular culture" when people are discussing current trends within the culture. This, of course, is not the way we use the word.

For our purposes, we are concerned with a definition that contains the recurring theme of how culture and communication are linked. One definition that meets our needs is advanced by Triandis: Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place. We are partial to this definition because it highlights the essential features of culture. First, specifying that it is "human-made" clarifies that culture is concerned with non-biological parts of human life. This distinction allows for explanations of behavior that must be learned while at the same time eliminating innate acts that are not learned (such as eating, sleeping, crying, speech mechanisms, and fear). "Second, the definition includes what can be termed "subjective" elements of culture—these include such concepts as values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and those foundational conventions most prevalent in a social order." Think for a moment of all the subjective cultural beliefs and values you hold that influence your interpretation of the world. Your views about the American flag, work, immigration, freedom, aging, ethics, dress, property rights, etiquette, healing and health, death and mourning, play, law, individualism, magic and superstition, modesty, sexual taboos, status differentiation, courtship, formality and informality, and bodily adornment are all part of your cultural membership. Finally, the definition also calls attention to the importance of language as a symbol system that allows culture to be transmitted and shared. This means that a collection of people has established not only a set of symbols, but rules for using those symbols.

3. 4. The Functions of Culture

Perhaps at this stage in our discussion about culture it is wise to ask the following question: *What are the basic functions of culture?* In its most uncomplicated sense, culture, for over forty thousand years until today, is intended to make life unproblematic for people by "teaching" them how to adapt to their surroundings. The English writer Fuller echoed the same idea in rather simple terms when he wrote, "Culture makes all things easy." A more detailed explanation as to the functions of culture is offered by Sowell: Cultures exist to serve the vital, practical requirements of human life—to structure a society so as to perpetuate the species, to pass on the hard-learned knowledge and experience of generations past and centuries past to the young and inexperienced in order to spare the next generation the costly and dangerous process of learning everything all over again from scratch through trial and error—including fatal errors.

Culture serves a basic need by laying out a somewhat predictable world in which each individual is firmly grounded. It thus enables you to make sense of your surroundings by offering a blueprint of not only how to behave but also what results you can anticipate for that behavior. While people in every culture might deviate from this blueprint, they at least know what their culture expects from them. Try to imagine a single day in your life without the guidelines of your culture. From how to earn a living, to how an economic

system works, to how to greet strangers, to explanations of illness and death, to how to find a mate, culture provides you with structure and direction.

4. Communication

If this lecture were only about culture we would not be compelled to begin our analysis by turning first to the subject of human communication. However, because the study of intercultural communication is the study of culture *and* communication, we begin by examining communication and then move to the area of culture. Although considering communication first and culture second might seem arbitrary; it is not. Our rationale for the order is rather straightforward: *To understand intercultural interaction, you must first recognize the role of communication in that process.* Communication—our ability to share our ideas and feelings—is the basis of all human contact. This notion is eloquently stated by Keating: "Communication is powerful: It brings companions to our side or scatters our rivals, reassures or alerts children, and forges consensus or battle lines between us."1 Whether people live in a city in Canada, in a village in India, on a farm in Kazakhstan, or in the Amazon rain forests of Brazil, they all employ the same activity when they attempt to share their thoughts and feelings with others. While the verbal and nonverbal symbols people utilize might sound and look different, the reasons people communicate tend to be the same. To further highlight the importance of human communication, let us look at some of those reasons.

4. 1. The Structure of Communication

The world of communication is divided into three parts: **(1)** words, **(2)** material things, and **(3)** behaviors. E.T. Hall notes that "words are the medium of business, politics, and diplomacy. Material things are usually indicators of status and power. Behavior provides feedback on how others feel and includes techniques for avoiding confrontation**.** G. Miller and M. Steinberg assume that "when people communicate, they make predictions about the effects, or outcomes, of their communication behaviors; that is, they choose among various communicative strategies on the basis of predictions about how the person receiving the message will respond". Awareness of making predictions differs with the degree to which we are aware of alternative outcomes of interactions. In making predictions, interlocutors rely on their knowledge of past events and expectations about future events**.**

Communication is the reflection and expression of the intentions and behavior through words. It is essential for cross-cultural communication to be effective for personnel to cooperate in a diverse environment successfully. While communicating it is necessary to answer some questions such as **(1)** *who communicate?* **(2)** *To whom?* **(3)** *What is communicated?* (4) *How is communicated?* **(5)** *Where is communicated?* (6) *When is communicated?* And (7) *why is communicated?* The answers to these questions will help us to improve our communication skills.

Communication skills that are necessary for a student, a foreign language student one as well, are the following: **(1)** transmitting instructions, **(2)** giving directions, **(3)** reporting, **(4)** eliciting information and

opinions, **(5)** resolving conflicts, **(6)** generating enthusiasm, **(7)** motivating, **(8)** negotiating, and **(9)** listening. Communication and communication skills are strictly connected with the process of communication and communication models presented further.

4. 2. Communication Models

The **process of communication** is well known to many of us. A message is sent by the sender through a communication channel to one or more receivers. The sender encodes the message into a form that is appropriate to the communication channel, and the receiver then decodes the message to understand its meaning and significance. To understand the communication situation, it is necessary to answer five basic questions such as **(1)** *who?* **(2)** *What?* **(3)** *To whom?* **(4)** *How? /what channel?* And **(5)** *with what result for?* (*What is the result?*). Figure 1 below illustrates the basic communication model.

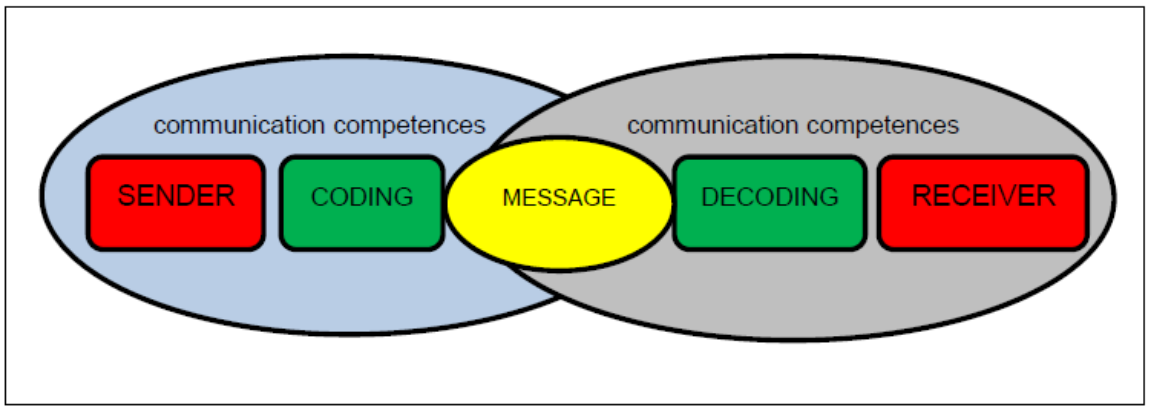

Figure 1: The Process of Communication

The next communication model (see Figure 2 below) shows the communication from the sender to the receiver and back – from the receiver, who is the sender now, to the sender, who becomes the receiver. While encoding and decoding they negotiate the meaning. "The primary function of the exchange of messages is the reduction of uncertainty". It is not a linear process. It is a circular one. Communication is almost always complex, two-way processes with the communicators sending and receiving messages to and from each other simultaneously. Communication is an interactive process. Feedback plays a significant role in the process of communication as well. Both the sender and the receiver exchange their roles. Unfortunately, they cannot play both roles at the same time.

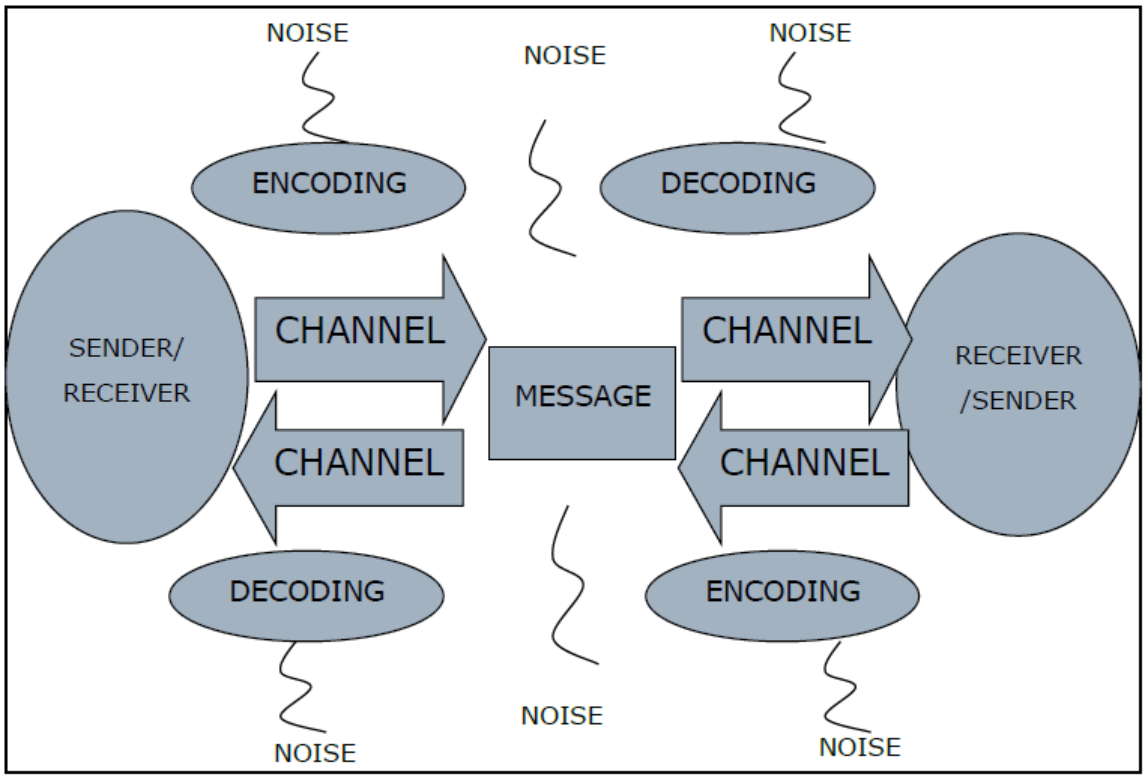

Figure 2: Communication Process Exchanges

In the communication process there are elements such as **(1)** the context (the communication conditions), **(2)** the communicators (the sender and the receiver), **(3)** a message (encoded feelings, emotions, and thoughts), **(4)** the channel (the way between the sender and the receiver), and **(5)** feedback (the receiver's reaction to the sender's message after decoding it). The context can refer to **(1)** physical aspects, **(2)** historical aspects, **(3)** physiological aspects, and **(4)** cultural aspects. There are five channels such as hearing (verbal), sight, smell, taste and touch. Feedback is usually direct and indirect. The direct one is experienced at once. The following section presents components of communication in details.

4. 3. The Components of Communication

The brevity of our definition has forced us to omit important specifics regarding how communication operates in real-life. Some of those specifics contribute a more complete understanding of how communication operates when people attempt to share what they know, what they want to know, and how they feel. In addition, because of limitations inherent in all definitions, it might seem from our definition that communication is a linear process with each phase of the interaction progressing as one thing happens at a time. This false notion fails to portray human interaction accurately. In most instances the eight stages of communication that make up the components occur almost simultaneously. An awareness of the interacting components promotes understanding the way communication functions when people exchange ideas and feelings.

4. 3. 1. Source

We begin with the *source*—a person who has an idea, feeling, experience, etc., that they wish to share with another person. The source, as well as the other person, send and receive messages, since communication is an interactive process. Put in slightly different terms, while you are sending messages you are also observing the messages being generated by your communication partner.

4. 3. 2. Encoding

Because what you are feeling and thinking cannot be shared directly (no direct mind to- mind contact), you must rely on symbolic representations of your internal states. This brings us to our second component—*encoding.* Encoding is an internal activity. It occurs when the source creates a message through the selection of verbal or nonverbal symbols. By employing vocabulary, rules of grammar, and syntax that are relevant to the sender's language, he or she attempts to symbolize what is going on inside them. What this means is that while the process of converting feelings into words and actions is universal, the words and actions selected and how they are strung together have their origins in the culture of the language being used. A member of one culture observes a close friend and makes a decision to smile, whereas, a member of another culture places their hands in front of their chest and slightly bows in the direction of their friend.

4. 3. 3. Messages

Encoding as a component leads to the production of the *message,* which is a set of written, pictorial, verbal, and/or nonverbal symbols that represent a source's particular state of being at a specific moment. While encoding is an internal act (finding a code that represents a personalized reality), the sending of messages is an external undertaking—it is the subject matter to be communicated.

4. 3. 4. Channel

Messages must have a means of moving from person to person. It is the *channel* that provides that necessary connection. The channel can take a variety of forms. For instance, as you read this book, the words on the printed page constitute our message, while the printing on these pages is the channel. Channels, in face-to-face interaction, are sights and sounds. However, channels can include a host of types of media. From television to the Internet, messages get moved from place to place.

4. 3. 5. Receiver

After a message has been generated and moved along through a channel, it must encounter a *receiver*. The receiver is the person who takes the message into account, and thereby is directly linked to the source. Receivers may be those whom the source intended to interact with or they may be other people who, for whatever reason, came in contact with the source's message.

4. 3. 6. Decoding

In the next stage of the communication process the receiver *decodes* the message. This operation (the converting of external stimuli to meaningful interpretations) is akin to the source's act of encoding, since

both are an internal activity. The decoding process within the receiver is often referred to as *information processing.* In this stage the receiver attributes meaning to the behaviors generated by the sender.

4. 3. 7. Feedback

When you send a message to another person you usually perceive the response that person makes to your actions. That response may be words, a nonverbal reaction, or even silence. It matters little; what is important is that your message produced some response that you took into account. The perception of the response to your message is called *feedback.* Feedback typically has two stages. First, it applies to the reactions you obtain from your communication partner. Second, in most instances you use that reaction to decide what to do next. In this way feedback controls the ebb and flow of the conversation. You smile at someone. Your smile is greeted with a frown. You respond by asking, "Are you okay?"

4. 3. 8. Noise

The source is not alone in sending messages to the receiver. In actuality, every communication event is characterized by a multitude of competing stimuli. We intentionally use the word "competing" as a way of calling attention to the fact that numerous stimuli are seeking to get noticed. Among communication scholars, this notion of competing stimuli is referred to as *noise.* It is defined and explained as: "any intended or unintended stimulus that affects the fidelity of a sender's message, [and] disrupts the communication process. Noise is often thought of as interference to the communication process. Noise can be external or internal, and it can influence our ability to process information." Noise can be produced by people sitting behind you talking on a cell phone or by an air conditioner in need of servicing. Before leaving our discussion of the components of communication we offer a caveat. As you know from personal experience, trying to communicate is not a simple matter. Communication is a highly complex and multidimensional activity. Hence, our enumeration of the components of communication could be extended for the remainder of the book. Factors such as perception, gender, race, culture, motivation, illness, and communication skills, funds of knowledge, social systems, and self-concepts may all play roles in the communication experience.

4. 4. The Uses of Communication

4. 4. 1. Communication and Identity

One is born into this world without a sense of self. "Self is not innate, but is acquired in the process of communication with others." With this declaration Wood is saying that through contacts with others, information is accumulated that helps define who you are, where you belong, and where your loyalties rest. Identity is multi-dimensional, since an individual has numerous identities ranging from concepts of self, emotional ties to family, attitudes toward gender, to beliefs about one's culture. Regardless of the identity in question, notions regarding all your identities have evolved during the course of interactions with others. So important is identity to the study of cross cultural communication that this document will examine the link between identity and cultural communication.

4. 4. 2. Communication and Person Perception

Not only does communication allow gathering information about personal and cultural identity, it also assists in collecting data about other people. Personal experience reveals that when you meet someone for the first time, gathering information about that individual begins immediately. That information serves two purposes. First, it enables you to learn about the other person. Second, it assists in deciding how to present you to that person. These judgments affect everything from the discussion topics selected to whether you decide to continue the conversation or terminate it. This information, collected from both verbal and nonverbal messages, is essential in intercultural communication because in many instances you are dealing with "strangers."

4. 4. 3. Communication and Interpersonal Needs

While there might be many occasions when frustration with other people causes one to find comfort in solitude, in most instances people are social creatures; therefore, communicating with others satisfies a basic social need. Conversation with others creates an enjoyable experience as it produces a feeling of warmth and friendship. In short, communication is one of the major ways to fulfill a social component within you. This linking up with others provides a sense of inclusion and affection. Although cultures might express these feelings and emotions differently, all people, both by nature and nurture, have a need to communicate and interact with others.

4. 4. 4. Communication and Persuasion

This final function suggests that communication allows you to send verbal and nonverbal messages that can shape the behavior of other people. Adler and Proctor describe this function thusly: "Besides satisfying social needs and shaping identity, communication is the most widely used approach to satisfying what communication scholars call instrumental goals: getting others to behave in ways we want." If you take a moment to reflect on the activities of a normal day, you will discover that you engage in innumerable face-to-face situations intended to influence others. They range from selling products at work, to asking someone for directions when lost, to soliciting a higher grade from a professor, to rallying a group of friends to work for a charitable cause. In all of these instances you are using communication as a tool that allows you to exercise some degree of control over your environment. Having reviewed the purposes of communication, we are ready to define communication and to discuss some of the basic principles of communication.

4. 5. Communication Levels

Communication takes place at various levels. D. McQuail notes six levels of communication: **(1)** intrapersonal, **(2)** interpersonal, **(3)** intragroup, **(4)** intergroup, **(5)** institutional or organizational, and **(6)** mass. At the *intrapersonal* level, communication refers to processing information such as attention, perception, comprehension, recall and learning, giving meaning and possible effects on knowledge, opinion, attitude, and self-identity.

Interpersonal communication is the basic way of communicating in a society. It refers to a conversation between two interlocutors. It is a process of encoding and decoding the message between two people triggering off definite results and feedback. Face-to-face interaction is direct interpersonal communication with immediate verbal and/or nonverbal feedback. Indirect interpersonal communication is a type of communication where medium takes part in the process of exchanging information between interlocutors who do not have direct physical contact. There is neither the requirement of relationship synchronicity nor direct feedback. Verbal communication enriched primitive forms of communication and significantly influenced this level. The need to cooperate and to coexist in a group (in a family or in a tribe) initiated *intragroup* level. At these levels (interpersonal and intragroup), forms of communication and patterns of interactions were formed, the aspects of hierarchy, affiliation (degrees of attachment) and control appeared, the phenomenon of influence and the ways of transmitting information developed.

Social development allowed us to move to *intergroup* communication, which refers to interactions in large groups where direct contact is limited. There are varied kinds of communication network, based on some shared features of daily life such as an environment, a need or an activity. Communication within various associations, local communities, and unions belongs to this group. At this level the key questions concern attachment and identity, cooperation and norm formation.

At *institutional/organizational* level there are various kinds of communication network such as **(1)** the larger society at the level of region, city or town, **(2)** firm or work organizations usually very integrated within its own organizational boundaries, **(3)** the 'institution' (of education, justice, religion, social security and government). The activities of a social institution are diverse and require correlation as well as communication, following patterned routes and forms. At this level; processes of communication are formalized, control and authority are clearly defined, the roles of senders and receivers are explicitly determined comparing to lower levels of communication. Cooperation, interaction, as well as standard and norm formation play crucial roles.

The youngest and the highest level of communication is *mass* communication, which can be seen as one of several society-wide communication processes. It is the widest process of communication as the biggest number of people is involved and it is the most time-consuming nowadays. A large public communication network, depending on the mass media, reaches and involves all citizens to varying degrees. As McQuail notes in the past society-wide public networks were provided by political organizations and the church, based on a hierarchical chain of contact and shared beliefs. It employed various means of communication from formal publication to informal contacts. Mass communication is impersonal and asynchronous involving two senses – sight and hearing. The message is sent from a media source to the public using mass media as a channel that makes mass media the sender itself, as it filters and censors the message.

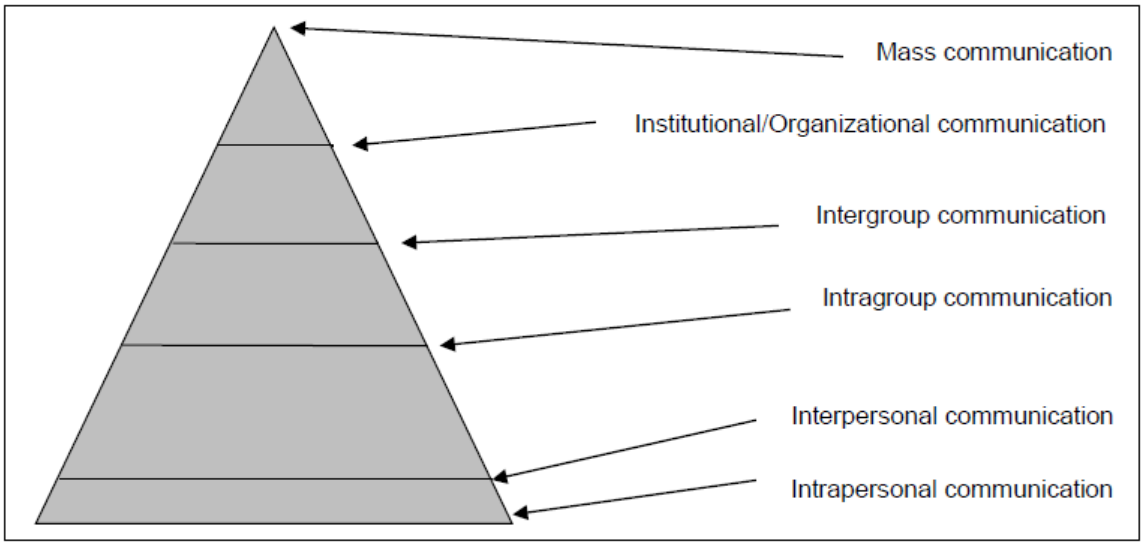

Figure 4: Levels of Communication

4. 6. Oral and Written Communication

Oral as well as written communication refers to the process in which messages are exchanged or communicated within the sender and the receiver either through word of mouth or written forms. The differences between oral and written communication are presented in the table below.

• **Written Communication**	• **Oral Communication**
▪ It has a permanent record	▪ It does not have a permanent record
▪ It takes time to give feedback	▪ It gives immediate feedback
▪ It is rigid and inflexible	▪ It is highly flexible
▪ It take s more time to prepare to transmit	▪ It takes least time to prepare and transmit
▪ It can be preserved and used in the future	▪ Preservation is less possible
▪ It involves writing and reading	▪ It involves talking and listening
▪ It conveys facts	▪ It conveys feelings and emotions
▪ It is little time urgency	▪ Time urgency
▪ It has more barriers	▪ Less barriers
▪ It is more costly	▪ Less costly

4. 7. Characteristics of Communication

Having defined communication, and briefly explained its major components, we now expand our analysis to include a discussion of the basic characteristics of communication. As was the case with our examination of definitions and components, a few introductory remarks are in order. First, communication has more characteristics than we can discuss in the next few pages. Just as a description of a forest that mentions only the trees and flowers—but omits the wildlife and lakes—does not do justice to the entire setting, our inventory is not exhaustive. We, too, are forced to leave out some of the landscape. Second, as

noted in the introduction to this section on communication, while the linear nature of language forces us to discuss one principle at a time, keep in mind that in reality the elements of communication are in continuous interaction with one another.

4. 7. 1. Communication is a Dynamic Process

You will notice that the words *dynamic process* was contained in our earlier definition of communication. The words *dynamic* and *process* were linked to remind you of a number of things about communication. First, the words indicate that communication is an ongoing activity that has no beginning or end. Put in slightly different terms, *communication is not static*. Communication is like a motion picture, not a single snapshot. A word or action does not stay frozen when you communicate. It is immediately replaced with yet another word or action. Second, communication is a dynamic process because once a word or action is produced, it cannot be retracted. Once an event takes place, that *exact* event cannot happen again. The judge who counsels the jury to "disregard the testimony just given" knows that such a mental activity is impossible. The poet T.S. Eliot said it far more eloquently when he wrote, "In the life of one person, never the same time returns." Third, the phrase *dynamic process* conveys the idea that sending and receiving messages involves a host of variables, *all in operation at the same time*. Each of the parties to the transaction is reacting to the other by seeing, listening, talking, thinking, perhaps smiling and touching the other, all at once. According to Trenholm and Jensen, "To understand communication, we have to look at how what we do and say is connected to what others do and say. We have to view communication as an ongoing process."

4. 7. 2. Communication is Symbolic

You will recall that our definition of communication mentioned the importance of symbols to human interaction. We noted that there is no direct mind-to-mind contact between people. You cannot directly access the internal thoughts and feelings of other human beings; you can only infer what they are experiencing by what you see and hear. Those inferences are drawn from the symbols people produce. *In human communication a symbol is an expression that stands for or represents something else*. Other animals may engage in some form of communication, and even make use of some symbols, but none has the unique communication capabilities found among humans. Through millions of years of physical evolution, and thousands of years of cultural development, humans are able to generate, receive, store, and manipulate symbols. This sophisticated system allows people to use symbols— be it sounds, marks on paper, letters on the screen of a cell phone, sculptures, Braille, movements, or paintings—to represent something else.

Reflect for a moment on the wonderful gift you have that allows you to hear the words, "The kittens look like cotton balls," and like magic, you have an image in your head. Because the image you conjure up for "kittens" and "cotton balls" is inside of you, it is important to remember that each person "defines" those words and phrases from their own cultural perspective. Although all cultures use symbols, they assign their own meanings to the symbols. Not only do Spanish speakers say *perro* for "dog," but the mental image they form when they hear the sound is probably quite different from the one Chinese speakers form when they

hear *goˇu*, their word for "dog." So important is the notion of symbols to the study of intercultural communication that later in this chapter, and again in Chapters 8 and 9, we will return to the topic of symbols.

4. 7. 3. Communication is Contextual

The heading declares communication is *contextual* as a way of informing you that communication does not occur in a vacuum. Communication is part of a larger system composed of many ingredients, all of which must be considered. As Littlejohn states, "Communication always occurs in a context, and the nature of communication depends in large measure on this context." What this implies is that setting and environment help determine the words and actions you generate and the meanings you give to the symbols produced by other people. Context provides what Shimanoff calls a "prescription that indicates what behavior is obligated, preferred, or prohibited." Attire, language, nonverbal behavior, topic selection, and vocabulary are all adapted to the context. Reflect for a moment on how differently you would behave in each of the following settings: a classroom, a church, a courtroom, a funeral, a wedding, a sporting event, a hospital, or a nightclub. For example, a male would not attend a university lecture, even in hot weather, without wearing a shirt. However, at a football stadium, you might find a whole row of males without shirts on (possibly with letters painted on their chests), and this would be socially acceptable. Even the words we exchange are contextual. The simple phrase, "How are you?" shifts meaning as you move from place to place and person to person. To a friend it can be a straightforward expression used as a greeting. Yet during a doctor's appointment, the same three words ("How are you?") uttered by the physician call for a detailed response regarding your physical condition. This contextualization of communication involves a number of variables we need to examine.

4. 7. 4. Location

Brief introspection should tell you that your behavior is not the same in every environment. Whether it is an auditorium, an employment interview, an upscale restaurant, a group meeting, or an office, the location of your interaction provides guidelines for your behavior. Either consciously or unconsciously, you know the prevailing rules, many of which are fixed by your culture. Most cultures, for example, have classrooms, but the rules for behavior in those classrooms are rooted in culture. In Mexico, children are encouraged to move around the room and to interact verbally and physically with their classmates. In China, students remain in their seats nearly all of the day and seldom talk to one another.

4. 7. 5. Occasion

The occasion of a communication encounter also controls the behavior of the participants. The same auditorium or sports arena can be the occasion for a graduation ceremony, concert, pep rally, convocation, dance, or memorial service. Each of these occasions calls for distinctly different forms of behavior. For example, somberness and silence are usually the rule at a solemn American Protestant funeral, while an Irish

wake calls for music, dancing, and a great deal of merriment. A pep rally or dance would be an occasion in the same sports arena venue for raucous activity and much movement.

4. 7. 6. Time

Time is another crucial element that can influence the communication event. Yet the influence of time on communication is so subtle that its impact is often overlooked. To understand this concept, answer these questions: How do you feel when someone keeps you waiting for a long time? Do you respond to a phone call at 2:00 AM the same way you do to one at 2:00 PM? Do you find yourself rushing the conversation when you know you have very little time to spend with someone? Your answers to these questions reveal how often the clock controls your actions. Every communication event takes place along a time-space continuum, and the amount of time allotted, whether it is for social conversation or a formal presentation, affects that event. Cultures, as well as people, use time to communicate. In the United States, schedules and time constraints are ever present. "For Americans, the use of appointment schedule time reveals how people feel about each other, how significant their business is, and where they rank in the status system."

4. 7. 7. Number of Participants

The number of people with whom you communicate also affects the flow of communication. You feel and act differently if you are speaking with one person, in a group, or before a large audience. Cultures also respond to changes in number. For example, people in Japan find small-group interaction much to their liking, yet they often feel extremely uncomfortable when they have to give a formal public speech.

4. 7. 8. Most Communication is Learned

Your ability to communicate is a complex interplay between biology and culture. Without describing the complexities of genetic science or the evolution of culture, what we are saying is that human beings are equipped with the necessary anatomy, physiology, and chemistry to learn new information throughout their lives. In addition, there is no upper limit to how much you can learn. This notion is often referred to as the brain being an "open-ended system." We can tell you one fact after another, and your brain can store these facts away. You may have trouble remembering it, but the information is there. For example, if we write that over fifty years ago Leon Festinger developed the theory of cognitive dissonance, "Star of the Class" is a celebrated race horse, and Ulan Bator is the capital of Mongolia, and you did not know these facts prior to reading them, you now have the three items stockpiled somewhere in your brain.

This idea that the brain is an open system has direct implications for intercultural communication. Being able to learn nearly any kind of information and numerous behavior patterns has resulted in your knowing how to communicate. If you were reared in a home where your family spoke Spanish, you learned to communicate in that language. If your family spoke in hushed tones, you learned to speak softly. If your family engaged in a great deal of touching, you learned about touch as a form of communication. Even what you learned to talk about was part of your learning experiences. If your family discussed politics and believed people should never gossip, you too, at least early in your life, held these beliefs about appropriate

and inappropriate topics for discussion. What we are suggesting is that all people have learned, and carry around, an assorted fund of knowledge about communication. However, it is obvious that not all people and cultures have gathered the same information. In one culture people might have received information on how to use camels or horses for transportation, while in another people have received instructions on how to drive automobiles. Some people have learned to talk to God, while others sit quietly and wait for God to talk to them. We conclude this section by reminding you that people of cultures different from your own might have distinctive views about transportation and God, but also unique ways of communicating.

4. 7. 9. Communication Has Consequence

As part of our last discussion on the workings of communication we inserted the idea that people can learn something from every experience to which they are exposed. An extension of this concept is stated by Berko and his associates when they write, "All of our messages, to one degree or another do something to someone else (as well as to us)." Obviously, your response to messages will fluctuate in both degree and kind. If someone sends you a message by asking directions to the library, your response is to say, "It's on your right." You might even point to the library. The message from the other person has thus produced an observable response. If someone says to you, "The United States is spending too much money fighting wars thousands of miles away," and you only think about this statement, you are still responding, but your response is not an observable action. There are also thousands of responses that are harder to detect. These are responses to messages that you receive by observing, imitating, or interacting with others.

Generally, you are not even aware that you are receiving these messages. Your parents act out their gender roles, and you receive messages about your gender role. People greet you by shaking hands instead of hugging, and without being aware of it; you are receiving messages about forms of address. The response you make to someone's message does not have to be immediate. You can respond minutes, days, or even years later. For example, your second-grade teacher may have asked you to stop throwing rocks at a group of birds. Perhaps the teacher added that the birds were part of a family and were gathering food for their babies. She might also have indicated that birds feel pain just like people. Perhaps twenty years later you are invited to go quail hunting. You are about to say "yes" when you remember those words from your teacher and decide not to go on the "expedition." This decision reflects the principle that all communication has a consequence. One of the most important implications of this principle is that you are changing other people each time you exchange messages with them. Wood buttresses this view when she writes, "What we say and do affects others: how they perceive themselves, how they think about themselves, and how they think about others. Thus, responsible people think carefully about ethical guidelines for communication."

We conclude this section on communication by again reminding you that *communication is complex.* It is even more complex when the cultural dimensions are included. Although all cultures use symbols to share their realities, the specific realities and the symbols employed are often quite different. In one culture you smile in a casual manner as a form of greeting, while in another you bow formally in silence, and in yet another you acknowledge your friend with a full embrace. From our discussion you should now have an

understanding of the concept of communication and the role it plays in everyday interaction. With this background, we now turn to the topic of culture.

4. 8. Communication Barriers

Misunderstanding can occur at any stage of the communication process. Effective communication involves minimizing potential misunderstanding and overcoming any barriers to communication at each stage in the communication process. An effective communicator will observe the receiver's feedback (both verbal and nonverbal) to learn how the message is understood and attempt to correct any misunderstanding or confusion as soon as possible.

G. Łasiński points out the most common **communication noises** such as **(1)** an unclear or ambiguous message, **(2)** unsuitable words and gestures, **(3)** disruptions while communicating, **(4)** wrong message interpretation, and **(5)** human relations. He also lists effective communication barriers hindering communication such as **(1)** semantic noise (jargon, an unknown topic or information overload), **(2)** psychological noise (disinterest, the lack of listening skills or tiredness), and **(3)** physical noise (temperature, background sound or computer problems).

To overcome communication barriers it is advised to do the following: **(1)** pay attention to feedback, **(2)** avoid sophisticated language, **(3)** listen actively, **(4)** control emotions, and **(5)** observe nonverbal communication. Grice's guidelines to avoid communication noise are the following: **(1)** quantity maximum – adapt the amount of information necessary to the goal of the conversation, **(2)** quality maximum – discuss facts you are certain, **(3)** responsibility maximum – stay close to the topic, and **(4)** style maximum – avoid ambiguity and verbosity.

The world we live in and communicate in is full of barriers hindering the process of effective listening that is strictly connected with effective communication. There are three kinds of barriers such as **(1)** physical, **(2)** psychological, and **(3)** interactive. The disruptions of environment and personal features of both the speaker and the listener are physical barriers. Psychological barriers refer to mental and emotional disruptions of effective listening. They are often caused by the difference between speaking speed and listening speed abilities, as well as information overload and complexity. Interactive barriers develop as a result of becoming involved in verbal fights, using violent language as well as cultural differences between the speaker and the listener. Figure 3 below illustrates the barriers of listening hindering effective communication.

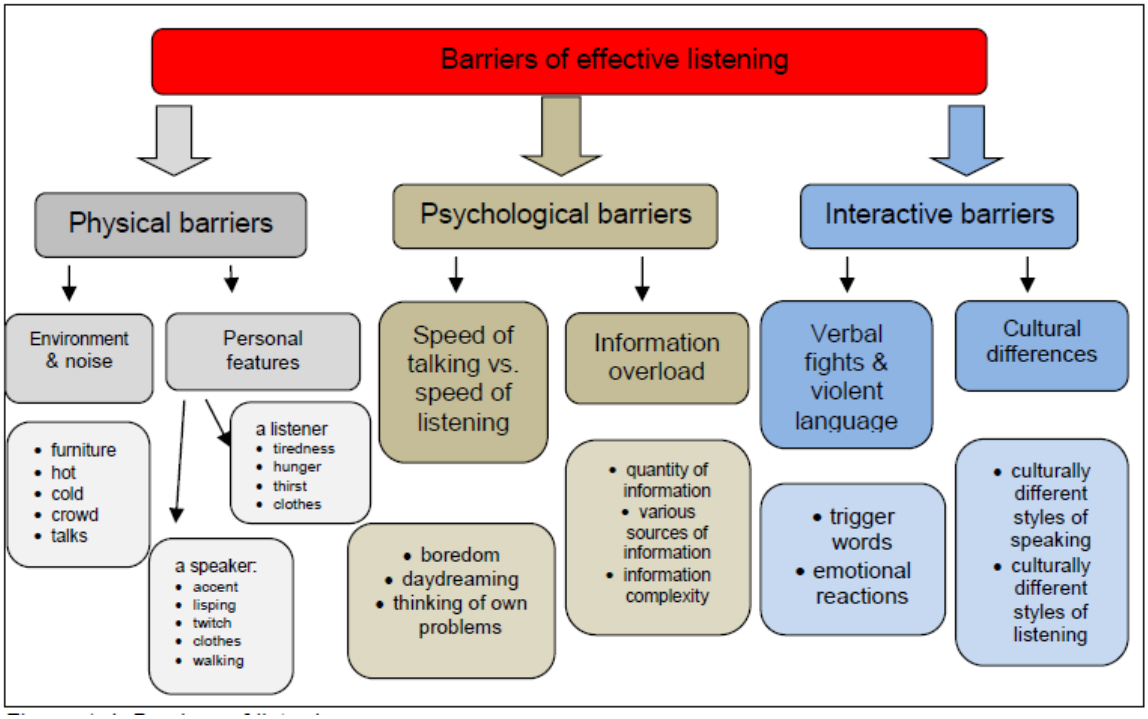

Figure 4: Barriers of Listening Effective Communication

5. The Relationship between Culture and Communication

Moving from communication to culture provides us with a rather seamless transition, for as Hall points out, "Culture is communication and communication is culture." In fact, when examining communication and culture it is hard to decide which the voice is and which the echo is. The reason for the duality is that you "learn" your culture via communication, while at the same time communication is a reflection of your culture. This lecture manifests the authors' strong belief that you cannot improve your intercultural communication skills without having a clear understanding of this phenomenon called culture. The following examples demonstrate the powerful link between communication and culture:

- Some people scratch their ears and cheeks as a sign of happiness, but people in other places of the world smile when they are happy. Why?
- Some people in many parts of the world put dogs in their ovens, but people in the United States put them on their couches and beds. Why?
- Some people in Kabul and Kandahar pray five times each day while kneeling on the floor, but some people in Jerusalem pray while standing erect and slightly rocking back and forth. Why?
- Some people speak Tagalog and others speak English. Why?
- Some people paint and decorate their entire bodies, but others spend hundreds of dollars painting and decorating only their faces. Why?
- Some people shake hands when introduced to a stranger, but other people bow at such an encounter. Why?

The general answer to all these questions is the same—*culture*. As Peoples and Bailey point out, "cultures vary in their ways of thinking and ways of behaving." That sentence is not only the answer to our initial

question, but it also serves as one of the basic premises of this entire lecture and module at large. Rodriguez punctuates the influence of culture on human perception and actions when she writes, “Culture consists of how we relate to other people, how we think, how we behave, and how we view the world.” Although culture is not the only stimulus behind your behavior, its omnipresent quality makes it one of the most powerful. Hall underscores this point when he concludes, “There is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture.” Wood further speaks to this notion when she writes, “We are not born knowing how, when, and to whom to speak, just as we are not born with attitudes about cooperating or competing. We acquire attitudes as we interact with others, and we then reflect cultural teachings in the way we communicate.” Wood is reminding you that although you enter this world with all the anatomy and physiology needed to live in the world, you do not arrive knowing how to dress, what toys to play with, what to eat, which gods to worship, what to strive for, how to spend your money or your time, or how to define the questions surrounding death.

6. Looking at Cultures

We all belong to and are molded by a series of interlocking cultures, which influence the way we view the world, make decisions and interact with others. The aim of this book is to help you reflect on your own and others’ cultures and the relationships between them; that is, you should first look in the mirror at your own culture, and out of the window at other cultures you are interested in or want to interact with.

It is easy to imagine that cultural differences all change at national frontiers. In the past, the nation-state was much more influential than it is today. Maps and atlases emphasized that your country and your continent were central, and the rest of the world was peripheral. Only thirty years ago, the apparent and obvious differences between European national cultures were enormous. People dressed, ate and shopped in instantly recognizable and totally different styles. You should be aware, though, that cultures change, sometimes quite quickly, especially as they come into contact with other cultures, which they do more quickly and frequently today than ever.

Nowadays, the inside of one McDonald’s is much the same anywhere; the customers dress the same, listen to much the same music, use the same computers and access the same Internet sites, and watch the same TV programs (though they speak different languages, of course). But the similarities are not very relevant. Deeper cultural differences are just as strong and influential as they always were, in particular with respect to people’s attitudes, beliefs and behavior. Europe is clearly developing its own “international” culture in some areas, though fortunately cultures retain their distinctiveness. People still queue, order, argue, complain and make friends quite differently in those fast-food restaurants that look the same on the surface all over the world. The stories, tasks and exercises in this book are designed to illustrate and explore this phenomenon.

Throughout most of the world, cultural norms vary widely according to perceived social position or level of wealth and income. But these differences are often rather trivial, and people who worry about what to wear to a wedding or which knife and fork to use are concerning themselves with rather superficial

matters. Similarly, it is not tremendously important if a Dutch friend of the opposite sex kisses you three times or a French friend twice. These things are superficial but have their function as a means of differentiation between groups. Even a school, a family, a business or a club can all have internal cultural norms and values which influence members' behavior and reactions, both within and outside these groups.

National cultures have a huge influence on people's values, attitudes and behaviors and most of the following exercises can be approached on this level. Nowadays, people from different cultures have to negotiate, interact with, understand and accept the behavior and reactions of people from quite different cultures. Thus it is very important that there is an awareness of cultural differences since multicultural groupings are becoming more common in professional settings and elsewhere around the globe. This book, for example, was written by people from very different cultures who share a common academic background and a common goal.

In making statements about cultures, you have to generalize, of course. No discussion is possible otherwise. You have to – initially – rely on stereotypes to learn about the world, but it is important to keep asking questions and accepting information which might contradict the stereotype. The authors of this book strongly believe that there are absolutely no "right" or "wrong" values or norms, provided, that is, that human rights are respected. All the exercises below encourage you to think about cultural differences in preparation for intercultural encounters. Each of these encounters will be quite different and whether you adapt to the cultural norms of the person you are negotiating with or to the norms of a third culture, or whether you compromise, all depend on your personality and experience, and those of your negotiating partner. What matters most is that you are aware of cultural differences and are prepared to deal with them in a nonjudgmental way. It is natural to feel more comfortable with your own culture. Realizing that other people might also feel the same, you should not dismiss the cultures of others.

It is quite certain that you will not be able to answer all of the questions in this book. Do not be discouraged, they are meant to help you to discover and reflect on aspects of your own and other cultures that perhaps you have not been aware of. The goal is not to have all the answers but to enjoy the fascinating views you might catch from your mirror and the many windows into the world.

7. The Importance of Cross Cultural Communication

The study of cross-cultural communication is central to both theoretical and applied linguistics. Examining the causes of misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication sets in relief the processes that underlie all communication but often go unnoticed when it proceeds successfully. Thus discourse analysts find cross-cultural communication a useful research site, apart from any real-world interest in cross-cultural relations.

In fact, however, most discourse analysts have a genuine concern with real-world issues, and cross-cultural communication is crucial to nearly all public and private human encounters. At the most global level, the fate of all people, indeed the fate of the earth, depends upon negotiations among representatives of governments and individuals with different cultural assumptions and ways of communicating. Moreover, in

order to accomplish any public or private goals, people have to talk to each other, and in more and more cases, the people communicating come from more or less different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the notion of "cross-cultural" encompasses more than just speakers of different languages or from different countries; it includes speakers from the same country of different class, region, age, and even gender.

Summary

Communication helps create identities, assists in gathering information about other people, helps fulfill interpersonal needs, and allows you to influence other people.

- Communication is a dynamic process in which people attempt to share their internal states with other people through the use of symbols.
- The components of communication include source, encoding, messages, channel, receiver, decoding, feedback, and noise.
- Communication is dynamic, symbolic, and contextual, learned, and has a consequence.
- Culture and communication are so intertwined that it is easy to think that culture is communication and communication is culture.
- Culture is a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and lived in the same time and place.
- Culture informs its members regarding life; therefore, it reduces confusion and helps them predict what to expect from life.
- The elements that compose culture are religion, history, values, social organizations, and language.
- Culture is learned, transmitted from generation to generation, based on symbols, and is a dynamic and integrated system.
- Cross cultural communication is the ability to step beyond one culture to another then to another one respectively successfully in a multi-cultural situation.
- Cross cultural communication is the state of being able to be understood and understand with the state of being culturally conscious at the same time.
- Cross cultural communication is a simultaneous combination of cultural orientations with the use of language.

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Practice

Focus Questions

1. What is culture?
2. What are the different elements of culture?
3. What are the characteristics of culture?
4. What is communication?
5. What are the elements of the concept communication?
6. What is the relationship between culture and communication?
7. What is the definition of the concept cross cultural communication?
8. What is the role of cross cultural communication?

Exercise One

Consider and analyze the following questions and statements.

1. What is meant by the phrase, "People engage in communication for a variety of purposes"? Communication is a complex behavior that involves numerous interrelated processes.
2. What is meant by the phrase "communication is a dynamic process"?
3. Because you cannot directly access the internal thoughts of another person, you must rely on and interpret their use of verbal and nonverbal symbols to represent those thoughts.
4. People as well as cultures differ in the manner in which they communicate.
5. Using the examples offered by Chiu and Hong, how would you explain the following "shared meanings" to someone from another culture: **(1)** typical arrangement of American cities, **(2)** some general characteristics of American schools and families, **(3)** perceptions of various jobs and professions, and **(4)** the place of religion in American culture?
6. Using the list of "learning" examples we just offered, stop now and reflect on your own background and try to recall any specific events where you were "learning" about your culture and did not realize it at the time. For instance, what experiences taught you about good manners, the treatment of the elderly, the importance of an education, sportsmanship, that it is wrong to steal, and the importance of being charitable
7. It would be enlightening to find some people from a variety of cultures and ask them to share some proverbs from their culture. You, of course, could tell them about the proverbs you learned as a child.
8. Culture is learned in a variety of ways and from a host of sources. How would you explain Hall's phrase, "You touch a culture in one place and everything else is affected"? Can you think of some examples from your culture that illustrate Hall's assertion?
9. What is meant by the statement: "In studying other cultures, we do so very often from the perspective of our own culture"?
10. Explain how and why communication and culture are linked.
11. Why is it said that much of culture is invisible?

12. Explain what is meant by the phrase: "Communication is contextual." Can you think of examples of how context has influenced your behavior?

13. How does intercultural communication differ from everyday forms of communication?

14. According to Charles Darwin "it is not the strongest of the species, or the most intelligent that survives, but rather the one that is most adaptable to change."

Exercise Two

Say whether the following stalemates are true of false then justify both of.

1. The term "inter-cultural" applies to something which covers more than one culture. …..……

2. The term "cross-cultural" implies interaction. From an intercultural perspective, it would be possible to study the experiences of students or teachers who move from one educational system to another….

3. The term "multiculturalism has had an effect of de-emphasizing national differences and highlighting the social diversity of cultural pluralism that exists within one and the same nation……....

4. Culture is defined as a dynamic process that embraces everything in and around human beings life that make up their whole life style. ……..…….

5. Culture is many and not unique to each society or group of people. It could therefore be regarded as the personality of the group. It constitutes to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual

6. Cross cultural communication is the ability to step beyond one culture to the second then to the third and so on successfully in a situation when many cultures come into interaction. ……...…….

7. Cross cultural communication does not mean the ability to go beyond the limitations of one culture….

8. Religion. For thousands of years religion has been used by people to assist them in understanding only the universe and natural phenomena. ……..……..

9. History provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity but does have any relationship to culture. ……..……

10. Values are less critical to the maintenance of culture as a whole because they do not represent the qualities that people believe are essential to continuing their way of life. ……..…….

11. Social organizations refer to as social systems or social structures which do not represent the various social units within the culture. These are institutions such as family, government, schools, tribes, and clans. ……..

12. The relationship between language and culture is the basic principle for issues of cross cultural communication since it is possible to detach one from each other. ……...……...

13. Perhaps the most important characteristic of culture is that it is innate and intrinsic; it is learned and acquired. ……...

14. Language is culture and culture is language in the sense that culture is more than culture and culture is more than language ……..…….

15. Because all people, regardless of their culture, share common experiences, many of the same proverbs appear throughout the world. For example, in nearly every culture some degree of thrift and hard work is largely sided. ……..……...

16. The customs, traditions, and beliefs expressed in folktales disassociate people to their history and root them to their past. Thus, "these cultural components are passed on through generations in the retelling of the tales." ……..

17. Historians and anthropologists would refuse the idea and principle that art is a powerful influence on all cultures. …….

18. For a culture to endure it must make certain that its crucial messages and elements are not only shared, but are passed to future generations, from generation to generation. ……..…….

19. Cultures do not exist in a vacuum; because of "other waters continually flowing in," they are subject to change. ……...……...

20. Culture serves a peripheral need by laying out a somewhat predictable world in which each individual is firmly grounded. It thus enables you to make sense of your surroundings by offering a blueprint of communication. …….……

21. Communication is the reflection and expression of the intentions and behavior through only words. It is essential for cross-cultural communication to be effective for personnel to cooperate in a diverse environment successfully. ……..……...

22. Decoding is an internal activity. It occurs when the source creates a message through the selection of verbal or nonverbal symbols. ……..

23. The encoding process within the receiver is often referred to as information processing. ……..…….

24. The words dynamic process is associated only with the concept of culture and dis-associated with the concept of communication. ……...

25. Human beings are equipped with the necessary anatomy, physiology, and chemistry to learn new information throughout their lives including communication. ……..……...

26. In human communication a symbol is an expression that stands for or represents something else. Other animals may engage in some form of communication, and even make use of some symbols, furthermore, they haves the unique communication capabilities found among humans. …..……...

27. Effective communication involves maximizing potential misunderstanding and overcoming any barriers to communication at each stage in the communication process. ……..……...

28. Culture is communication and communication is culture this duality is that you "learn" your culture via communication, while at the same time communication is a reflection of your culture…….

29. The study of cross-cultural communication is peripheral to both theoretical and applied linguistics.

30. Cross cultural communication is a sequential combination of cultural orientations with the use of language……..……..……

Exercise Three

Identify and infer the explicit and implied meaning from the following situations.

1. Early in this lecture chapter we discussed the notion that "Communication has a consequence." List at least two occasions when you have experienced a consequence due to a communication.
2. Attend a meeting (mosque ceremonies, church service, lecture, social event, etc.) of a culture or co-culture different from you own. Try to notice the various ways cultural characteristics of that culture are being reflected in the interaction.
3. Make a list of the changes in your culture that you have observed in your lifetime. Discuss with a group of your classmates how those changes have affected intercultural communication.
4. Go to YouTube and search for "culture and folk tales." View some folktales from a variety of cultures. Note the "lessons" being taught in each folktale.

Exercise 4 Cross-cultural checklist

Key objectives	• To identify important cultural information that learners may wish to learn before they go overseas. • To illustrate the importance of having a framework for understanding the cultures that learners encounter.
Time	**30 minutes**
Materials	Cross-Cultural Checklist

Background rationale

- This activity is designed to help teach learners to identify what they know (and don't know) about another culture or country. It is a practical activity designed for preparing for real-life cross-cultural encounters through an examination of both similarities and differences.
- The purpose of this activity is not to come up with exact information about how to behave during cross-cultural encounters, but to identify some of the areas in which the learner needs to find out more.

Procedure

1. Give the learner a copy of the 'Cross-Cultural Checklist' and ask them to work through each question in turn.
2. Where the learner answers 'Yes', ask them to identify how they anticipate things to be different in the other culture.
3. Where the learner answers 'Don't Know', ask them to identify ways in which they might find out the answer to this question.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

- The answers to each question are, of course, wholly dependent on the specific culture around which the checklist is undertaken and, of course, the cultural origin of the learners themselves. Not all the questions will be relevant in all situations.

Cross-Cultural Checklist

1. Think about another country or culture.
2. Complete the checklist answering Yes, No or Don't Know to each question.
3. Where you answer Don't Know, how will you find out about the answer to this cultural question?

	Yes	No	Do not know
Non verbal communication			
• Should I expect differences in what is thought of as appropriate 'personal space'?			
• Should I anticipate differences in the way my counterparts use touch?			
• Is there anything particular I need to be careful about in giving or receiving business cards?			
• Should I avoid any particular gestures?			
• Should I expect differences in the level of acceptable eye contact?			
• Do I know what body language is taboo?			

	Yes	No	Do not know
Communication			
• Should I anticipate different attitudes about the acceptability of asking personal questions?			
• Should I anticipate different attitudes towards the acceptability of humour and emotions?			
• Should I anticipate different attitudes towards the acceptability of interrupting?			
• Do I know what type of argument is likely to be most persuasive?			
• Should I anticipate a different attitude towards addressing difficult issues directly?			
• Do I know what style of feedback is acceptable?			
• Should I anticipate different expectations about the expression of criticism?			

• Should I anticipate different expectations about the expression of anger?			
• Should I anticipate different expectations about the formality of feedback?			
• Do I know the range of ways in which disagreement is likely to be expressed?			
• Should I expect a different style of conflict resolution?			
• Should I anticipate different expectations about the use of silence?			
• Should I anticipate different communication styles to be in use?			
• Do I know when to use first names and surnames?			
• Do I know what professional titles to use?			
• Should I anticipate different attitudes towards small-talk?			
• Should I anticipate different attitudes towards the importance of saving face?			
• Should I anticipate a different use of tone or pitch when speaking?			
• Should I expect different attitudes towards displays of affection?			

Lecture 4

Language Differences: Verbal and Non-verbal Communications

Description of the Lecture

This lecture aims at introducing Master One university students to a kind of knowledge and culture about the relationship between language differences and cross cultural communications in relationship with its two main perspectives such as verbal and non-verbal communication as among prior qualities of the use of language in cross cultural communication. Through this lecture students will become familiar with the definitions assigned to language, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication. The emphasis is put on the related meanings and aspects of both verbal and nonverbal communication in cross cultural communication with some more emphasis on the nonverbal language. Key content of the lecture includes two sections; the first one deals with the related theoretical matters while the second one presents the likely practical materials and exercises.

Introduction

Language differences include verbal and nonverbal messages occur in the context of environment, space, and time dimension. Just as verbal language is broken up into various categories, there are also different types of nonverbal communication. A variety of verbal communication styles have been developed for over centuries and generations closely linked with culture. To learn about these styles, to become conscious of one's own style, and to be able to recognize the styles used by our interlocutors influence cross-cultural communication. It is very difficult to separate verbal and nonverbal communication from each other. There are not only similarities but also differences between them. Generally, it can be said that people trust nonverbal communication more than verbal in determining the meaning of message, especially when verbal and nonverbal contradict each other. Nonverbal context provides the background in which verbal messages are encoded and decoded. One message can occur in the context of an angry tone of voice, an informative tone, and a teasing tone. A lack of nonverbal message may mean that the speaker is carefully controlling their body language, and is trying to hide their true emotions.

1. An Overview of Language Differences on the Cross cultural Communication

The biggest issue dealing with cross-cultural communication is the difficulty created by language barriers. For example, a person does not speak Japanese, so he is concerned with his ability to communicate effectively with another. There are some strategies that he can use to help establish a rapport with another person. He can explain himself without words by using emotions, facial expressions, and other nonverbal cues. He can also use drawings and ask for an interpreter. These practices are at communication via verbal

language in case the language differences are okay and nonverbal language in case the differences are apparent and create some confusion in communication. The current section presents a general overview of the general meanings associated to the terms verbal and nonverbal communication as apparent language differences.

1. 1. The General Meanings Associated with Verbal Language

Verbal communication is a system of symbols that denote how a culture structures its world. As such, by examining language, it is possible to see how a culture relates to its world. For example, some languages have words that do not exist in other cultures. The Eskimo language, for instance, has multiple words for snow while the English language has only one (Whorf, 1956). The German word *Schadenfreude* (joy in another person's misfortunes) and the Japanese word *amae* (sweet dependence), which do not exist in English, are other examples. That the words do not exist in other languages does not mean that the concepts are nonexistent. In American culture, for example, it is very common to see people derive joy from others' misfortunes! Rather, such words reflect the fact that the concept is important enough to the culture for its language to have a separate linguistic symbol for it. In this way, verbal language is a manifestation of the larger culture within which it exists.

Another example of this manifestation is the case of self and other referents. In American English, for example, we typically refer to ourselves as "I," and to someone else as "you." There are many other languages of the world, however, that do not use such simplistic terms for self and others. The Japanese language, for instance, includes an extensive choice of terms referring to one-self and others, all dependent upon the relationship between the people interacting (Suzuki, 1978). In Japanese, you refer to your teacher as "teacher" or your boss at work as "section chief" when in English the word *you* would normally be used. In Japanese, terms denoting status are also used within the family. The degree of politeness and fluency in the language and culture is dependent on the ability to use this system properly. When people speak the language of their culture, they reinforce their concepts of culture. If you engage fluently in the Japanese use of the elaborate system of self and other referents, for example, you will reinforce your own understanding of the Japanese culture's emphasis on status relationships and interdependence. If you engage fluently in American English's "I" and "you," you will reinforce your view of the American individuality and uniqueness. Culture and language share a highly interrelated, reciprocal relationship.

That language helps to structure thought, and vice versa, is a concept that is known as the *Supir-Whorf hypothesis.* It suggests that people of different cultures think differently, just by the very nature, structure, and function of their language. Since the early 1960s, some research has indicated that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis may not be true with regard to the influence of lexical and semantic aspects of language (e.g., see the experiments on color names reported in Rosch & Lloyd, 1978). But, many other studies have confirmed that Sapir-Whorf is very valid with regard to the grammar and syntax of language. Also, there is a small but growing amount of evidence in research with bilinguals that supports the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. Collectively, Sapir-Whorf suggests that people who speak different languages may interpret the same event

differently because the differences in their language are associated with different thinking styles (e.g., see Matsumoto, 1996, for a review of this line of research). The section 2 in this lecture presents in details all the related information about the use of nonverbal communication in cross cultural communication.

1. 2. The General Meanings Associated with Non-Verbal Language

Nonverbal Communication as a term corresponds to the idea that cultural differences in language are very apparent; there are major differences between cultures in nonverbal communication as well. In fact, ample studies have shown that the bulk of message exchange in communication occurs nonverbally; depending on the study, estimates of the contribution of nonverbal behaviors to overall communication range as high as 90%! There are five categories of nonverbal behaviors: speech illustrators, conversation regulators, selfadaptors, emblematic gestures, and emotion signals (Ekman & Friesen, Serniotica, 1968, *19*, 49-98). All carry some kind of communicative value and are influenced by culture. One of the well-studied areas of nonverbal behavior is gesture, and many cultural similarities and differences have been documented (Morris, Collet, Marsh, & O'Shaunessy, 1980). Facial expressions of emotion are another well-studied area of nonverbal communication. Research since the 1970s has shown that a small set of facial expressions of emotion are universally expressed (see review of early research in Ekman, 1972). These emotions include anger, contempt, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, and surprise. Cultures differ, however, in the rules governing how to use these universal expressions. These rules-called cultural display rules-are learned rules of expression management that dictate the appropriateness of emotion display depending on social circumstances. Learned from infancy, we are so adept at using these rules that by the time we are adults, we do so automatically and without much conscious awareness. There are cultural differences in other *channels* of nonverbal behaviors, such as in gaze and visual behavior, and in the use of interpersonal space. Each of these is important in its own right, and contributes greatly to communication. Mistaken inferences about feelings and intentions easily occur because of misattributions about gaze behavior that we are not accustomed to, and interactions are often strained because they occur at spaces that are too distant or close for comfort. Collectively, the literature suggests that culture exerts a considerable amount of influence over much of the nonverbal behaviors that occur in intercultural communication episodes. The section 3 in this lecture presents in details all the related information about the use of nonverbal communication in cross cultural communication.

2. Verbal Messages and Communication

The role and importance of language in daily life is self-evident. Language enables humans to symbolize. That ability allows the exchange of information, including abstract ideas, which is what sets us apart from all other animals. Language lets you convey to others your beliefs, values, attitudes, worldviews, emotions, aspects of identity, and myriad other personal features. Even your name is a function of language. Without language there would be no need for Facebook, Twitter, or any of the other social networking

media; YouTube would have only silent videos, and would be limited to instrumental music. There would be no Internet!

Language and culture are the indispensable components of intercultural communication. Together, they form a synergy, each working to sustain and perpetuate the other while creating a greater phenomenon—language allows the dissemination and adoption of culture, while culture gives rise to and shapes language. Combined, they enable societal organization and collective activities. With the exception of co-culture members, in almost every intercultural interaction one of the participants will be speaking a language other than their native language. And even with co-cultures, you are likely to encounter unfamiliar, specialized English usage, such as argot and slang, which are a function of culture.

The objective of this section is to provide you with an appreciation and understanding of verbal language and its role in intercultural communication. We will begin by examining some of the functions of language. Next, some examples will illustrate how different cultures actually use language and how language reflects the values of those cultures. Several features of the interpretation and translation process, a critical link in cross-cultural communication, are then examined. We next explore some aspects of language in communication technology. The section concludes with a look at language considerations that can increase cross-cultural communication competence and complement each other. In this section we begin that journey by looking at how language functions in social interaction, provides a means of social cohesion, and facilitates expressions of identity.

2. 1. Functions of Language

Contemporary society, both domestic and international, is increasingly characterized by interactions between people from different cultures speaking different languages. For example, a 2009 U.S. Census report disclosed that over 19 percent of the U.S. population, five years of age or older speak a language other than English at home. This statistics offers a compelling reason to understand how culture and language.

2. 1. 1. Social Interaction

Everyone makes daily use of language. Stop for a minute and consider some of your daily activities that require language. These activities include talking with friends before class, listening to a lecture, using your cell phone, surfing the Internet, reading an assignment, writing a report, coordinating with co-workers, or chilling with your IPad. All of these activities, and many more, form a part of your daily schedule. Without language, however, none of these events would be possible. Language allows you to speak, read, write, listen to others, and even talk to yourself—or to think. Language also serves important communicative functions other than directly expressing and exchanging ideas and thoughts with others. For example, language allows you to verbally convey your internal emotions and relieve stress by simply uttering a phrase

(darn it) or a swear word (damn). You use language to express pain (ouch), elation (great!), disappointment (oh no!), and amazement or surprise (OMG!). Often, these or similar expressions are used subconsciously, even when no one is around. Language is also employed to invoke assistance from the supernatural. A Jewish rabbi, a Buddhist priest, a Mongolian shaman, the Pope, a Muslim, or a small child reciting a prayer are all using language to appeal to a greater power.

2. 1. 2. Social Cohesion

A common language allows individuals to form social groups and engage in cooperative efforts. A shared vocabulary enables a group to record and preserve past events, albeit often with a selective interpretation. Because the past is an important means for teaching children their culture's normative behaviors, these recordings provide the people with a communal history that becomes a unifying force for future generations. As you may recall from other related sections, language allows a group of people to maintain a record of the cultural values and expectations that bind them together. The rules a cultural group establishes for using language provide a form of social-bonding and predictability. The maintenance of social relations also relies on language for more than communicating messages. For example, the type of language used to express intimacy, respect, affiliation, formality, distance, and other emotions can help you sustain a relationship or disengage from one. Unfortunately, the unity created by a shared language can also become a divisive force when people identify too strongly with their native tongue, become ethnocentric, and feel threatened by someone speaking a different language.

2. 1. 3. Expression of Identity

Language plays an important role in the formation and expression of your identity, particularly national identity. Recall the ongoing controversy over making English the official language of the United States, which is often seen as a reaction to the rising tide of illegal immigrants. While they represent only 22 percent of the Canadian population, French speakers have made French "the official language of Québec." Noted for taking extraordinary measures to ensure the purity of its national language, France established the Académie Française in 1635 to "codify and regulate the French tongue." In the Baltic nation of Estonia, a part of the former Soviet Union, approximately 30 percent of the population uses Russian as their first language. In an effort to bolster national identity, the government created the National Language Inspectorate, which is charged with ensuring that state employees possess and utilize a proficiency in Estonian. Language related conflict between French and Flemish speakers in Belgium actually led to dissolution of the government in 2010.8 Language can also be used to construct a new national identity, as was done with Hebrew in Israel in 1948, when there was an urgent need to unify extremely diverse groups from many different nations who spoke a variety of languages. Language plays a part in establishing and expressing ethnic identity. Black English Vernacular (BEV), or Ebonics, helps create and reinforce a sense of mutual identity among African Americans. Dialects or accents can also be a part of one's identity. Think

for a minute about the stereotypical southern drawl, the variety of accents encountered in the metropolitan areas of Boston and New York City, or the surfer's lingo heard in southern California. Each of these different linguistic conventions contributes to the user's regional identity.

Language usage can categorize people into groups according to factors such as age and gender. The terminology used can easily mark one as young or old. Recall how you sometimes thought the words used by your parents or grandparents sounded old fashioned. Additionally, language is part of your gender identity. Women and men use language differently, both in word choice and behaviors. Among U.S. English speakers, women tend to ask more questions, listen more, and use a supportive speech style. Men, on the other hand, are more prone to interrupting, asserting their opinions, and are poor listeners. In Japan, women employ more honorific terms and the two genders often use a different word to say the same thing. Language has also been used to categorize people into varying social and economic levels. "Historically, the way that people speak carries an unimaginable weight in how they are perceived in the society. They are viewed to be civilized or uncivilized, sophisticated or unsophisticated and 'high class' or 'low class' by the language that they speak."

2. 2. Language and Meaning

2. 2. 1. What is Language?

At the most basic level, language is a set of shared symbols or signs that a cooperative group of people has mutually agreed to use to help them create meaning. The relationship between the selected sign and the agreed meaning is quite often arbitrary. This concept is easily illustrated by looking at some of the varied symbols used by different cultures to identify a familiar household pet. In Finland they have settled on *kissa*, but in Germany *katze* has been chosen, and Swahili speakers use *paka*. The Japanese decided on *neko* ( ), Tagalog speakers in the Philippines prefer *pusa*, and in Spanish-speaking countries *gato* has been selected. In the English language *cat* is the term used. As you can see, none of the words has any relation to the actual characteristics of a cat. They are simply arbitrary symbols that each language group uses to call to mind the common domestic pet, or sometimes a larger wild animal such as a tiger, lion, or leopard. These differences in symbols also extend to how people of a cultural group hear natural sounds.13 For instance, in the United States pigs are heard to make an "oink, oink" sound, but the Japanese hear the sound as "bu–bu."

When you applaud an outstanding performance in the United States, the sound is "clap-clap," but in Japan it's "pachi-pachi." It is also common to find significant differences within a major language group. While English can vary within national boundaries, more prominent differences, such as pronunciation, spelling, and terminology, can be found when comparing English-speaking countries such as Australia, England, and the United States. For example, in England, the trunk of a car is a "boot" and the hood is the "bonnet." Australians pronounce the "ay" sound as "ai." Imagine the confusion and consternation when an Australian asks his U.S. friend how she will celebrate "Mother's Dai."

Pronunciation differences, or accents, between the English-speaking countries are a product of early immigration and the natural evolution of the language. Rubenstein provides a clear explanation of this process: “Again, geographic concepts help explain the reason for the differences. From the time of their arrival in North America, colonists began to pronounce words differently from the British. Such divergence is normal, for interaction between the two groups was largely confined to exchange of letters and other printed matter rather than direct speech.” However, variations in spelling between American English and that used in England are the result of a calculated effort to create a new national identity and loosen the colonies’ ties to England. When Noah Webster sat down to write his early American dictionary, the underlying objective was to “create a uniquely American dialect of English.”

Of course, English is not the only language to have significant deviations across international borders. The differences in spelling between the Portuguese used in Portugal and that used in Brazil and the former Portuguese colonies in Africa is so great that in 2008 Portugal adopted a standardization measure requiring “hundreds of words to be spelled the Brazilian way.” Even within the Spanish language there are major linguistic differences in what is used in Spain, South America, Central America, Mexico, and other Spanish-speaking nations.

2. 2. 2. Language Variation

In addition to the differences discussed above, cultures are also characterized by a number of internal linguistic variations. These differences are usually culturally influenced and frequently offer hints as to the nation or region where a person lives or grew up, their age, level of education, and socioeconomic status. It is particularly important to have both an awareness of these distinctions and an appreciation of their role in cross cultural communication. With this knowledge you will be able to avoid erroneous, misinformed judgments derived from a person’s accent, dialect, or other language trait.

2. 2. 2. 1. Accent

As we mentioned earlier, accents are simply variations in pronunciation that occur when people are speaking the same language. These are often a result of geographical or historical differences, such as those among English speakers in Australia, Canada, England, South Africa, and the United States. In the United States you often hear regional accents characterized as “Southern,” “New England,” or “New York.”

2. 2. 2. 2. Dialect

In addition to pronunciation variations that characterize accents, during communicative exchanges you may have already encountered regional differences in language usage. In cross cultural communication an additional challenge to competency is presented by these regional distinctions or dialects, which are distinguished by differences in vocabulary, grammar, and even punctuation. The Japanese, often considered a homogeneous culture, have a number of dialects, and some, like Kagoshima-*ben* and Okinawa-*ben* in the

extreme south, are very difficult for other Japanese to understand. Chinese is usually considered to have eight distinct, major dialects (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, etc.), which are bound by a common writing system but are mutually unintelligible when spoken. Indeed, some scholars consider the dialects as separate languages. The most common dialect categories of German are High, Middle, and Low, but there are numerous sub-dialects of these classifications that are often unintelligible to someone speaking Standard German. There are different dialects of the Spanish language spoken in Spain, such as Andalusian in the south, Castilian in the center, and Galician in the northwest. Significant dialectical differences exist between the Spanish spoken in Europe and that used in North and South America, and most regions have their own unique variations. English spoken in the United States is characterized by a number of dialects. Black English Vernacular (BEV), which we referred to earlier, represents a very distinct dialect in the United States, as does Hawaiian "pidgin." Among U.S. white, native English speakers, a 2004 survey identified six regional dialects prevalent for middleclass, college-educated participants between 18 and 25 years of age: **(1)** New England, **(2)** Mid-Atlantic, **(3)** North, **(4)** Midland, **(5)** South, and **(6)** West. Take a moment and place yourself in the position of an international visitor, using English as a second language, confronted with a group of Americans speaking several of these dialects.

2. 2. 2. 3. Argot

Argot is a private vocabulary unique to a co-culture, group, organization, or profession. In the United States many individuals employ a specialized vocabulary that identifies them as a member of a particular co-culture or group, such as prisoners or those engaged in criminal activities, gays, street gangs, and professional or sporting groups. Members of these groups may employ a specialized vocabulary to obscure the intended meaning or to create a sense of identity. "By changing the meaning of existing words or inventing new ones, members of the 'in-group' can communicate with fellow members while effectively excluding outsiders who may be within hearing range." While technically an argot, professional terminology is often referred to as jargon. Workers in vocational fields such as medicine, engineering, or computer science make extensive use of professional jargon. Each branch of the U.S. military uses jargon specific to their mission and particular type of activity. The contract you signed for your cell phone is an excellent example of argot used in the legal system.

2. 2. 2. 4. Slang

Slang designates those non-standard terms, usually used in instances of informality, which serve as a "means of marking social or linguistic identity." Slang can be regionally based, associated with a co culture, or used by groups engaged in a specific endeavor. Contemporary speech used by Japanese students provides an example of regional slang. In the Tokyo area McDonald's (*Maku Donarudo*) is referred to as *Maku*, but further to the west, in Osaka, it becomes *Makudo*. And in both locations Starbucks is *Sutaba*. The word "dude" can help you understand how slang evolves. Originally, "dude" was a term used by rural inhabitants

to belittle someone from the city. Later, it became popular among the early Southern California surfing community and then spread to the general population, where it is now commonly used to address or refer to another person.

2. 2. 2. 5. Language Taboos

All cultures have taboos related to the use of language. These can be cultural restrictions against discussing a topic in a particular setting, or prohibitions against using certain words. Crystal tells us that a culture's verbal taboos generally relate "to sex, the supernatural, excretion, and death, but quite often they extend to other aspects of domestic and social life." Because they believe that death can be brought on by talking about it the Navajo refrain from discussing the topic. Additionally, names of the dead are never spoken again. From personal experience you know that at first meetings, whether for business or pleasure, people usually engage in "small talk" as a way of getting to know each another. However, the choice of topics discussed during these meetings must follow established cultural norms. In intercultural interactions this requires that you learn which topics are acceptable and which are taboo. In the United States early conversations often center on the weather or some aspect of the physical setting, such as the scenery or furnishings in a room.

As the interaction becomes more comfortable, topics relating to sports, food, or travel may be discussed. If both parties continue the conversation, which is a positive sign, they begin gathering information about each other through personal questions related to likes and dislikes and family matters. For American businesspersons personal questions are not actually considered taboo in the business context. Hence, you might hear the most well intentioned American ask questions such as "What do you do?" "How long have you been with your company?" "Do you have a family?" But those personal topics are considered taboo in many cultures. In the United States we are taught that it is impolite to ask a person's age, sexual orientation, or religion, and to refrain from arguing about politics. However, in many European nations vigorous debates about political activities are quite acceptable. In Saudi Arabia asking about a person's family can cause considerable offense. It is common to begin a meeting or a presentation in the United States with a joke, but this can prove disastrous in an international setting. This is because humor does not travel well, if at all, across cultures. What is funny in one culture can be offensive in another.

2. 3. Language and Culture

2. 3. 1. The Synergy of Language and Culture

As mentioned at the beginning of this lecture, language and culture form a synergistic relationship. Language provides the means for a group of people to create a collective societal structure encompassing political, economic, social support, and educational institutions. Culture fashions the template for those institutions, and as you would expect, the organizations are structured around, and replicate, the values of that culture. What you might find surprising, however, is that a culture's values are also embodied in the

content and use of language. A well-known and widely debated theoretical concept, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, holds that language is a dominant influence in shaping one's worldview and perception of reality. In general, most scholars today agree that the hypothesis originally overstated the effect of language, which is now considered to have a more selective influence on how one views reality. Critics do agree, however, that a culture's linguistic vocabulary emphasizes what is considered important. Salzmann contends "those aspects of culture that are important for the members of a society are correspondingly highlighted in the vocabulary." This culture-language synergy is easily illustrated by comparing a food staple from the United States with one from Japan.

2. 3. 2. Using Language across Cultures

2. 3. 2. 1. Spanish

An exploration of how the Spanish language is used in Mexico can provide insight into Mexican society and further demonstrate the codependency of language and culture. First, communicative interaction, especially conversation, is an important part of Mexican life, and Mexicans readily engage in casual talk. Condon reports that during interactions, even in a business setting, puns, double-entendres, and colloquialisms are frequently interjected, which gives conversations a feeling of liveliness and warmth. This is in contrast to the logic based U.S. style that Mexicans often see as cold and remote. The male orientation that characterizes Mexican society is clearly evident in the Spanish language use of gendered nouns and pronouns. For instance, men in an all-male group are referred to as *ellos*, and women in an all-female group are *ellas*, the *o* ending denoting masculine and the *a* ending being feminine. However, *ellos* is used for a group of several men and one woman, as well as a gathering of women and one male. Small girls in a group are called *niñas*, but if a boy joins the girls, *niños* is used. The Spanish use of separate verb conjugations for formal and informal speech also helps Mexicans express the formality that is important in their culture. To understand this distinction, we can look at the pronoun *you*. In formal speech, *usted* is used, but when talking to family, friends, or in informal situations, *tú* is more appropriate. The use of titles, such as *Profesor*, *Doctor*, or *Licenciado*, is widespread in Mexico and illustrates the value placed on status and hierarchy. Finally, the Mexican preference for indirectness and face-saving tactics is evident in their use of language. Interpersonal relationships are very important among Mexicans, and they try to avoid situations that carry the potential for confrontation or loss of face. High-context communication and etiquette are employed to help ensure harmonious interactions. Among U.S. Americans this indirect politeness can sometimes be misconstrued as dishonesty or aloofness, when it is actually a sign of respect and an opportunity for the other person to save face.

2. 3. 2. 2. Northeast Asian cultures

The languages of China, Korea, and Japan are quite different, but there are commonalities in how those respective languages are used. All three nations are considered high-context cultures and commonly

employ language in an indirect manner to promote harmony and face-saving measures. Politeness can take precedence over truth, which is consistent with the cultural emphasis on maintaining social stability. Members of these three cultures also expect their communication partners to be able to recognize the intended meaning more from the context than the actual words used. The languages of the Northeast Asian cultures also reflect the importance placed on formality and hierarchy and vary sharply from the more direct, informal, low-context speech common among Americans. This contrast is, in part, a result of varying perceptions of the reason for communication. In Northeast Asia communication is used to reduce one's selfishness and egocentrism. This is diametrically opposite to the Western perspective that views communication as a way to increase one's esteem and guard personal interests. To provide more insight, we will examine some specific examples of the similarities between how Chinese, Korean, and Japanese are used.

2. 3. 2. 3. China or Chinese

Wenzhong and Grove suggest that the three most fundamental values of Chinese culture are **(1)** collectivism or a group orientation, **(2)** intragroup harmony, and **(3)** societal hierarchy. The latter two values are easily discernible in the Chinese's use of language. For instance, the focus on social status and position among the Chinese is of such importance that it also shapes how individuals communicatively interact. Accordingly, a deferential manner is commonly used when addressing an authority figure. The widespread use of titles is another way of showing respect and formality in the Chinese culture. Among family members, given names are usually replaced with a title, such as "younger" or "older" brother, which reflects that individual's position within the family. The Chinese exhibit the importance of in-group social stability, or harmony, through a number of different communication protocols. Rather than employing precise language, as is done in the United States, the Chinese will be vague and indirect, which leaves the listener to discern the meaning. Conflict situations among in-groups will be avoided when possible and intermediaries are used to resolve disputes. Any criticism will be issued in an indirect manner. The concern for others' face can be pervasive, and to demonstrate humility, the Chinese will frequently engage in self-deprecation, and attentively listen to others, especially seniors or elders.

2. 3. 2. 4. Korean

The cultural values of collectivism, status, and harmony are also prevalent in the way Koreans use language. For instance, the family represents the strongest in-group among Koreans and a common way of introducing one's parent is to say "this is our mother/father" rather than using the pronoun "my." This demonstrates the Korean collective orientation by signaling that one's family is a comprehensive unit, encompassing parents and siblings, extending beyond self-considerations. Status is another important cultural value and one's position as a senior or a junior will dictate the appropriate communication style. As a result, Koreans will use small talk in an effort to ascertain each other's hierarchical position. Because

Korea is also a high-context culture, communicative interactions are often characterized by indirectness, with the meaning imbedded in the context of how something is expressed rather than what is actually said. For example, instead of asking a subordinate to work on a project over the weekend, a Korean manager may say, "The success of this project is important to the company, and we cannot miss the deadline."

2. 3. 2. 5. Japanese

As with China and Korea, Japan is a high-context, hierarchical culture with a distinct group orientation emphasizing social harmony, and these cultural characteristics are manifest in the Japanese language, which is highly contextual and often ambiguous. There are many words that have identical pronunciations and written form, but quite different meanings. For instance, *sumimasen* can mean "excuse me," "sorry," or "thank you," or can be used simply to attract someone's attention. The listener is left to determine the meaning from the context. *Osoi* is another word that has dual meanings ("slow" or "late"), but is written and pronounced identically. Japanese verbs come at the end of sentences, which impedes a full understanding until the sentence has been completed and allows the speaker to gage listeners' reaction before deciding on which verb form to use.

Social position, or status, is an important consideration among the Japanese and is very evident in their use of language. One's social position will determine the type of language and choice of words to use during every interaction. Women will use more honorific words than men. Juniors will employ polite speech when addressing their seniors, who may reply with informal speech. Terms of address are also determined by one's hierarchical positioning. Given names are rarely used between Japanese, who prefer to use last names followed by a suffix term that is determined by the type or level of the relationship. Professor Mari Suzuki's students, for example, would call her Suzuki *sensei* (teacher), and she would refer to the students by their last name and the *–san* (Mr. or Ms.) suffix. There are many other hierarchically determined suffix terms used with an individual's name. In addition to the Japanese concern for social position, this practice also indicates that Japan is a formal culture.

2. 3. 2. 6. Arabic Cultures

Linguistic identity as an Arab transcends ethnic origins, national borders and, with certain exceptions (e.g., Coptic, Jewish), religious affiliation. Among Arabs "anyone whose mother tongue is Arabic" is considered an Arab. Thus, language is what defines and unites the greater Arab community. The importance placed on language is, in part, a function of their history. The early Arabs developed cultural expressions, such as poetry and storytelling, which were suited to their nomadic life. Nydell provides an insightful summation of the prominence of language among Arabs: "The Arabic language is their [Arabs] greatest cultural treasure and achievement, an art form that unfortunately cannot be accessed or appreciated by outsiders…. In the Arab world, how you say something is as important as what you have to say." Thus, Arabs see their language as possessing an emotional content. Arabs approach the language as a "social

conduit in which emotional resonance is stressed," which is in contrast with the western view that language is a means of transferring information.

The Arab societies are characterized by the cultural values of collectivism, hierarchy, and a present orientation, which are mirrored in how Arabic is used. As with almost every collective society, social harmony among in-group members is valued among Arabs, who rely on indirect, ambiguous statements to lessen the potential for loss of face during interactions. While employing indirectness to ensure smooth relations, Arabs will engage in repetition and exaggeration to appeal to the audience's emotions. The noisy, animated speech form often associated with the Arab communication style is normally limited to interactions with social peers. When engaging elders or superiors "polite deference is required," which demonstrates the value placed on hierarchy. Arabs also tend to focus more on the present and consider future events with some degree of incertitude. This attitude is evident in the frequent use of *Inshallah* (if God wills) when discussing future events. Additionally, when connected to some action, the phrase can be used to indicate "yes," but at an unspecified future time, "no" in order to avoid personal responsibility, or an indirect "never."

2. 3. 2. 7. English Cultures

The cultural values characterizing Americans are quite evident in their use of English. Think for a moment on how frequently you use "I" in conversation and writing. When constructing your resume personal accomplishments and rewards take precedence over group efforts. During communicative interactions you will probably be more concerned with protecting your own face than that of others. This leads to a very direct, forthright style of communication that promotes the individuality so valued in the United States. The cultural value of equality also influences how Americans use English. With certain exceptions—such as judges, doctors, figures in higher education, and political office holders—titles are rarely used, and Americans prefer to move quickly to a first name basis when meeting new people.

However, as we briefly noted earlier in this lecture, the English language in other national cultures can vary in usage, vocabulary, and even spelling. For instance, the British place more emphasis on social status, or class, which can be reflected through one's accent. Additionally, they tend to be more formal and first names are normally not used until a relationship has been established. "The Queen's English" also has a large vocabulary of terms that vary from those employed in the United States— soldiers leaving the U.S. military are "discharged," but in England and Australia they are "demobbed." In the United States being "pissed" implies irritation or anger, but in England, Australia, and New Zealand it means being intoxicated. A "bum" in the United States refers to a vagrant or shiftless person, but in England it is that part of the body you sit on.

2. 4. Language use Interpreting and Translating

The impact of globalization on the world community and the ever increasing level of cross cultural communication interactions is a theme running through every chapter of this text. The work of interpreters and translators is instrumental to the success of increased communication interactions across cultural boundaries. Their importance in our globalized, multicultural society is exemplified by the requirements of the European Union. Today, the EU must manage meetings and correspondence in its 23 official languages, as well as several others, such as Arabic, Chinese, and Russian. Nations with large immigration populations are faced with interpretation and translation requirements that often exceed those of the European Union. For example, the written exam for a California state driver license is available in 31 languages in addition to English. The Los Angeles County court system maintains a pool of interpreters representing over 100 languages. In addition to these examples, and on a larger scale, government, business, and social institutions must structure their messages, products, and advertisements to appeal to culturally diverse communities.

The term "translating" is often used in a broad sense to refer to changing messages, written or signed, from one language to another. However, in professional settings, "translation" is taken to mean working with written messages. "Interpretation," on the other hand, implies changing oral or signed messages from one language into another. Awareness of this difference is especially important when dealing with organizations that must continually manage information in two or more languages. The
European Commission, for instance, has both a Directorate General for Interpretation and a Directorate General for Translation.

2. 4. 1. Interpretation

In today's multicultural society the presence of interpreters is commonplace. In the United States interpretation services are frequently used in health care centers, courtrooms, business conferences, and even classrooms. Television news clips of international meetings often show participants with headsets or earphones. Almost any un-posed photo of a U.S. president conversing with a foreign government leader will show one or two individuals hovering near the participants interpreting the conversation. The presence of either an interpreter or participants wearing earphones usually suggests the type of translation being done—consecutive or simultaneous. *Consecutive* translation is most often used in high-level private activities, business meetings, and small, informal gatherings. In this method the speaker will talk for a short time and then stop to allow the interpreter to convey the message to the other party. *Simultaneous* translation uses audio equipment, with the translator located in a soundproof booth away from the participants. This is a much more demanding method because the speaker does not pause, which requires the translator to listen and speak simultaneously. In each method, a high degree of fluency in the target languages is obviously necessary.

2. 4. 2. Translation

As we mentioned above, a translator's task is to convert written text from one language into another. Types of texts can vary widely, including official government documents, international contracts, scientific papers, and even novels and poetry. Translators have the advantage of being able to consult references if needed and are not subject to the same time constraints that interpreters must work under. However, they are usually required to be knowledgeable in, and possess a comprehensive vocabulary of, a specific subject area. These vocabularies can be highly technical, such as for a scientific document, or consist of contemporary jargon or slang like that used in novels or even *manga* (Japanese comics) publications. Research in machine translation is a growing field and significant advances are being made. However, language variations in grammar, sentence structure, and cultural differences encompassing humor, irony, sarcasm, and the like, make this a daunting task. Although machines have lessened the burden of some elementary, routine translations, linguistic experts think it will be some time before human translators are replaced by machines. Part of the difficulty lies in a machine's inability to detect the subtle aspects of language, such as emotions and sarcasm, which can be conveyed by the way words are *used* rather than the actual words. Moreover, machines cannot read nonverbal communication.

2. 4. 3. Cultural Consideration in Interpretation and Translation

The process of translation and interpretation is much more complicated than merely taking a word from one language and replacing it with one from another language. There are numerous cultural considerations that come into play. Often, there is no single word equivalency or the word may have a different meaning in another language. Football, for instance, means something quite different in Europe and South America than in the United States or Canada. In the United States, the suggestion to "discuss" something connotes a desire to talk over a topic in a mutually agreeable, friendly manner, but in Spanish, "*discusión*" implies a more intense, discordant attitude.

An applied example can illustrate how cultural factors can compound the interpretation process. In previous chapters we pointed out that some cultures (e.g., China, Japan, and Korea) rely on an indirect communication style and others (e.g., United States) use a straightforward, direct style. In cross-cultural negotiations with a U.S. group, representatives from one of the Northeast Asian countries might respond to a request with "maybe," "I will try my best," or "we will have to consider this" to signal a negative reply. In this case, a literal translation devoid of any cultural nuances can be potentially misleading. Members of the U.S. team are conditioned to hearing a more direct reply, such as a simple "no" or even "that is out of the question." Thus, they could easily misconstrue a literal interpretation to be a positive reply. Translation tasks can also require an extensive awareness of cultural factors. As an illustration, if translating a Japanese novel into English, the translator would need to be aware of contemporary colloquialisms and slang. For example, if the novel mentions a large truck (*oki torakku*), it could become "eighteen-wheeler" or "semi" in American

English, but in the United Kingdom, “articulated lorry” would be a more appropriate term. Similarly, if the Japanese novel mentioned an “American dog” (*Amerikan doggu*), the Australian version would use “Dagwood Dog” and the U.S. adaptation would be “corn dog.” The Spanish word *ahora* offers another example. Among Spanish speakers the common meaning is that something will be done within a few minutes to several hours. However, the word is usually translated into English as “now,” which implies immediately or right away. To add greater urgency, the Spanish speaker would use *ahorita* or *ahoritita*. Even *within* the Spanish language there are major linguistic differences between what is used in Spain, South America, Central America, Mexico, and other Spanish speaking nations. These variations are so great that it is impossible to translate “a given text in a way that would fully satisfy all of these people.”

2. 4. 4. Working with Interpreters and Translators

As interactions with people from other cultures speaking different languages continue to increase, the ability to work through an interpreter or translator becomes essential to ensuring your message is conveyed correctly and that you properly understand the other party’s meaning. Use of an interpreter or translator involves establishing a three-way rapport between you, the interpreter or translator, and the audience. Thus, it is important to select an interpreter or translator that best suits your particular situation. The following are some of the more obvious considerations.

- **Language knowledge**: The individual selected needs to be completely bilingual. Moreover, this knowledge should encompass contemporary usage which includes metaphors, slang, and idioms.
- **Dialect knowledge:** In addition to language, the individual should also have a facility in any dialect that may come into play. While this may seem minor, during the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill, to work with the Vietnamese speaking residents of the Gulf area, BP hired interpreters who spoke a North Vietnamese dialect and used what was considered “Communist terminology.” This caused the Gulf Coast Vietnamese, originally from South Vietnam, to view the interpreters with suspicion.
- **Specialized terminology:** The specialized terminology used in different fields can be very confusing to an outsider. Therefore, it is essential that an interpreter or translator be well versed in the terms, jargon, and acronyms of the topic being addressed. For instance, an interpreter unfamiliar with medical terminology would be an impediment to effective intercultural communication in a health care setting.
- **Cultural knowledge:** There is a growing recognition that interpreters and translators must be culturally competent, and this requires knowledge of own culture as well as that of the target language culture.

2. 5. Communication Technology and Language

The digital age has greatly enhanced the ability of people around to world to easily and quickly “connect” with others through a variety of media. Although the Internet enables people from different cultures to interact with individuals and groups across vast distances, they must find and use a common language. Because the Internet is such a dynamic communication forum, new innovations are continually

being introduced. Thus, it is not our intention to provide you a comprehensive examination of the nexus between technology and culture, an endeavor far beyond the scope of this lecture. Rather, we wish to offer you a perspective on the variety of languages used to access the Internet.

English continues to be the most common language among Internet users, which has raised concern of it becoming the world's dominant language. There are two rather obvious reasons for English being the principal language among Internet users: **(1)** the system was conceived and implemented in the United States and was, therefore, designed for English speakers, and **(2)** English "is the lingua franca of scientific and academic publishing." However, Internet usage statistics over the past decade suggest that other languages are gaining a greater presence. Looking at the worldwide classification, for example, we see that China has the largest number of all Internet users, but they represent less than one-third of the country's population. In contrast, the United States is the second largest user with over three quarters of the population going online. Thus, China has a much greater potential for increasing its number of Internet users, as do the other developing nations of India and Brazil.

Just as previous Western media, such as television, music, and videos, increased the world's exposure to English, so has the Internet. But Danet and Herring suggest that "the possibility of a single language prevailing over all others seems remote." What seems possible, however, is "an oligarchy of the world's largest languages—Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, Malay, Hindi, Russian—each of them dominating in its geographical region, where it also enjoys economic and cultural influences."60 Language can also play a role in the selection of which social media outlet a culture favors. A mid-2010 report indicated that while 62 percent of U.S. Internet users were on Facebook, only 3 percent of the Japanese were. However, more than 16 percent of Japanese Internet users "tweeted," compared to 9.8 percent in the United States. One reason for this variation is that the Japanese language (as well as Chinese) enables users to say considerably more in the 140 character limit than can be said in English. For example, the word "Japan" requires five characters in English, but only two (2) in Japanese.

2. 6. Language and Intercultural Competence

As we stated at the outset of this lecture, almost every intercultural communication interaction involves one or more individuals relying on a second language. Thus, it is impossible to discuss even a small number of the many scenarios where language is used to create understanding. But here we want to acquaint you with some general measures relating to language use that can enhance your intercultural communication competence.

2. 6. 1. Improving Interpersonal Interactions

During interactions with someone speaking a second or foreign language, there is a very high potential for miscommunication, unless the person is fluent and culturally knowledgeable. When using your

own language while conversing with a non-native speaker, the following considerations should help you reduce the potential for misunderstandings.

2. 6. 2. being mindful

In any cross cultural communication interaction it is especially important that you be *mindful*. This is defined as creating new categories, being receptive to new information, and realizing that other people may not share your perspective. Creating new categories means moving beyond the broad, general classifications you may have been using for many years. As an example, instead of categorizing someone as an Asian, you should try to form a more specific classification that considers gender, age, national and regional identity, occupation, and such (e.g., "a young Chinese male college student from Beijing"). Being receptive to new information may mean something as simple as learning that some people consider horse meat a delicacy or do not wear shoes inside their homes. Yet learning about different perspectives can also be as complicated as trying to understand why another culture sees nothing wrong in bribing government officials or aborting a fetus because it is not a male.

Being mindful can also entail being aware that using a second or foreign language is more physically and cognitively demanding than speaking one's native language. During a conversation, someone speaking a second or foreign language must be more alert to what the other person is saying and how it is being said. They must simultaneously think about how to respond. Depending on the degree of fluency, this may require the second or foreign language speaker to mentally convert the received message into his or her native language, prepare a response in the native language, and then cognitively translate that response into the second or foreign language. If their second language vocabulary is limited, the cognitive demands are even greater. This difficulty is increased if the second language speaker is unfamiliar with the native speaker's accent. As you can see, the second language speaker is confronted with a much greater mental task than the native speaker. This cognitive process can produce both mental and physical fatigue. Thus, the native speaker must be alert for signs that the second language speaker is tiring.

2. 6. 3. Speech Rate

One problem encountered by second or foreign language speakers is that native speakers often seem to talk quite fast. For example, if you are interacting with someone who is using English as a second or foreign language, you cannot automatically assume that he or she is completely fluent. Therefore, until the other person's level of language competence is determined, you should speak a bit more slowly and distinctly than you normally do. By closely monitoring feedback from the second or foreign language speaker, you can adjust your speech rate accordingly. It is also important to look in the direction of the other person, as this can aid in understanding a second or foreign language.

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2. 6. 4. Vocabulary

Determining the second or foreign language speaker's vocabulary level is also important. Until you are sure that the other person has the requisite second or foreign language ability, avoid professional vocabulary, technical words, and acronyms. In a health care setting, instead of using "inflammation," it might be more effective to say, "The area will get red and a little sore." Metaphors, slang, and colloquialisms can also impede understanding and should not be used. In the United States, for instance, the phrase "we are on a parallel course" is used to indicate that you agree with the other party's proposal. However, in Japan, it means that the proposal will never be accepted because parallel lines never meet. In addition, please recall our earlier warning that humor does not travel well across cultures.

2. 6. 5. Attend to Nonverbal Behavior

When interacting with a second or foreign language user, you need to be alert to the individual's nonverbal responses. This can provide cues about your speech rate, type of vocabulary, and whether the individual understands what you are saying. Moreover, in a cross cultural situation you need to be aware of cultural differences in nonverbal cues. For instance, if your Japanese counterpart is giggling at something you said, which you know is not humorous, it might be a signal that your message is not fully understood. At the same time you should expect a second or foreign language speaker to exhibit unfamiliar nonverbal behaviors. Standing farther apart than you are used to, being less demonstrative, refraining from smiling, or avoiding direct eye contact may be normal nonverbal behaviors in their culture.

2. 6. 6. Checking

By "checking," we mean that you should employ measures to help ensure your cross cultural partner understands your messages. If you feel the second language speaker is having difficulty comprehending something said, simply say, "Let me say that another way," and rephrase your statement. Also, while checking for understanding, try to do so from a subordinate position. That is, instead of asking, "Do you understand?" which places the burden on the other person, ask, "Am I being clear?" In this manner you take responsibility for the conversation and lessen the potential for embarrassing the other person. This can be of considerable importance when interacting with someone from a culture where face is highly valued. Another means of checking is to write out a few words of the message you are trying to convey. Some people's second or foreign language reading skills may be greater than their listening ability. As you have read throughout this lecture, globalization has made the world much smaller. As more and more people from different cultures come together, knowing another language becomes increasingly beneficial. The following section will note some of the benefits of learning a second or foreign language.

2. 6. 7. Second or Foreign Language Benefit

It should be clear at this stage of the lecture that learning another language can be extremely demanding, requiring considerable time and effort, but the advantages are so numerous as to make the effort worthwhile. Obviously, knowledge of a second or foreign language will help you communicate with other people. Additionally, it also tells the native speakers that you are interested in them and their culture. Using another language can also help you better express yourself or explain certain concepts or items. A native Hindi speaker explained that English, his second language, had no "words for certain kinds of [Hindi] relationships and the cultural assumptions and understandings which go with them." Wong, who speaks Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese) and English echoes this: "Relying only on English, I often cannot find words to convey important meanings found in Chinese." Thus, learning a second or foreign language can provide greater insight into the emotions and values of another culture, which will increase your intercultural understanding and competence, and also provide a greater awareness of cultural influences in general.

A Belgian businessman explained that one of the first questions asked during employment interviews is, "Do you speak languages?" This priority is a product of Belgium's small geographical size, which creates a need for international commerce, and as a member of the European Union. In many ways the language ability the people of Belgium need to effectively interact within the greater sphere of the European Union is a microcosm of globalization. As world society becomes more interconnected and more integrated, there is a corresponding need to speak more than one language. While bilingualism is official in only a small number of nations—such as Switzerland, Belgium, India, and Canada—it is practiced in almost every country. The criticality of language to successful interactions in a globalized world is seen in the European Commission's goal of a "Europe where everyone can speak at least **two other languages** in addition to their own mother tongue." A similar objective was voiced on the other side of the world by the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, "Since we are living in a globalized society, I am keenly aware of the necessity of children acquiring the ability to communicate in foreign languages."

3. Nonverbal Messages and Communication

All of the examples offered in the last few paragraphs were presented for two reasons. First, we hoped to arouse your interest in the subject of nonverbal communication. Second, we wanted to demonstrate that although much of nonverbal communication is universal, many nonverbal actions are shaped by culture. What might be a clear "message" in one culture could well produce confusion in another. This potential for misinterpretation is at the core of this chapter. To appreciate fully the significance of nonverbal communication to human interaction, reflect for a moment on the countless times, besides employment interviews, that you send and receive nonverbal messages. Barnlund highlights some of those occasions: Many, and sometimes most, of the critical meanings generated in human encounters are elicited by touch, glance, vocal nuance, gestures, or facial expression with or without the aid of words. From the moment of recognition until the moment of separation, people observe each other with all their senses, hearing pause and intonation, attending to dress and carriage, observing glance and facial tension, as well as noting word

choice and syntax. Every harmony or disharmony of signals guides the interpretation of passing mood or enduring attribute. Out of the evaluation of kinetic, vocal, and verbal cues, decisions are made to argue or agree, to laugh or blush, to relax or resist, or to continue or cut off conversation.

3. 1. The Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Not only is nonverbal communication omnipresent and an essential ingredient in human interaction, it also occurs for specific reasons. Examining a few of those reasons will illustrate why any study of intercultural interaction must include information about nonverbal communication.

3. 1. 1. Expressing Internal States

Nonverbal communication is important because people use this message system to express ideas, attitudes, feelings, and emotions. As Guerrero and Floyd point out, "Nonverbal communication is the predominant means of conveying meaning from person to person." Consciously and unconsciously, intentionally and unintentionally, people make important judgments concerning your internal state by the nonverbal messages you generate. If you see someone with a clenched fist and an inhospitable expression, you do not need words to tell you that the person is not happy. If you hear someone's voice quaver and witness their hands tremble, you may infer that the person is fearful or anxious, despite what might be said. If someone smiles as you approach them, you feel far more at ease than if they were scowling.

Be it fear, joy, anger, or sadness, your posture, face, and eyes can convey your feelings without you ever uttering a word. For this reason most people rely heavily on what they perceive through their eyes.

In fact, research indicates that you will usually believe nonverbal messages instead of verbal messages when the two contradict. You can even appraise the quality of your relationships according to the interpretations assigned to nonverbal messages. From the amount of touching that takes place, to the tone of voice being used, to the distance between you and your partner, you can gather clues to the closeness of your relationship. The first time you move from holding hands with your partner to touching his or her face, you are sending a message, and that message takes on added significance if your touch is returned. In short, "people use nonverbal cues to define the social and emotional nature of their relationships and interactions."

3. 1. 2. Creating Identity

Nonverbal communication is important in human interaction because it is partially responsible for establishing identity. The nonverbal inferences people use to construct their identities are drawn from a variety of messages. From personal experience you know how judgments are often made about another person based on such things as skin color, use of makeup, facial expression, manner of dress, accent, jewelry, and even the type of handshake offered. This use of nonverbal symbols to express a person's

identity is universal, as expressed in the following quote about tattoos. In New Guinea, a swirl of tattoos on a woman's face indicates her family lineage. The dark scrawls on a Cambodian monk's chest reflect his religious beliefs. A Los Angeles gang member's sprawling tattoos describe his street affiliation, and may even reveal if he's committed murder. Whether the bearer is a Maori chief in New Zealand or a Japanese mafia lord, tattoos express an indelible identity.

3. 1. 3. Regulating Interaction

Nonverbal actions offer clues regarding how people navigate conversation. In a classroom you might raise your hand to signal that you want to talk. In other situations you could lean forward, point a finger, pause, or change the direction of your gaze as a way of altering the conversation. These and other actions communicate to your partner "when to begin a conversation, whose turn it is to speak, how to get a chance to speak, how to signal others to talk more, and how to end a conversation."

3. 1. 4. Repeating the Message

A common function of nonverbal communication is that it can be used for repetition. If someone is offering what you consider to be a substandard plan, you can move your head from side to side at the same time you utter the word "no." While pointing in a certain direction you can say to the other person, "The computer lab's over there." In both of these examples the gestures and the words you use have similar meanings and reinforce one another.

3. 1. 5. Substituting for Words

Nonverbal messages can be used as substitutes for words. For example, there are many occasions when someone who is carrying bad news will end up signaling their sorrow without uttering a sound. Or think of all the occasions when you approach a very special friend with a large smile and open arms. A teacher will often place an index finger to the lips as an alternative to saying, "Please be quiet." In each of these examples an action is replacing a verbal utterance and that action becomes the language. To help you understand the language of nonverbal communication, and its role in intercultural communication, we will **(1)** define nonverbal communication, **(2)** offer some guidelines for studying nonverbal communication, **(3)** link nonverbal communication to culture, **(4)** discuss the major classifications of nonverbal messages, and **(5)** offer some advice on how to better employ nonverbal communication within the intercultural context.

3. 2. The Nature of Nonverbal Communication

Because the central concern of this lecture is to examine how and why people communicate nonverbally, we begin with a definition of nonverbal communication. A single definition, like our definitions of "culture" and "communication" in lecture 1, is hard to pin down. For example, a common and very general definition of nonverbal communication is: "Nonverbal behavior refers to actions as distinct from speech."8 Because this definition is so broad as to include nearly every aspect of non-linguistic communication, we offer a slightly different view of nonverbal communication that is consistent with current thinking in the field and also reflects the cultural orientation of this book. We propose that

nonverbal communication involves all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment, and that have potential message value for the source and/or receiver. It is not by chance that our definition is somewhat lengthy. We wanted to offer a definition that would not only establish the boundaries of nonverbal communication, but would also reflect how the process actually functions. Part of that functioning involves **(1)** intentional and unintentional messages, and **(2)** the reciprocal relationship between verbal and nonverbal messages.

3. 2. 1. Intentional and Unintentional Messages

Our definition permits us to include *intentional* as well as *unintentional* behavior. One of the features that separate humans from most other animals is that humans can usually plan certain actions before they execute them. Observing a friend approaching, you offer a broad smile as part of your greeting. This is an intentional act. Yet nonverbal messages are most often produced without a conscious awareness that they may have meaning for other people. These are unintentional messages. For example, frowning because the sun is in your eyes may make someone mistakenly believe you are angry; looking upset after receiving a phone call could make a person approaching you think that you're unhappy to see him or her; and touching someone's hand for an extended time could cause that person to think you are flirting when that was not your intent. These are all examples of how your actions, unintentionally, can send messages to others. The sociologist Goffman describes this fusing of intentional and unintentional behavior: The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives and the impression that he gives off. The first involves verbal symbols or their substitutes, which he uses admittedly and solely to convey the information that he and the other are known to attach to these symbols. This is communication in the traditional and narrow sense. The second involves a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor (communicator), the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way.

3. 2. 2. Verbal and Nonverbal Messages

We have already indicated that nonverbal communication is a multidimensional activity where nonverbal messages can serve as substitutes for verbal messages. We now add that verbal and nonverbal messages often work in unison. Knapp and Hall emphasize this idea when they write, "We need to understand that separating verbal and nonverbal behavior into two separate and distinct categories is virtually impossible." The interfacing of the verbal with the nonverbal is reflected in a number of ways. For example, you often use nonverbal messages to repeat a point you are trying to make verbally. You could place your index finger over your lips at the same time you were whispering "please don't yell" to someone who was shouting. You can also observe the reciprocal relationship between words and actions if you tell someone you are pleased with his or her performance while patting them on the shoulder.

3. 2. 3. Studying Nonverbal Messages

Because the study of nonverbal communication has become part of "popular culture," this complex and multifaceted subject is often trivialized. Fox News Network, for example, frequently employees an "expert" in nonverbal communication to inform viewers of what politicians are "really saying." This marginalizing often means that nonverbal communication is presented in a misleading and frivolous manner. Therefore, we need to pause before pursuing the topic any further and mention some potential problems and misconceptions associated with this area of study.

3. 2. 4. Nonverbal Messages and Communication can be Ambiguous

Part of the ambiguity associated with nonverbal messages is contextual, which can be seen if someone brushes against you in an elevator: Was it merely an accident, or was it an opportunistic sexual act? As Osborn and Motley tell us, "Meanings and interpretations of nonverbal behaviors often are on very shaky ground." You saw that "shaky ground" when people, both in and out of the media, interpreted a fist bump exchanged by President Barack Obama and his wife Michelle as a "terrorist greeting" instead of a simple sign of camaraderie between husband and wife. Our intention is to remind you that "different situations or environments produce different nonverbal messages."

3. 3. Multiple Factor Influence Non verbal Communication

Nonverbal communication, like much of your behavior, is produced by a host of variables, and culture is but one of them. Nonverbal interactions are influenced by factors such as "cultural background, socioeconomic background, education, gender, age, personal preferences and idiosyncrasies." Simply stated, not everyone in a particular culture engages in the same nonverbal actions, so interpretations of nonverbal behaviors must be carefully evaluated before generalizations can be made.

3. 3. 1. Nonverbal Messages Include Cultural Universal

Although the bulk of this lecture will focus on nonverbal differences across cultures, we need to point out that there are many similarities in how cultures employ this communication system. Cross cultural parallels have been at the core of a lingering academic debate that goes back to the work of Charles Darwin. While much of the debate deals with facial expressions, the arguments touch all dimensions of nonverbal communication. Here lies the question: Is there a universal language of facial expressions? One position holds that anatomically similar expressions may occur in everyone, but the meanings people attach to them differ from culture to culture. The majority opinion among scholars is that there are universal facial expressions for which people have similar meanings. Ekman, the driving force behind this position, advances the following point of view: "The subtle creases of a grimace tell the same story around the world, to preliterate New Guinea tribesmen, to Japanese and American college students alike. As noted, this was also Darwin's thesis but now here's hard evidence that culture does not control the face." Ekman and others present the theory that there is "a basic set of at least six facial expressions that are innate, universal, and carry the same basic meaning throughout the world." The six pan-cultural and universal emotions conveyed

by facial expressions are happiness, sadness, fear, anger, disgust, and surprise. Despite the biologically based nature of facial expressions, there seem to be clear cultural expectations and norms that often dictate when, where, how, and to whom facial expressions are displayed. This means that different cultures construct their own rules for what are appropriate facial expressions, as well as what aspects of that behavior should be attended to.

3. 3. 2. Nonverbal Communication and Culture

We have just finished discussing how culture is but one of the dynamics that influence the manner in which people send and receive nonverbal messages. However, while granting the assorted causes behind human behavior, we nevertheless advocate that nonverbal communication mirrors the learned behaviors imbedded in a culture. Speaking of this link, Wood writes, "Most nonverbal communication isn't instinctual, but is learned in the process of socialization." Rosenblatt confirms this same idea by noting, "What emotions are felt, how they are expressed, and how they are understood are matters of culture." What is key in Rosenblatt's sentence is that your culture has taught you what nonverbal actions to display (crying or laughing), the meaning of those actions (sadness or happiness), and the contextual backdrop of those actions (funeral or wedding).

Our thesis should be clear: Nonverbal communication "plays a crucial and necessary part in communicative interactions between people from different cultures." As a student of cross cultural communication, learning about the connection between culture and nonverbal behavior will help to improve the manner in which you engage in cross cultural interactions. Hall underscores the need to learn about nonverbal behaviors in the following: I remain convinced that much of our difficulty with people in other countries stems from the fact that so little is known about cross-cultural communication…. Formal training in the language, history, government, and customs is only a first step. Of equal importance is an introduction to the nonverbal language of the country. Most Americans are only dimly aware of this silent language, even though they use it every day. By understanding cultural differences in nonverbal behavior you will also be able to gather clues about underlying attitudes and values being expressed by your communication partner. How far people stand from each other during normal conversation can offer clues to their views on privacy. Bowing tells you that a culture values formality, rank, and status. It is not by chance that Hindus greet each other by placing their palms together in front of themselves while tilting their heads slightly downward. This salutation reflects their belief that the deity exists in everyone.

3. 4. Classifications of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication involves these nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and their use of the environment, and that have a potential message value for the source or the receiver. It is sending and receiving messages in a variety of ways without the use of verbal

codes (words). It is both intentional and unintentional. There are many different types of nonverbal communication such as kinesics, proxemics, haptics, chronemics, paralanguage and environment. Nonverbal classifications may slightly vary depending on a researcher. B. Dobek-Ostrowska's types/classifications of nonverbal communication are presented below. Generally speaking, there are two basic categories of nonverbal language: (1) nonverbal messages produced by the body, and (2) nonverbal messages produced by the broad setting (time, space, silence). The figure below presents the multiple aspects of non-verbal communication.

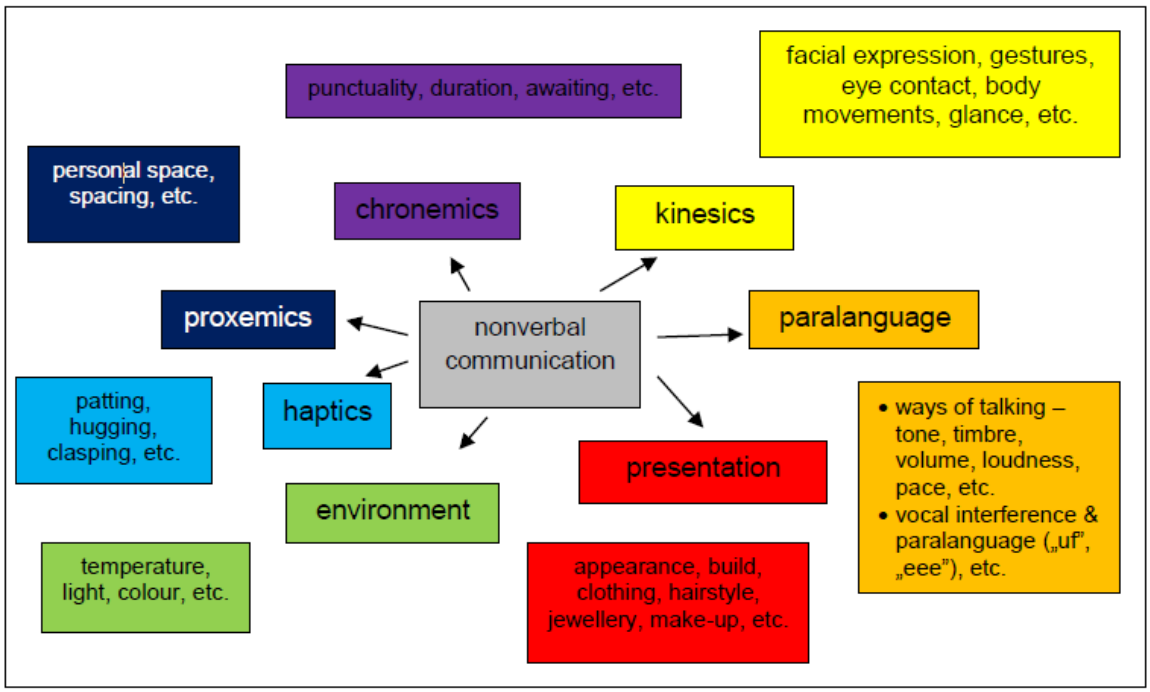

Figure 1: The Multiple Aspects of Non Verbal Communication

3. 4. 1. Messages of the Body

As we begin our discussion of the classifications of nonverbal communication you will notice that our analysis of each category starts with the behaviors found in the dominant culture of the United States. We also remind you of the integrated nature of these categories. "Messages generated by each category do not exist in isolation but rather exist in the company of messages from other categories, verbal messages, contexts, and people functioning as message receivers." Most classifications divide nonverbal messages into two comprehensive categories: those that are primarily produced by the body (appearance, movement, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, and paralanguage), and those that the individual combines with the setting (space, time, and silence).

3. 4. 2. Appearance

From hair sprays to hairpieces, from fat-reducing diets to 24-hour fitness centers, from false eyelashes to blue contact lenses, and from cosmetic surgery to tanning salons, people show their concern for how they appear to others. Many people in the United States now use body piercing and tattooing to alter

their appearance. A study in 2010 conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 38 percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 have at least one tattoo.24 Keating clearly underscores the sway your outer shell has on others when she writes, “The power of communication to draw others near or to drive them away derives as much from how we appear as from the language we deploy.” What Keating is suggesting is, of course, what you observe daily in your personal life. Whom you approach and whom you avoid, particularly in regard to first impressions, might well determine future interaction, or indeed, if there will be any interaction. “Initial attraction from one person to another is frequently the precursor to actual interaction, whereas a lack of attraction may preclude people from taking any steps toward relational development.”

3. 4. 2. 1. Judgment of beauty

Concern with personal appearance is not unique to the United States. As Peoples and Bailey point out, “People around the world are highly creative in altering their physical appearance.” And we add that they have been doing so for a long time. As far back as the Upper Paleolithic period (about forty thousand years ago) your ancestors were using bones for necklaces and other bodily ornaments. From that period to the present, historical and archaeological evidence has shown that people are fixated on their bodies. They have painted them, fastened objects to them, dressed them, undressed them, and even deformed and mutilated them in the name of beauty. According to Keesing, “The use of the body for decoration appears to be a cultural universal.”

An important component of appearance is the perception of beauty. Studies show that in the United States, being overweight reduces one’s income, lowers one’s chances of getting married, and helps decrease the amount of education one receives. People use a person’s attractiveness to make inferences (often faulty) about that individual’s “intelligence, gender, age, approachability, financial well-being, class, tastes, values, and cultural background.” In intercultural communication, appearance is important because “One’s body image and the satisfaction with it result from comparisons with an implicit cultural ideal and standard.” In the United States, people tend to value the appearance of men with muscular bodies and women who are tall and slender. This view of attractiveness is not the rule in all cultures. For example, in large parts of Africa plumpness is considered a sign of beauty, health, and wealth, and slimness is evidence of unhappiness, disease, or mistreatment at the hands of one’s husband. Among the Chinese, you can see yet another cultural standard for female attractiveness. As Wenzhong and Grove note, “Many women keep their hairstyles simple (often one or two braids) and make little attempt to draw attention to themselves through self-decoration such as colorful scarves, jewelry, or makeup.” In major Chinese cities today, however, judgments of beauty are being influenced by an influx of Western images.

The judgment of beauty across cultures is a perception that is ripe for ethnocentrism. What happens is that “people intolerant of different cultural practices often fail to realize that had they been raised in one of those other cultures, they would be practicing those allegedly disgusting or irrational customs.” As we have just noted, one of those “customs” is what defines attractiveness. The link between ethnocentrism and

beauty arises from "what is seen as beautiful in one culture may look hideous to people from another culture." The many exotic rituals we often see in PBS documentaries or in the pages of *National Geographic*, such as neck stretching, lip enlargements, earlobe plugs, teeth filing, and so on, represent the beautifying practices common in many parts of the world. Of course, liposuction, hair implants, facelifts, laser surgery, and the like, while not the least bit extraordinary to many Westerners, may seem abhorrent to people from other parts of the world. Because cultures are always in a state of flux, it will be interesting to observe if perceptions of attractiveness begin to change as cultures have greater contact with one another. Even today doctors are reporting an increase in plastic surgeries in places like China, Korea, and Brazil.

3. 4. 2. 2. Skin Color

Perhaps we should have begun our discussion of appearance with skin color, since it is the first characteristic people notice when they approach a stranger, and the one that has the greatest impact on perception and interaction. In fact "skin color is the first racial marker children recognize and can be considered the most salient of phenotypic attributes." Often that marker is perceived negatively. In an effort to replicate the classic "Doll Test" from the 1940s, where both black and white children preferred white dolls over black, Spencer recently designed a similar study and found that color still mattered in 2010. According to her research, "white children, as a whole, responded with a high rate of what researchers called white bias, identifying the color of their own skin with positive attributes and darker skin with negative attributes."

This conclusion, and others like it, is noteworthy in cross cultural communication since skin color is a clear symbol of differences. Knapp and Hall note, "In many respects, permanent skin colors have been the most potent body stimulus for determining inter-personal responses in our culture." Skin color "may also be the basis of the allocation of economic and psychological privileges to individuals relative to the degree those privileges are awarded to valued members of the dominant culture." The United States is not the only location where members of a culture are judged by their skin tone and seek various means to alter that tone. South Asian and Chinese women often avoid sunlight so that their skin remains light. They, along with women from Brazil, Jamaica, and India, are even using an assortment of creams and lotions as a means of achieving a paler tone to their skin.

3. 4. 2. 3. Attire

You know from your own experiences that clothing goes well beyond protection from the elements. As Adler and Rodman state, "Clothing can be used to convey economic status, education, social status, moral standards, athletic ability and/or interests, belief system (political, philosophical, religious), and levels of sophistication." In the United States, you can also observe how clothing can be a sign of group identification. Whether it is a military uniform, the sweatshirt that carries a logo of a favorite football team, the specific tilt of a baseball cap, or the attire of the hip-hop co-culture, clothing attempts to tell other people something about your identity. Among gang members in East Los Angeles, even the color of a bandana is a

proclamation of group affiliation—blue for Crips and red for Bloods. The notion of trying to make a statement with attire is so strong that recently, young boys at a high school in California were sent home from school because they were wearing T-shirts that looked like the American flag. According to school officials, they were wearing the American flag T-shirts on the same day that Cinco de Mayo was being celebrated by the Mexican students at the high school. School administrators believed that the conspicuous American flag apparel could provoke fights.

Nowhere is the incendiary nature of clothing more apparent than in the various types of scarves, veils, and robes associated with Muslim women. The first is called the *hijab,* which basically covers only the head, while the second scarf, known as the *alamira,* is a two-piece veil that also includes a scarf. There is also the *niqab,* a more extensive veil that only leaves an area open around the eyes. However, the most controversy has been generated by the *burqa*, which consists of a robe and veils over the entire face of the woman. Even the eyes are covered with the exception of a mesh screen that allows the woman to see what is in front of her. These coverings, particularly the ones over the entire face, have been a point of contention in some non- Muslim countries. In many European nations there have been government attempts to ban the veils from being worn in public places. For example, countries such as Britain, The Netherlands, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland are all deliberating proposals that, in one form or another, would prohibit the wearing of some veils in schools and other public places. France has already taken the first step in this debate with the bold action of banning Muslim headscarves and other so-called religious symbols from classrooms. Attempts at outlawing the veils have even come to North
America where "Lawmakers in Quebec are pushing a bill that would deny public services— including health care and education—to Muslim women who wear the *niqab*."

The arguments for and against an imposed dress code are complex, particularly since Muslim women wear scarves, veils, and the *burqa* as nonverbal symbols of womanhood, identity, and more importantly, as a manifestation of their religious beliefs. Throughout the Koran, women are told to be modest and wear clothing that does not draw attention to them. Al-Kaysi develops this point in more detail when he speaks of the links between modesty and dress among Muslim women: "The main garment must be a 'flowing' one, that is, a woman must avoid tight or clinging clothes which exaggerate her figure, or any part of it, such as breasts, legs or arms." Young girls and women are also urged in the Koran to dress in garments that do not resemble the clothes of nonbelievers. For these and other reasons, many Muslims and non-Muslims believe the banning of certain religious attire by any government violates the rights of a religion to offer "instruction" to its adherents. Those who support the ban advance arguments about freedom, female equality, secular traditions within a country, and even fears of terrorism. There is, of course, no simple solution to this dilemma. Some Arab countries have attempted to mediate the controversy by outlawing some of the religious clothing while permitting the wearing of a few specific garments. Syria and Turkey (secular countries with Muslim majority populations) have forbidden students and teachers from wearing the *niqab* in school, but have attempted to avoid extending these rulings off campus.

The issue of dress for Muslim women has even found its way to the United States in a location that in many ways is an icon of the United States—Disneyland. A young woman received an internship to work at Disneyland without having to be interviewed for the position. When she appeared for her first day of employment she was wearing a *hijab*. She was told to remove the *hijab*. She refused and was relegated to a room at Disneyland where she did not have any contact with park visitors. The woman is now pursuing legal action against Disneyland. This example, and all the others in this section, demonstrates just how powerful an impact nonverbal communication can have on human behavior.

Muslim men, like the women, have attire that differs from that found in the West. And like the attire of women, there is often a link between religion and dress. The traditional attire for men in Arabic nations would "include a long loose robe called a *dishdasha* or *thobe* and a headpiece, a white cloth *kaffiya* banded by a black *egal* to secure it." The subtlety of color in garments "tells others" about their status and affiliation. An all-white *kaffiya* means the person wearing the headpiece has not yet made the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The link between cultural values and clothing can be seen in nearly every culture. For example, as a symbolic gesture of their faith, the Amish dress in clothing that demonstrates humility and a severance from the dominant culture. Both males and females dress in clothing that is simple, unadorned, and predominantly dark in color. You can also observe the relationship of values and beliefs to dress in German culture, a culture where status and authority are significant. Hall and Hall write: Correct behavior is symbolized by appropriate and very conservative dress. The male business uniform is a freshly pressed dark suit and tie with a plain shirt and dark shoes and socks. It is important to emulate this conservative approach to both manners and dress. Personal appearance, like the exterior appearance of their homes, is very important to Germans.

Japan is another place that merges attire and a culture's value system, as seen in, "The general proclivity for conservative dress styles and colors emphasizes the nation's collectivism and, concomitantly, lessens the potential for social disharmony arising from nonconformist attire." Like so many cultural values, this Japanese desire for dark and unobtrusive attire has its roots deep in Japanese culture.

In much of the world people still dress in very traditional garments. Clothing styles, according to Peoples and Bailey, "have historically served as the most overt single indicator of ethnic identity." Whether it be the women of Guatemala wearing their colorful tunics (*huípiles),* or African men in white *dashikis*, traditional garments are still common in many cultures. Whether they are Sikhs in white turbans, women in Iran wearing their *hijabs,* the Japanese in kimonos, Hasidic Jews in black yarmulkes, or the dark attire of the Amish in the United States, you need to learn to be tolerant of others' external differences and not let them impede communication.

3. 4. 4. Body Movements

We remind you that the major thesis of this lecture is that communication involves much more than words. Imai underscores this point when he writes: "The world is a giddy montage of vivid gestures—traffic

police, street vendors, expressway drivers, teachers, and children on playgrounds, athletes with their exuberant hugging, clenched fists and 'high fives.' People all over the world use their hands, heads, and bodies to communicate expressively." The study of how movement communicates is called *kinesics*.

Kinesics cues are those visible body shifts and movements that can send both intentional and unintentional messages. For example, your attitude toward the other person can be shown by leaning forward to "communicate" that you are comfortable with him or her. You might show your emotional state by tapping on a table because you are nervous. Something as simple as walking can also send messages. Americans, particularly males, tend to walk in a manner that is distinct from most other cultures. Stevenson highlights this distinguishing gait thusly: "We walk big—swinging arms, letting our legs amble wide—in a manner that's fitting for folks from a country with plenty of empty space. Citizens of densely populated Europe exhibit a far more compact posture, with elbows and knees tucked tight and arm swings restrained." In attempting to understand the influence of body movement, a few points need to be clarified. First, in most instances the messages the body generates operate in combination with other messages. People usually smile and say "hello" to a friend at the same time. In Mexico, when asking someone to wait for "just a minute, please" (*un momento, por favor*), the speaker also makes a fist and then extends the thumb and index finger so that they form a sideways "U," as though measuring a short span of time. Second, while body language is universal, the meanings it evokes are attached to culture. Third, it is often difficult to control kinesics behavior. That is to say, in most instances you have at least a fraction of a second to think about what you are going to say, but a great deal of body action is spontaneous. Finally, there are thousands of distinct physical signs. Hence, any attempt at cataloging them would be both frustrating and fruitless. Our basic purpose is to point out that while all people use movements to communicate, culture teaches them how to use and interpret the movements. In the upcoming sections we look at a few cultural differences in a person's **(1)** posture and **(2)** movements (gestures) that convey ideas and feelings.

3. 4. 4. 1. Postures

Posture can indicate whether or not people are paying attention, the degree of status in the encounter, if people like or dislike each other, feelings of submissiveness, and even sexual intentions. One study reveals "that body posture may be as important as the face in communicating emotions such as fear." Think for a moment of all the meanings associated with slouching, being stiff, slumping over, crouching, kneeling, pulling back one's shoulders, twitching one's legs, putting one's hands in pockets, bowing, and the like.

On a cross cultural level, posture can offer insight into a culture's value system. President Obama discovered this firsthand when he visited Japan and engaged in a polite bow in front of Japan's Emperor Akihito. The arguments surrounding this seemingly innocuous nonverbal action created a firestorm of media attention. *Newsweek* magazine summarized the positions on both sides of the argument in the following two sentences: "The President was pilloried last week for his deep bow to Japan's Emperor Akihito during a visit to Tokyo. Was he groveling before a foreign leader—or just being polite?" The problem is, "In the West, bowing is associated with the indignity of feudal bondage." Hence, for many, Obama was engaging in an act

of subservience. For the Japanese, the bow (*ojigi*) is not a sign of capitulation, but rather it mirrors their value of status and respect. Actually, the Japanese have a wide range of uses for the bow. It can be a nonverbal way of expressing "thank you," a greeting, an apology, a congratulatory gesture, and much more.

To outsiders the act of bowing appears simple. The actual Japanese ritual is rather complicated. For example, the person who occupies the lower station begins the bow, and his or her bow must be deeper than the other person's. The superior, on the other hand, determines when the bowing is to end. When the participants are of equal rank, they begin the bow in the same manner and end at the same time. In fact, there are so many nuances to the act of bowing in Japan that young children begin to learn about this nonverbal behavior at a very early age. Many large companies even hold classes in correct bowing protocol for their employees. Thai people use a bow that is similar to the one employed by the Japanese. This movement (called the *wai)* is made by pressing both palms together in front of one's body, with the fingertips reaching to about neck level. While the basic value behind the bow is to demonstrate respect, it is also used to "say" "thank you." Many Buddhists will also keep the hands in the *wai* position while listening to a Dharma talk (Buddhist teaching).

Another nonverbal greeting pattern linked to religion is used in the Indian culture, where the *namaste* (Indian bow) is carried out by making a slight bow and bringing both hands together in front of the heart. This practice of greeting someone reflects the Hindu belief that God is in everything—including other people. Hence, all human beings, along with all the gods of Hinduism, are to be honored and respected Hindus will even bow before eating as a way of bestowing thanks for yet another one of God's gifts. As eccentric as it sounds, the way people sit is often a reflection of important cultural characteristics. In the United States, being casual and friendly is valued, and people often demonstrate this through their manner of sitting. The casual sitting position for males "includes a slump and leaning back and a type of sprawl that occupies a lot of space." American males often, consciously or unconsciously, sit with their feet up on their desk as a sign of being relaxed. In many countries, such as Germany, Sweden, and Taiwan, where lifestyles tend to be more formal, slouching is considered a sign of rudeness and poor manners. In fact, "German children are still taught to sit and stand up straight, which is a sign of good character. Slouching is seen as a sign of a poor upbringing." Even the manner in which you position your legs while sitting has cultural overtones. Remland offers further instances of the crossing of legs when he notes, "An innocent act of ankle-to-knee leg crossing, typical of most American males, could be mistaken for an insult (a showing of the sole of the foot gesture) in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Singapore, or Thailand." People in Thailand also believe there is something special about the bottoms of the feet. For them, the feet are the lowest part of the body, and they should never be pointed in the direction of another person.

In the United States, co-cultural differences exist in how people move, stand, and sit during interaction. Women often hold their arms closer to their bodies than men do. They usually keep their legs close together. Their posture is more restricted and less relaxed than the posture of males. Most of the research in the area of gender communication concludes that these differences are related to issues such as

status, power, and affiliation. Posture and stance also play important roles in the African- American co-culture. This is evident in the walk assumed by many young African- American males. “The general form of the walk is slow and casual with the head elevated and tipped to one side, one arm swinging and the other held limply.” The walk is often used to “show the dominant culture that you are strong and proud, despite your status in American society.”

3. 4. 4. 2. Gestures

Consider all of the messages that can be sent by waving, placing hands on hips, folding the arms, scratching the head, biting fingernails, pointing, making a fist, shaking a finger, etc. Gestures are a nonverbal “vocabulary” that people use, both intentionally and unintentionally, to share their internal states. Reflect for a moment about “signing” as a major form of communication utilized by the deaf co culture in the United States. Here you can observe a rich and extensive vocabulary composed almost exclusively of gestures. Another example of the power of gestures can be found in the hand signals used by various urban gangs. The slightest variation in performing a certain gesture can be the catalyst for a violent confrontation. Inability to “read” the meaning of a gesture, particularly in an intercultural communication setting, has the potential for confusion and awkwardness. You can witness some of the uncertainty of intercultural gestures in the following few examples.

- The “thumbs-up” gesture in the United States has positive connotations because it indicates that “everything is okay” or “you are doing very well.” However, “in Australia and West Africa it is seen as a rude gesture.”
- In the United States, pointing at someone usually does not carry negative connotations. In fact, directions are often given by pointing in one direction or another with the index finger. Germans point with the little finger, while in Japan pointing is done with the entire hand with the palm held upward. In China, pointing can be taken as a sign of rudeness. In much of the Arab world, pointing is thought to be an offensive gesture. And in much of Asia, pointing the index finger at a person is considered rude.
- In the United States “making a circle with one’s thumb and index finger while extending the others is emblematic of the word ‘okay’; in Japan (and Korea) it traditionally signifies ‘money’ (*okane*); and among Arabs this gesture is usually accompanied by a baring of teeth, signifying extreme hostility.” To a Tunisian, the gesture means, “I’ll kill you.” And in some Latino cultures the circle with the thumb and index finger is “an obscene gesture.”

We could present many more examples, since there are thousands of gestures prevalent in every culture. Therefore, instead of presenting a random catalog of gestures from all over the world, we will present enough examples to demonstrate how gestures and culture are linked. In so doing we examine **(1)** *idiosyncratic gestures*, **(2)** *beckoning*, **(3)** *agreement*, and variations related to the **(4)** *frequency and intensity* of the gestures.

Nonverbal communication is especially significant in cross-cultural communication. Different gestures can have different meanings. It has been proved that nonverbal communication can differ depending on culture. Therefore, we should pay special attention when we use gestures in a culture we do not know. The example of a different meaning of the same gesture is presented in the figure below.

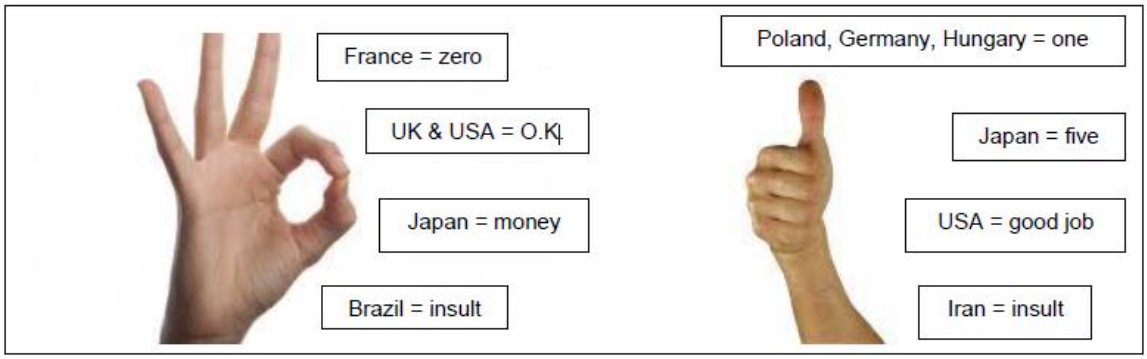

Figure 2: Gestures as Cultural Manifestations around the World

3. 4. 4. 2. 1. Idiosyncratic Gestures

As we have already indicated, there are limitless *idiosyncratic gestures* found in each culture. These are the distinctive gestures whose meanings are the feature and property of a particular culture. Nonverbal ways of communicating admiration can be one of the most idiosyncratic categories of all gestures. For example, "the Frenchman kisses his fingertips, the Italian twists an imaginary moustache, and the Brazilian curls one hand in front of another as if he is looking through an imaginary telescope." The Japanese have a gesture whose actual movement is not unique to that culture, yet the meaning is exclusive to that culture. The gesture is made by pointing both index fingers above the head, at the top of the ears, as if they were the horns of an ogre. The gesture means the man's wife is angry. In China, if you place your right hand over your heart, it means you are making a sincere promise. In Iraq, the same gesture can mean "thank you." For the French, pulling the skin down below the right eye can mean "I don't believe you." In Argentina, one twists an imaginary mustache to signify that everything is "okay."

Meanings for gestures with sexual connotations may also be exclusive to a specific culture. In the United States someone might use the middle finger to send an insulting, obscene gesture. This sexual insult gesture is not universal. For the Japanese, the thumb protruding out between the index finger and the middle finger is a sexual sign with a variety of interpretations. This same gesture is the letter "T" in American Sign Language.

3. 4. 4. 2. 2. Beckoning Gestures

The sign used for *beckoning* is also attached to culture. In the United States when a person wants to signal a friend to come, he or she usually makes the gesture with one hand, palm up, fingers more or less together, and moving toward the body. In much of Latin America this gesture takes on romantic connotations. Koreans signal someone to come by cupping "the hand with the palm down and drawing the

fingers toward the palm." This same beckoning sign is used by the Vietnamese. When they see this gesture, many Americans think the other person is waving good-bye. In Germany and much of Scandinavia, tossing the head back constitutes a beckoning motion. For many Arabs, holding the right hand out, palm upward, and opening and closing the hand is nonverbally asking someone to "come here." And to beckon someone in Spain, you stretch your arm out, palm downward, and make a scratching motion toward your body with your fingers.

3. 4. 4. 2. 3. Agreement Gestures

Movements and gestures denoting agreement represent another example of culturally based gestures. In the United States, moving your head up and down is perceived as a sign of agreement. This same movement can have different meanings in different cultures. "Among Native American, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Island groups, it often means, 'I hear you speaking.' It does not signal that the listener understands the message nor does it suggest that he or she agrees." Greeks express "yes" with a nod similar to the one used in the United States, but when communicating "no," they jerk their head back and raise their faces. Lifting one or both hands up to the shoulders strongly emphasizes the "no." In India, gestures for "yes" and "no" also differ from those used in the United States. Indians demonstrate they agree with you by tossing the head from side to side. To show disagreement they nod up and down. These gestures are virtually reversed in the United States. In Japan people have "learned" to strike the palm of one hand with a clenched fist to show agreement, but this is an obscene gesture in Indonesia.

3. 4. 4. 2. 4. Frequency and Intensity of Gestures

There are also cultural differences that regulate the frequency and intensity of gestures. It is generally accepted that Italians, most Latinos, Africans, and people from the Middle East are more demonstrative and employ gestures with greater frequency and intensity than do cultures such as the Japanese, Chinese, Finns, and Scandinavians. Italians, for example, "speak" with their hands as well as their voices. Berry and his colleagues reaffirm this idea when they mention the "excited impression" Italians make "because of their lively movement patterns." "Brazilians say that if you tie their hands they cannot speak. They use hand gestures and broad arm gestures as they talk." The use of gestures to promote meaning is also common among Arab men. Here you can see large gestures and "the waving of arms used to accompany almost every spoken word." Members of many Asian cultures perceive such outward activity quite differently, often equating vigorous action with a lack of manners and restraint. Germans are also made uncomfortable by bold hand gestures. These types of gestures, by their standards, are too ostentatious and flamboyant. Ruch offers the following advice to American executives who work with German corporations: "Hands should be used with calculated dignity. They should never serve as lively instruments to emphasize points in conversation. The entire game plan is to appear calm under pressure." The Germans are not alone in their aversion to large and ostentatious gestures. As Morrison and Conway note, "Canadians, especially those of British descent, do not tend toward frequent or expansive gesturing." You can witness differences in

gestures by looking at various co-cultures. For example, as compared to males, “women are more likely to gesture than are men,” yet “men’s gestures tend to be larger and more expansive.” African Americans value a lively and expressive form of communication and hence display a greater variety of movements than whites when interacting.

3. 4. 4. 3. Facial Expressions

The early Greek playwrights and the Noh actors of Japan were keenly aware of the shifts in mood and meaning that facial expressions conveyed. Both forms of drama used masks and an abundance of makeup to demonstrate differences in each actor’s character and expression. Whether it is the Mexican adage that “One’s face is the mirror of one’s soul,” or the Yiddish proverb, “The face tells the secret,” people everywhere have always been captivated by the face. What is intriguing is that we are talking about three faces. First, there is your “assigned” face, the one you are born with. While it is altered by age, health, and even cosmetics and surgery, this is your “basic” face. Second is the face that can be manipulated at will. To signal your happiness, you can put on a broad smile when your best friend is approaching. Alternatively, you can hide your true feelings and smile when you dislike having to talk with another person. In short, this second face is one you control. Finally, you have the face that is changed by your surroundings and the messages you receive, such as when you involuntarily blush after receiving a compliment.

Among scholars, the importance of facial expressions is well established. From the moment of birth a newborn begins the process (which is unconscious at this stage) of “reading” the expressions on the faces that stare down at it. “Infants learn to distinguish different expressions and sense the changes in a parent’s facial expressions.” Ferraro accentuates the importance of facial expressions by noting that the face is so central to the process of communication that people often speak of “face-to-face” communication in the West and “losing face” in places like Asia. So important is the influence of the face in communicating that studies have shown that “facial communications are given greater weight than are vocal messages.” Facial expressions are important in that they can reflect a course of action, convey messages of “social submissiveness and dominance,” tell others how interested you are, signal your degree of involvement, indicate your level of comprehension, and divulge whether or not your reactions are spontaneous or controlled. A vivid example of how facial expressions impact intercultural communication was observed when executives from the Toyota automobile company appeared before a Congressional panel in the United States to explain the problems associated with the recall of over six million vehicles. The executives’ presentation before the panel was criticized by members of the Congressional Committee and the news media, who felt the Toyota spokesperson failed “to show adequate remorse for those who had been killed in accidents involving acceleration problems.” At the core of these negative reactions was the perception that the Toyota representatives failed to outwardly display any signs of emotion. What the critics failed to realize is that many Asian cultures restrain and suppress facial expressions. As Sue and Sue point out, “the Japanese and Chinese restraint of strong feelings (anger, irritation, sadness, and love or happiness) is considered to be a sign of maturity and wisdom.” Koreans also with emotion and do not engage in animated facial

expressions. As you can see, cultural expectations and norms often dictate when, where, how, and to whom facial expressions are displayed. This means that different cultures construct their own rules for what are appropriate facial expressions, as well as what aspects of the behavior should be attended to. While the "rule" in many Asian cultures calls for a degree of control and restraint with regard to outwardly displaying emotions, in some cultures, such as those of the Mediterranean, facial expressions are animated and even exaggerated.

It is not uncommon in this region of the world to see men crying in public. We now move to yet another facial expression, the smile. Although the smile is a universal act, it is in part controlled by culture. An interesting note regarding smiling is that everyone is born knowing how to smile, yet the amount of smiling, the stimulus that produces the smile, and even what the smile is communicating often shifts from culture to culture. Culture can "influence smiling both by determining the interpretation of events, which affects the cause of happiness, and by shaping display roles, which determine when it is socially appropriate to smile." In North America a smile usually sends a positive message. It is a sign of happiness, and is even used as a greeting.

The Thais are another people noted for their use of the smile. In fact, Thailand has been called the "Land of Smiles," and so common is the smile that to an outsider it seems to be the response to just about any situation. Therefore, people from other cultures find it difficult to "read" the Thai smile, since it can be used to display sadness, joy, embarrassment, fright, anxiety, and numerous other emotions. Vietnamese also make use of the smile to represent phrases such as "Hello," "Thank you," and "I am sorry." In Japan you can observe another culture where there are many meanings associated with smiling. According to Nishiyama, "the Japanese may smile when they feel embarrassed and laugh when they want to hide their anger." In Japan people of lower status often use the smile "to denote acceptance of a command or order by a person of higher status when in fact they feel anger or contempt for the order or the person giving the order." There are many cultures where smiling is not a common or widely accepted nonverbal action. In Korean culture, for example, too much smiling is often perceived as a sign of shallowness. Dresser notes that this "lack of smiling by Koreans has often been misinterpreted as a sign of hostility." Russians also suffer from the same misunderstanding regarding their limited use of smiling. Russians are not exhibiting rudeness or impoliteness by not smiling, but rather reflecting that culture's "rules" regarding when and to whom to smile. The same restrained attitude toward smiling exists in Germany, where a smile "is used with far more discretion, generally only with those persons one knows and really likes." Even within a culture, there are groups and co-cultures that use facial expressions differently from the dominant culture. For example, when compared to men, women use more facial expressions, are more expressive, smile more, are more apt to return smiles, and are more attracted to others who smile.

3. 4. 4. 3. 1. Eye Contact and Gaze

The eyes, and their power and sway, have always been a topic of interest and fascination. You can witness the potential communication component of eye contact when professional poker players seek to hide

behind their dark glasses or a hooded sweat shirt during a tournament. The impact of eye contact on communication is also seen in the countless literary and musical allusions to eyes made over hundreds of years. Emerson wrote, “The eyes indicate the antiquity of the soul.” Shakespeare also knew the communicative potency of the eyes when he wrote, “Thou tell me there is murder in mine eye.” Bob Dylan underscored the same potency in his lyrics: “Your eyes said more to me that night than your lips would ever say.” Even the concept of “the evil eye” has been present in nearly every culture for centuries.

The notion of an “evil eye” means being able to send another person a thought (transmitted through the eyes) that can cause damage in a host of ways. By some estimates there are approximately cultures covering nearly every part of the world that believe in the influence of the evil eye. Belief in the power of the evil eye (*mal de ojo*) is seen in Mexico and Puerto Rico, where “Mothers may isolate their children for fear of having one become a victim of *mal de ojo*.” Eye contact and gaze are essential to the study of human communication for a number of reasons. First, eyes express emotions, monitor feedback, indicate degrees of attentiveness and interest regulate the flow of the conversation, influence changes in attitude, define power and status relationships, and help modify impression management.

Second, eyes are significant to the communication process because of the number of messages they can send. We have all heard some of the following words used to describe a person’s eyes: *direct*, *sensual*, *sardonic*, *cruel, expressive, intelligent*, *penetrating*, *sad, cheerful, worldly, hard, trusting*, and *suspicious*. Finally, and perhaps most importantly for our purposes, much of eye contact is directly related to culture. On both a conscious and unconscious level you have “learned” the significance of eye contact and the “rules” for employing (or not employing) eye contact. As Tubbs and Moss point out, “The many rules implicit in our culture about looking at others are a tacit admission that eye contact is perhaps the single most important facial cue we use in communicating.” These rules become quite evident when people are in an elevator with strangers. Also, reflect on the discomfort felt when someone stares at you for a long period of time. Before offering some comparisons that demonstrate culture’s influence, we shall briefly discuss how eye contact is used by the dominant culture in the United States. As Triandis notes, looking another person directly in the eye is very common in the United States. Not only is it the rule, but for most members of the dominant culture, eye contact is highly valued. “For Americans, a direct gaze signals a positive connection from one person to another and communicates caring and common courtesy. If we turn away when speaking to others, we communicate that the words we are saying are difficult or we are thinking about other things.” The implication is that if you fail to use direct eye contact you risk being perceived as showing a lack of interest, trying to hide something, or even being deceitful. But what is normal in the United States can be unacceptable in other cultures.

In Japan prolonged eye contact may be considered discourteous and disrespectful. It is not uncommon for the Japanese to look down or away or even close their eyes while engaging in conversation. You can probably appreciate the problems that might arise if Americans are not aware of the Japanese use of eye contact. Americans who are culturally unaware often interpret Japanese eye contact, or lack of it, “as signs

of disagreement, disinterest, or rejection." Dresser notes that "People from many Asian, Latino, and Caribbean cultures also avoid eye contact as a sign of respect." This same orientation toward eye contact is found in many parts of Africa, where "Making eye contact when communicating with a person who is older or of higher status is considered a sign of disrespect or even aggression … where respect is shown by lowering the eyes." There is even a Zulu saying: "The eye is an organ of aggression." India and Egypt provide two additional examples of eye contact mirroring a cultural value. "In India, the amount of eye contact that is appropriate depends on one's social position (people of different socioeconomic classes avoid eye contact with each other)." In Egypt, where the issue is not social status but gender, "Women and men who are strangers may avoid eye contact out of modesty and respect for religious rules." We should point out, at least as it applies to gender and globalization, the use of eye contact involving women is "changing as more women throughout the world enter the job market and rise to higher levels."

The avoidance of direct eye contact is not the case among Arabs who use very direct eye contact between same-sex communicators. This contact is not only direct, but extends over a long period of time. For "outsiders" this directness often appears as a form of staring. Yet for Arab males this visual intensity is employed so that they can infer the "truthfulness" of the other person's words. Notice how the words "same sex" were used in our portrayal of Arab eye contact. The reason is that where gender segregation is the norm (such as in Saudi Arabia) direct eye contact between men and women is often avoided. Germans also engage in very direct eye contact. And because of this, problems can arise. Nees notes: "Germans will look you directly in the eye while talking, which some Americans find vaguely annoying or disconcerting. From the German point of view, this is a sign of honesty and true interest in the conversation. For Americans it can seem too intense and direct." In North America the prolonged stare is frequently part of the nonverbal code used in the gay male co-culture. When directed toward a member of the same sex, an extended stare, like certain other nonverbal messages, is often perceived as a signal of interest and sexual suggestion. A few other differences in the use of eye contact in the United States are worth noting. Eye contact, or a lack of it, can create misunderstandings between African Americans and members of the dominant culture. The reason is simple: African Americans often do not find it necessary to engage in direct eye contact at all times during a conversation. This same uncomfortable feeling toward direct and prolonged eye contact can be found among Mexican Americans who "consider sustained eye contact when speaking directly to someone as rude. Direct eye contact with superiors may be interpreted as insolence. Avoiding direct eye contact with superiors is a sign of respect."

Among members of the dominant culture in the United States there are also gender variations in how people use their eyes to communicate. Research on the subject of gender differences in the use of eye contact indicates that in most instances, "women are much more visually oriented than are men." This characteristic manifests itself by the fact that "Women look more at other people, attempt to make more eye contact, and are also looked at more than men." As you might expect, eye contact is a very important consideration when communicating with members of the deaf community who are employing American

Sign Language. Among members of the deaf co-culture who are "signing," there is a belief that eye contact is an especially important part of their communication process. Turning your back to people who are "signing" is essentially the same as ignoring them. So delicate is the use of eye contact that you seldom realize the modifications you make when communicating. For example, the next time you are speaking with a disabled person, perhaps someone in a wheelchair, notice how little eye contact you have in comparison with someone who is not disabled. This practice is all too common and, unfortunately, may be interpreted as a lack of interest and concern.

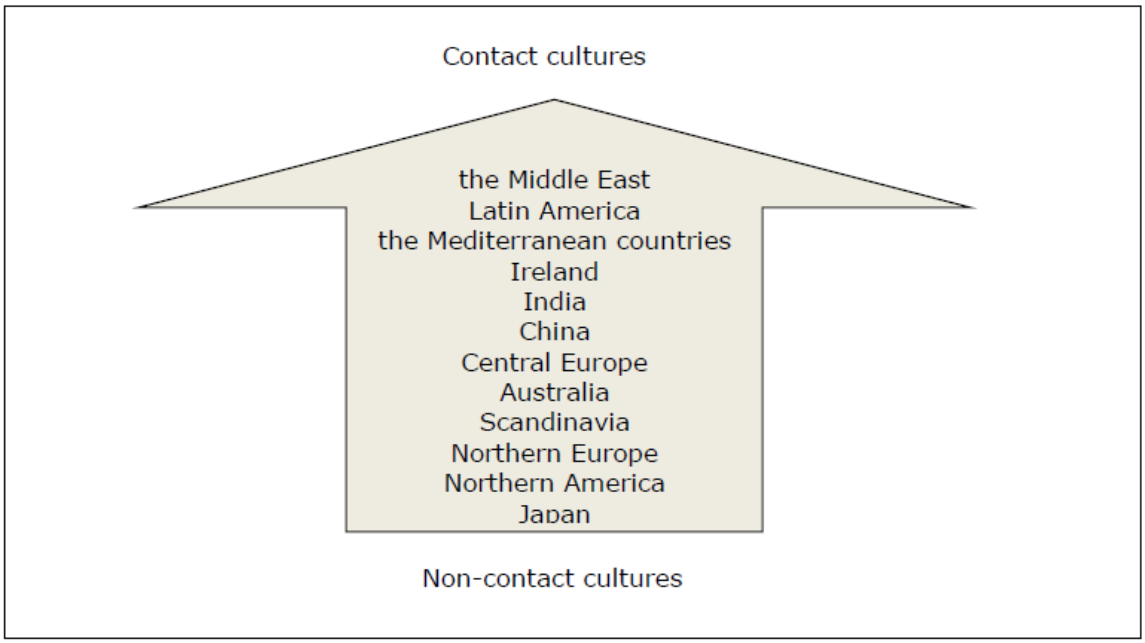

Figure 3: Touch and Non-Touch Cultures

3. 4. 5. Paralanguage

Vocalics refers to the vocalized but not verbal aspects of nonverbal communication, including our speaking rate, pause, pitch, volume, tone of voice, vocal quality, laugh, scream, silence as well as sigh. These qualities, also known as paralanguage, reinforce the meaning of verbal communication, allow us to emphasize particular parts of a message, or can contradict verbal messages. In non-tonal languages (English, Polish, German), much of the expression and nonverbal communication is expressed by tone. Therefore, it is necessary to remember that in tonal languages (Korean, Japanese, and Chinese), the tone changes the word, not just the nonverbal sense, and cannot be used to convey other meaning. There are three groups of vocalics such as **(1)** vocal characterizers (laugh, cry, yell, moan, whine, belch, yawn), **(2)** vocal qualifiers (volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, and tone), **(3)** vocal segregates (un-huh, shh, uh, ooh, mmmh, humm, eh, mah, lah). They can mean different things in different countries. The functions of paralanguage are the following: **(1)** repetition, **(2)** complementing, **(3)** accenting, **(4)** substituting, **(5)** regulating, and **(6)** contradicting.

When the German poet Klopstock wrote, “The tones of human voices are mightier than strings or brass to move the soul,” he knew that the sounds people produce contain subliminal messages that influence how people feel. Most of you probably have viewed a foreign film with subtitles. During those intervals when the subtitles were not on the screen, you heard the actors speaking an unfamiliar language but could understand some of what was happening just from the sound of the voices. Perhaps you inferred that the performers were expressing anger, sorrow, or joy, or recognized who the hero was and who was cast in the role of the villain. The rise and fall of voices also may have told you when one person was asking a question and when another was making a statement or issuing a command. Whatever the case, certain vocal cues provided you with information with which to make judgments about the characters’ personalities. You could only speculate on the exact meaning of the words being spoken, but voice inflections still revealed a great deal about what was happening. Research reveals that *how* a person’s voice sounds can influence perceptions related to the individual’s emotional state, social class, credibility, comprehension, and personality. What we have been talking about is called *paralanguage*. It denotes the features that accompany speech and contribute to the meanings people assign to the overall transaction. Most classifications divide paralanguage into three categories: **(1)** *vocal qualities,* **(2)** *vocal characterizers,* and **(3)** *vocal segregates.*

3. 4. 6. Silence

“The spoken word sometimes loses what silence has won.” This Spanish proverb is a fitting introduction to our discussion of silence. Observe the poignant use of silence when the classical composer strategically places intervals of orchestration so that the ensuing silence marks a contrast in expression.

Silence can be a powerful message. There is a story of how the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson “talked” in silence for hours to the famous English writer Thomas Carlyle. It seems that Emerson, on a visit to Europe, arranged to meet with Carlyle, who was his idol. Emerson maintains they sat together for hours in perfect silence until it was time for him to go, then parted company cordially, congratulating each other on the fruitful time they had had together. Periods of silence affect interpersonal communication by providing an interval in an ongoing interaction during which the participants have time to think, check or suppress an emotion, encode a lengthy response, or inaugurate another line of thought.

Silence also provides feedback, informing both sender and receiver about the clarity of an idea or its significance in the overall interpersonal exchange. In most Western cultures talk is highly valued, and it is often difficult to determine the meaning behind someone’s silence, because it can be interpreted as an indication of agreement, anger, and lack of interest, injured feelings, or contempt. For young children in the United States silence often takes on negative connotations when used as a punishment. Reflect for a moment about the secondary message being sent when a misbehaving child is given a “time-out”—a period when they are expected not to talk or have any sort of human interaction. For many Americans “silence can be a very frightening experience. There are often occasions when it is embarrassing, humiliating or makes us appear to be fools when we remain silent.” This is one reason Americans will usually try to fill up the silence with “small talk.” The intercultural implications of silence as a means of interpreting ongoing verbal

interactions are as diverse as those of other nonverbal cues: Cross-cultural differences are common over when to talk and when to remain silent, or what a particular instance of silence means. In response to the question, "Will you marry me?" silence in English would be interpreted as uncertainty…. In Igbo, it would be considered a denial if the woman were to continue to stand there and an acceptance if she ran away.

Knowing how various cultures use silence is essential information for anyone who interacts with a different culture. As Braithwaite points out: "One of the basic building blocks of competence, both linguistic and cultural, is knowing when not to speak in a particular community. Therefore, to understand where and when to be silent, and the meaning attached to silence, is to gain a keen insight into the fundamental structure of communication in that world." As already noted, silence is not a meaningful part of the life of most members of the dominant U.S. culture. Talking at coffee houses, talking on cell phones (even when driving an automobile), watching television, or listening to music on an iPod keeps Americans from silence. Reflect for a moment on the popularity of radio and television programs called "talk shows." Members of the dominant culture not only enjoy talking and avoiding silence, but also "feel responsible for starting a conversation or keeping it going, even with strangers." Because Americans have this orientation toward silence, they "often experience problems when they go international and place themselves in face-to-face contacts with more silent people of the world."

Americans are not the only group of people who prefer noise and talking over silence. In the commercial world, "a silent reaction to a business proposal would seem negative to American, German, French, Southern European and Arab executives." It seems that there is a link between cultures that emphasize social interaction (Jewish, Italian, French, Arab, and others) and their perception of and use of silence. In fact, talking in these cultures is highly valued. In Greek culture there is also a belief that being in the company of other people and engaging in conversation are signs of a good life. The concepts of solitude and silence are overshadowed in Greek history and literature, which contain numerous allusions to rhetoric and dialogues. The culture that produced Aristotle, Plato, and Socrates is not one that will find silent meditation appealing. This is in sharp contrast to cultures where a hushed and still environment is the rule. We now will look at a few cultural variations in the use of silence, so that you might better understand how a lack of words can influence the outcome of a communication event.

In the Eastern tradition the view of silence is much different from the Western view. As you learned when we examined Buddhism in sub-title of religion, many people feel comfortable with the absence of noise or talk and actually believe that words can contaminate an experience. They maintain that inner peace and wisdom come only through silence. This idea is brought out by the Buddhist scholar A.J.V. Chandrakanthan: In the stories and discourses attributed to Buddha, one can clearly see a close link between Truth and Silence. Wherever Truth is mentioned in references to Buddha it is always said in relation to silence. In fact, popular Buddhist religious tradition attests that whenever someone asked Buddha to explain truth, he invariably answered in Silence. Barnlund links this Buddhist view of silence to communication, "One of its tenets is that words are deceptive and silent intuition is a truer way to confront the world; mind-

to-mind communication through words is less reliable than heart-to-heart communication through an intuitive grasp of things." Silence is also used by many Asian people as a means of avoiding conflict. "A typical practice among many Asian peoples is to refuse to speak any further in conversation if they cannot personally accept the speaker's attitude, opinion, or way of thinking about particular issues or subjects."

Silence is both important and complex among the Japanese. In many instances, people are expected to know what another person is thinking and feeling without anything being said. Some scholars even refer to this mode of communication as "implying rather than saying." The Japanese emphasis on silence serves a variety of purposes. First, among family members, silence is actually seen as a way of "talking." The following example offers an explanation of how silence takes the place of words for the Japanese: "When people say 'There's no communication between parents and children,' this is an American way of thinking. In Japan we didn't need spoken communication between parents and children. A glance at the face, a glance back, and we understand enough." Second, silence in Japan is linked to credibility. Someone who is silent is often perceived as having higher credibility than someone who talks a great deal. "Reticent individuals are trusted as honest, sincere, and straightforward. Thus silence is an active state, while speech is an excuse for delaying activity." Finally, the Japanese also use silence to avoid both conflict and embarrassment. The Japanese view of silence is reflected in the following proverbs: "It is the duck that squawks that gets shot," and "A flower does not speak." Compare these perceptions of silence with the American saying, "the squeaky wheel gets the grease," or with the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Speech is power: Speech is to persuade, to convert, to compel." You can easily imagine how these two uses of silence might create communication problems when Americans and Japanese come together. For example, during business negotiations between Japanese and Americans, each will give a different interpretation to the same silent period. The Japanese use the silence to "consider the Americans' offer; the Americans interpret the silence as rejection and respond by making concessions."

3. 4. 7. 1. Personal Space

The significance of personal space is highlighted by Hall and Hall: Each person has around him an invisible bubble of space which expands and contracts depending on his relationship to those around him, his emotional state, his cultural background, and the activity he is performing. Few people are allowed to penetrate this bit of mobile territory, and then only for short periods of time. Your personal space is that area you occupy and call your own. As the owner of this area, you usually decide who may enter and who may not. When your space is invaded, you react in a variety of ways. You may retreat, stand your ground, or sometimes even react violently. Use of personal space is learned on both the conscious and unconscious levels. Hall classified how personal space was used in the United States by proposing the following four categories that demonstrate how space can communicate.

- **Intimate distance** (actual contact to 18 inches) is normally reserved for very personal relationships. You can reach out and touch the person at this distance. Because of the closeness of the participants, voices are usually in the form of a whisper.
- **In personal distance** (18 inches to 4 feet) there is little chance of physical contact, and you can speak in a normal voice. This is distance reserved for family and close friends.
- **Social distance** (4 to 12 feet), it is the distance at which most members of the dominant culture conduct business and take part in social gatherings.
- **Public distance** is usually used in public presentations and can vary from relatively close to very far.

As with most forms of communication, space is associated with cultural values. A good example of the link between the use of space and culture can be seen in the values of individualism and collectivism. Cultures that stress individualism and privacy (England, United States, Sweden, Germany, and Australia) generally demand more space than do collective cultures. According to Triandis, Arabs, Latin Americans, and U.S. Hispanics fall into this collective category, where people are more interdependent and "the members work, play, live and sleep in close proximity to one another." With regard to Arabs, Ruch writes, "Typical Arab conversations are at close range. Closeness cannot be avoided." This closeness is even reflected when people stand in line. When waiting, "Egyptians do not stand in neat lines … everyone pushes their way toward the front." As we have noted elsewhere, a person's use of space is directly linked to their value system and culture. In some Asian cultures students do not sit close to their teachers or stand near their superiors; the extended distance demonstrates deference and esteem. In Germany personal space is sacred. For Germans "this distancing is a protective barrier and psychological symbol that operates in a manner similar to that of the home." You find the opposite view toward space in Brazil where "physical contact, closeness, and human warmth," are important; hence, conversation takes place with less room between participants.

3. 4. 7. 2. Seating Arrangements

Like so many features of nonverbal communication, seating arrangements send both inconspicuous and obvious messages. The sending of a very subtle message could be witnessed at an important diplomatic meeting between the Turkish ambassador and his counterpart from Israel. The Turkish representative was extremely distressed that he was asked to sit on a sofa that was lower than the one occupied by the Israeli officials. His anger was so intense that he refused to allow the media to take a picture of the meeting since he felt it humiliated him and his country. This real-life example vividly demonstrates that seating arrangements can be a powerful form of nonverbal communication. Notice that when you are a member of a group in the United States, people tend to talk with those opposite them rather than those seated beside them.

This same pattern controls how the group might designate their leader. In most instances, the person sitting at the head of the table is the leader. When we turn to China we witness a very different orientation toward seating arrangements. Because of their Confucian background, China is a culture that respects proper

etiquette and ritual. Therefore, seating arrangements are frequently dictated by cultural and historical norms, particularly at formal events such as banquets, and diplomatic and business meetings. At banquets, which are very common in China, seating arrangements place the honored person (often decided by seniority and age) facing east or facing the entrance to the hall. The higher a person's status, the closer they sit to the person of honor. At business meetings the Chinese experience alienation and uneasiness when they face someone directly or sit opposite them at a desk or table. If you view a news story about American diplomats meeting with government officials from China, you might observe that the meeting is taking place with people sitting side by side—frequently on couches. In Korea seating arrangements reflect status and role distinctions. In a car, office, or home, the seat on the right is considered to be the place of honor. For the Japanese, much like the Chinese, seating at any formal event is determined based on hierarchy. When conducting business or diplomatic negotiations, the Japanese will arrange themselves with the most senior person sitting in the middle and those next highest in rank sitting to the left and right of this senior position. Low-ranking members will sit away from the table, behind the other representatives.

4. Improving Nonverbal Communication Skills

In the Preface, and during many of the discussions that followed, we accentuated the idea that *communication is an activity and interaction.* This was a way of saying that communication is a behavior that you engage in and that others respond to. We conclude the lecture by offering a brief section on how you can exercise some control over that behavior to produce positive results.

4. 1. Monitor your Verbal Actions

As simplistic as it sounds, what *you* bring to the communication event greatly influences the success or failure of that event. Although "know thyself" is an overused expression, it is, nevertheless, worth repeating. The novelist James Baldwin made the idea of self-knowledge clear when he wrote, "The questions which one asks oneself, begin, at last, to illuminate the world, and become one's key to the experiences of others." Hence, our initial advice is to *monitor your actions so that you better understand the experiences of others.* By knowing how you "present" yourself you can gain insight into how people are reacting to the types of messages you are sending. As Dunn and Goodnight point out, "Keep in mind that others may interpret your nonverbal messages differently from the way you had intended." We urge you to consider some of the following questions that will help you understand the responses displayed by your intercultural communication partner.

- Is my behavior making people feel comfortable or uncomfortable?
- Am I adjusting my nonverbal messages to the feedback I am receiving from my communication "partner"?

- How are people reacting to my use of space, touch, paralanguage, time, and the like?
- If my messages are being misinterpreted is it because my unintentional messages, rather than my intentional messages, are impacting my communication "partner"?

4. 2. Monitor Feedback

Using feedback is directly related to the preceding suggestion regarding the notion of self-monitoring. Both suggestions ask you to be aware of the interactive nature of communication; that is to say, the recipients of your messages are not passive observers. They receive your verbal and nonverbal symbols and respond in a variety of ways. These responses are known as *feedback.* Hence, our next suggestion is that you e*ncourage feedback as a way of improving the accuracy of your perceptions of the communication encounter.* Utilizing both verbal and nonverbal feedback devices allows you to make qualitative judgments about the communication encounter. Feedback also affords you the opportunity to immediately correct and adjust your next message. Because feedback is critical, you need to create an atmosphere that encourages it. Communication skills that promote feedback include smiling, head nodding, leaning forward, and even laughing. Although the four actions just mentioned are found in Western cultures, they often produce positive reactions in other cultures as well. Each of these nonverbal activities contributes to a relaxed atmosphere that fosters an accurate "reading" of your receiver's nonverbal response to your messages.

4. 3. Be Sensitive to the Context

As you have already learned, *communication is rule-governed*. Some self-reflection tells you that your behavior is different as you move from place to place. Think of all the "rules" that are in operation in school rooms, courtrooms, mosques, churches, business meetings, parties, restaurants, sporting events, funerals, and the like. Each of these settings requires behaviors that you have learned as part of the acculturation process. When trying to improve nonverbal communication skills you need to understand how each situation might influence meaning given a specific action. During a job interview a person's actions might reflect a degree of nervousness brought about by the formal setting (fidgeting, talking fast, etc.), while at home that same person might be relaxed and speak at a slower pace. Culturally you can also observe vast differences in how people respond nonverbally when thrust into an unfamiliar environment. In North American classrooms students move around and interact with the teacher and other students. In Japan and China nonverbal behavior is much more subdued and restrained as students follow the classroom "rules" in these cultures. There, silence and constrained gestures are the rule. When trying to improve your ability to read nonverbal behaviors, ask yourself if the observed actions are appropriate for the setting.

4. 4. Be Aware of Nonverbal Ambiguity

At the beginning of this lecture we noted that nonverbal messages can be intentional (waving goodbye to a friend) or unintentional (frowning because you are looking into the sun and your friend believes you are upset). It would be as if you were nonverbally "saying" two different things at once. That confusion can also be seen if you tell someone, "I am so happy to see you again," while at the same time you

are pulling away as they try to embrace you. *This multiple meaning dimension of nonverbal communication puts an increased burden on you whether you are the sender or the receiver*.

4. 5. Know your Culture

Recommending that you need to know your own culture should be obvious at this stage of the lecture. Your culture "told you" how to use all of the nonverbal action discussed in this lecture. Therefore, a certain degree of introspection about your own culture is an important step in improving nonverbal behavior. Each of us is a product of our culture, including gender, ethnicity, family, age, religion, profession, and other life experiences. Our cultural inventory provides us with valuable insights for understanding our beliefs and attitudes, our values and assumptions. It is critical that we reflect on the various aspects of our own cultural identity and examine their positive impacts on our personal and professional development. In many ways this observation is a fitting conclusion to both this lecture and the discussion of how to enhance your use of nonverbal communication. Therefore, we close this chapter by harking back to the idea that cultural affiliation influences both how you send messages and how other people react to those messages.

Summary

Language allows people to exchange information and abstract ideas, and it is an integral part of identity. Based on the language they use, people are often categorized into groups such as age, gender, and socio-income level.

- The use of a common language enables people to organize and perform collective activities.
- Language is a set of shared symbols used to create meaning. The relationship between the symbol and the meaning is often arbitrary. There are usually variations within language groups, such as accents, dialects, argot, and slang.
- Corporate brands (i.e., names, logos, and slogans) are often understood across cultures irrespective of language.
- Every culture has conversational taboos—restrictions against some topics in certain contexts.
- Culture and language form a symbiotic relationship; without one, the other could not exist.
- Cultural values, or dimensions, can be reflected in the language used by a culture.
- Interpreters work with spoken or signed language and translators work with written messages. Consecutive interpretation is when you stop every minute or so to allow the translator to relay your message in the other language. Simultaneous interpretation is done while the speakers are talking in their native language. A good interpreter/translator should have knowledge of the target language, dialect, special terminology, and culture.
- English is the most common language used on the Internet at this time. The increasing number of Chinese users could alter this in the future. Some scholars have predicted a future oligarchy of major world languages—Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, and Russian. In any intercultural communication

interaction it is probable that someone will be using a second language. Using a second language can be both physically and cognitively demanding.

- When speaking to someone who is using a second or foreign language, you should be mindful; monitor your speech rate, vocabulary, and nonverbal feedback; and check to ensure that the other person understands your message.
- One way of enhancing your intercultural communication competency is to study another language. Nonverbal communication is important to the study of intercultural communication because people use nonverbal communication to express internal states, create identity, regulate interaction, repeat messages, and substitute actions for words.
- Nonverbal communication is culture-bound.
- Nonverbal communication involves all nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that (1) are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and (2) have potential message value for the source and/or the receiver.
- Nonverbal messages may be intentional or unintentional.
- Nonverbal messages can work alone or in tandem with verbal messages.
- When studying nonverbal communication it should be remembered that nonverbal behaviors can be ambiguous, contain multiple meanings, and include cultural universals.
- Nonverbal behaviors and culture are similar in that both are learned, both are passed from generation to generation, and both involve shared understandings.
- The body is a major source of nonverbal messages. These messages are communicated by means of general appearance, skin color, attire, body movements (kinesics), posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, and paralanguage.
- Cultures differ in their perception and use of personal space, seating, and furniture arrangement.
- A culture's sense of time can be understood by learning how members of that culture view informal time and whether or not their orientation toward time is monochromic or poly-chronic.
- The use of silence varies from culture to culture. You can improve your nonverbal communication skill by monitoring your nonverbal actions, being sensitive to the context, employing feedback, being aware of nonverbal ambiguity, and knowing your culture.

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Practice

Focus Questions

1. What is language?
2. What is meant by language differences?
3. What are the language differences that correspond with the cross cultural communication?
4. What is meant by verbal communication as a form of language?
5. What is meant by non-verbal communication as a form of language?
6. What are the main aspects of verbal language?
7. What are the main aspects of nonverbal language?
8. What is the relationship between verbal language and communication?
9. What is the relationship between nonverbal language and communication?
10. To what extent nonverbal language contribute to communication?
11. What types of nonverbal communication do you know?
12. What is the role of nonverbal communication?

Exercise One

Consider and analyze the following questions, situations and statements.

1. A language is a set of symbols that a cultural group has agreed to use to create meaning. The symbols and their meanings are often arbitrary.
2. Unfortunately, cultures sometimes ascribe behavioral or intellectual characteristics to different accents. For example, what characteristics do you associate with a slow Southern drawl? What mental images come to mind when you hear someone speaking English with an obvious Spanish or Italian accent? Do the accents heard on the TV shows Jersey Shore and Housewives of New Jersey influence your perception of the people? How have media stereotypes influenced your perception of accents?
3. Language and culture cannot be separated. Language is vital to understanding our unique cultural perspectives. Language is a tool that is used to explore and experience our cultures and the perspectives that are embedded in our cultures.
4. Developed in the early twentieth century, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis holds that language defines your perceptions of the world.
5. The nonverbal messages you send, and the responses they produce, are rooted in culture.
6. You received a low grade on an examination and have decided to make an appointment to discuss this matter with your professor. Arriving at his office at the designated time, you begin to present your case, but quickly notice the appeal for a re-evaluation of your test score is not being well received. What

nonverbal clues might have been sent by the professor that led you to conclude it was best to terminate the discussion?

7. Nonverbal communication is often open to more than one interpretation.

8. You tell a friend that you are currently enrolled in a course in intercultural communication and have learned that in many ways cultures use nonverbal communication in the same ways and in different ways. Your friend says that sounds like a riddle and asks what that sentence means. What is your response?

9. Attire is often used to help establish one's cultural identity.

10. You are the director of Human Resources for an international company. Your supervisor approaches you with the responsibility of drawing up a dress code and a justification for that code. What steps would you take in researching that assignment and what might your final product include?

11. You met someone who has recently arrived in the United States and they ask your help in deciding what certain gestures mean. What would you tell them the following gestures mean in United States culture?

- Fingers crossed
- Thumbs up
- Thumbs down
- Making a round ring (O) with the thumb and index finger
- Pointing at a person.

❖ After you explain the above gestures, they ask you if those gestures can have more than one meaning. What would you answer?

12. Idiosyncratic gestures are those movements whose meaning is directly linked to a particular culture. Usually these gestures do not have the same meaning when used in other cultures.

13. Even though the act of smiling is a universal activity, what produces the smile and the meanings of the smile often differ from culture to culture.

14. After teaching for years in California, Adie had learned to read students' nonverbal behaviors in the classroom. For instance, she could determine from facial expressions and body posture if a student did not understand the lesson, was bored, tired, daydreaming, or actually was paying close attention to what was being said. With this knowledge, Adie could continuously adjust the way she lectured in order to maintain student attention. However, when she moved to a new position at a Japanese university, she discovered that students exhibited few, if any, facial expressions, and sat quietly at their desks with very good posture. What could Adie have done in this situation in order to measure student interest during her lecture?

15. Paralanguage is concerned with the communicative characteristics of the voice and with how people use their voices. Paralanguage includes such things as giggles, laughter, accents, groans, sighs, pitch, tempo, volume, and resonance.

16. The next time you are at an airport, supermarket, or shopping mall where people from different cultural backgrounds might be interacting, try to observe the interactions by referencing the items listed below:

- **a.** What are the average distances between the people you observed? Were there differences related to culture?
- **b.** What differences did you observe in touching behavior? How did people greet each other? Did people hug, kiss, shake hands, etc.?
- **c.** What differences did you observe in facial expressions? Were people animated, reserved, etc.?
- **d.** Did you notice any differences in gestures? Did some people use more or fewer gestures?

Exercise Two

Say whether the following stalemates are true of false then justify both of.

1. Language differences include only verbal and nonverbal messages occur in the context in real life communication. ……..……...

2. Verbal communication is a system of symbols that denote how a culture structures its world. As such, by examining language, it is possible to see how a culture relates to its world ……

3. Language plays an important role in the formation and expression of your identity, particularly personal identity**.** ……..……..

4. The Arab societies are characterized by the cultural values of collectivism, hierarchy, and a present orientation, which are mirrored in how Arabic is used……...……..…….

5. There is a growing recognition that interpreters and translators must be culturally competent, and this requires knowledge of own culture as well as that of the target language culture. ……..

6. The digital age has greatly decreased the ability of people around to world to easily and quickly "connect" with others through a variety of media**.** …….…….

7. Nonverbal communication involves all those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment, and that have potential message value for the source and/or receiver…..……..

8. Nonverbal communication is important in human interaction because it is partially responsible for establishing identity. ……..……

9. Moving your head up and down is perceived as a sign of disagreement. This same movement can have different meanings in different cultures. ……..……

10. The avoidance of direct eye contact is not the case among Arabs who use very direct eye contact between same-sex communicators. ……..……..

11. It has been scientifically proved that what parts and how often we touch another person mostly depends on language rather than culture. ……..……

Exercise Three

Identify and infer the explicit and implied meaning from the following situations.

1. What images come to mind when you hear someone speaking English with an accent? Do different accents create different images? Try to decide why you form those images? Talk with others to see if they have the same experience.
2. Some countries have an official language (or languages), but others do not. What are the advantages and disadvantages of a country having an official language? Should the United States have an official language? Why?
3. How many "brands" can you think of that have international recognition? What type of meaning (e.g., style, reliability, etc.) do you usually associate with those brands? Do other people assign the same meaning to them?
4. Construction of a simple sentence in English is Subject-Verb-Object (S-V-O). In Japanese and Korean it is S-O-V. What kind of problems might this present for simultaneous translation?
5. Some scholars think the world is moving toward an "oligarchy" of major economic power languages. Do you think this would be a good or bad occurrence? Why? What will happen to minority languages, and what will be the result?
6. Why is it useful to understand the nonverbal language of a culture?
7. What are some potential obstacles to accurately reading the nonverbal messages of other people?
8. What is meant by the following: "Most nonverbal communication is learned on the subconscious level."
9. Give your culture's interpretation of the following nonverbal actions:
    - Two people are speaking loudly, waving their arms, and using many gestures.
    - A customer in a restaurant waves his hand over his head and snaps his fingers loudly.
    - An elderly woman dresses entirely in black.
    - A young man dresses entirely in black.
    - An adult pats a child's head.
    - Two men kiss in public.
10. How can studying the intercultural aspects of nonverbal behavior assist you in discovering your own ethnocentrism? Give personal examples.
11. How late can you be for the following: (a) a class, (b) work, (c) a job interview, (d) a dinner party, or (e) a date with a friend? Ask this same question of members of two or three cultures other than your own.
12. What is meant by "Nonverbal communication is rule-governed"?

Exercise Four

1. Construct a list of as many of your identities as you can. Using the list, draw a pie chart with each identity receiving space proportional to that identity's importance to you. Compare your chart with other classmates' charts. Do members of the dominant and minority cultures differ in the amount of space allotted to their racial/ethnic identity? If so why?

2. Select an ethnicity other than your own and try to answer the five questions relating to avoiding stereotypes.
3. Working with some members of your class, try to compile a list of what you believe to be examples of American ethnocentrism.
4. What is the relationship among stereotypes, prejudice, racism, and ethnocentrism?
5. To learn more about your personal biases and preferences take one of the Implicate Association Tests, sponsored by Harvard University. The tests can be taken anonymously online with results provided immediately. Go to "Project Implicit" at https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/ demo/
6. Go to YouTube and view video of services of three different religions: Catholic, Buddhist, and Jewish. Observe the nonverbal elements, noting particularly the differences in how members of each group use paralanguage, space, and touch.
7. Attend an event—social, religious, etc.—populated by people from a culture different from your own. Make note of any differences between your culture and the culture you are visiting as they apply to greeting behavior, eye contact, voice volume levels, seating arrangements, dress, and the like.
8. Locate pictures from magazines and newspapers that you believe are showing the following emotions through facial expressions: **(a)** anger, **(b)** joy, **(c)** sadness, **(d)** fear, and **(e)** revulsion. Show these pictures to people from various cultures and see what interpretations they give to the facial expressions.
9. Go to YouTube and type in "Culture and body language." View some of the videos for examples of how cultures differ in their use of body language.
10. Watch a foreign film and look for examples of proxemics, touch, and facial expressions. Compare these to those of the dominant culture of the United States.
11. Explain the phrase: "Our nonverbal actions usually reflect our culture."

Exercise Five

- Communication falls into two classic categories: verbal and nonverbal. Nonverbal communication, in turn, can be divided into a number of specific subcategories. Two separate exercises (3.5 & 3.7) will be presented, each focusing on three types of nonverbal communication. These exercises may be completed over time, as you continue to become aware of personal, familial, and work behaviors in your host country.

1. **Gestures**

- In a number of different settings, watch what people do with their arms, hands, fingers, and whole body. Try to describe the gestures as "scientifically" as possible (a man held out his hand, palm down, and wiggled his fingers to call a waiter to his table) and indicate what you think is the meaning.

Hands
• ……
……

…….
Arms • …… …… ……
Fingers • …… …… ……
Whole body • …… …… ……

2. Eye contact

- Observe the degree and nature of eye contact in as many of the following situations as possible:

Between two men of the same age • …… …… ……
Between two women of the same age • …… …… ……
Between an older and younger man/woman • …… …… ……
Between a man and woman • …… …… ……
Between a husband and wife in public • …… ……

……
Between a boss and employee • …… …… ……
Between a teacher and a student • …… …… ……
Between a parent and child • …… …… ……
Between people passing on the street • …… …… ……

3. Conversational styles

Observe the following nonverbal aspects of typical conversations:

1. How much gesturing goes on in general?

   ……
   ……
   ……

2. How does the transition from one speaker to the next take place? Check one:
   - **a.** ____ speaker A starts before speaker B finishes
   - **b.** ____ speaker A starts just after speaker B finishes
   - **c.** ____ speaker A pauses before starting
3. How long does one person speak before allowing the other to speak?

   ……
   ……
4. How do people indicate they want to end the conversation?
5. ……
   ……

6. How do people show disagreement?

7. ……
……

8. How do people show displeasure with what they hear?

9. ……
……

10. How do people show pleasure at what they are hearing?

11. ……
……

12. What is the pattern of eye contact between speaker and listener?

13. ……
……

Exercise Six

This is the second of two exercises in which you observe and record instances of nonverbal communication. In this activity, you focus on facial expressions, personal space, and touching:

1. Facial expressions

Observe what people do with their head, eyes, eyebrows, mouth, nose, chin, etc. Record these observations as accurately as you can in the spaces below, indicating what these facial expressions mean.

The Head and Forehead
• …… …… ……
Eyes and eyebrows
• …… …… ……
The Nose
• …… …… ……
The Chin and Jaw
• …… …… ……
Any part of the face or head in combination with the hands and fingers

- ……
  ……
  ……

2. Personal space

Observe how close various kinds of people stand to each other in various settings:

In normal conversation, at work, or on the street • …… …… ……
In line at the post office, bank, cinema, etc. • …… …… ……
In an elevator, crowded or uncrowded • …… …… ……
Two men • …… …… ……
Two women • …… …… ……
Two children • …… …… ……
An older and younger person • …… …… ……
Parent and child

• …… …… ……
A man and woman
• …… …… ……
Husband and wife
• …… …… ……

1. In those situations where host country people stand *closer* to each other than do Americans, what impression might people have of Americans?

   ……
   ……..
2. What impression might Americans have of host country people in those same situations?
3. ……
   ……..
4. In those situations where host country people stand *further apart* from each other than do Americans, what impression might people have of Americans?
5. ……
   ……..
6. What impression might Americans have of host country people in those same situations?
7. ……
   ……..

3. Touching

Observe how much and in which parts of the body the following people touch each other:

Two men
• …… …… ……
Two women
• ……

…… ……
Husband and wife • …… …… ……
Unrelated man and woman • …… …… ……
Parent and child • …… …… ……
Older and younger person • …… …… ……
Boss and subordinate • …… …… ……
Male boss/female worker and vice versa • …… …… ……
What differences do you observe in touching behavior in public and in private? • …… …… ……

1. In those situations where host country people touch each other *more* than Americans do, what impression might people have of Americans?

……

……..

2. What impression might host country people convey in those same situations?
3. ……
   ……..
4. In those situations where host country people touch *less* than Americans do, what impression might people have of Americans?
   ……
   ……..
5. What might be the impression of host country people?
   ……
   ……..

Exercise Seven Conversation and ……. silence

The conventions surrounding conversation are the source of much intercultural misunderstanding. In many cultures, people who are known to each other but not related and who are in the same room or space together expect that conversation will take place. Silence is seen as awkward and embarrassing.

In some cultures, even total strangers – people in the same railway carriage compartment, for example – would expect to engage in conversation with the others in the same space. Conversely, in other cultures, it would be regarded as unacceptable to attempt conversation with strangers, apart perhaps from short, bland comments on the weather or other value-free topics. Again, gender and age play important roles here.

Even where conversation is sanctioned or expected, there are very strict rules governing the choice of topics, and also about who is allowed or expected to initiate a conversation. But these vary widely from culture to culture, and it is sometimes very difficult to know what is and what is not permitted. It is useful to learn some conversation strategies for successful intercultural communication, for example, when in doubt, ask questions for clarification about meaning, usage and connotations. Be careful if you are not quite sure that what you want to say is acceptable.

- **Reflecting on your culture**
- **Conversation topics**

Go through the following topics/ideas and decide if they are acceptable for introduction into a conversation with a person of the same age whom you meet for the first time at a fairly informal social event like a party in your culture. Add any conditions you think are necessary. TN 3.1

- Age: could you ask someone's age?
- Family relationships: could you talk about problems and conflicts in your family? Could you ask if someone is married?
- Relationships: could you talk about your private life?
- Health: could you talk about any health problems?
- National (party) politics: could you criticize or praise government or opposition policies or politicians?

- International politics: could you talk about international relations?
- Jokes: could you tell a joke? What topics would be taboo?
- Professions: could you ask what others' professions are? Could you talk about your own?
- Money: could you ask what something has cost or what somebody earns?

- **Silence and turn-taking**

There are cultures where close friends and relatives – or even business partners – can sit together in silence, simply enjoying each other' company. This situation can be very unnerving for someone from a "conversation culture". Next time you are having a conversation with friends or colleagues, try to observe the role of silence on the basis of the questions below.

- What is the attitude towards silence?
- Is it acceptable for people in your culture to sit together silently?
- Is it a natural part of conversation, or is it regarded as awkward and uncomfortable?
- How long can the silence last?
- Who breaks the silence?
- Is silence used as a weapon in disagreements?
- Does turn-taking have any special rules in your language?
- Do age, social position and gender play a role, for example?

- **Non-verbal communication**
  - Do you recognize, or can you give meaning to, any of the gestures in the cartoon opposite?

- **Discovering other cultures**

- **Conversation topics**

What's your religion?

A European student visiting friends in Utah was taken to a health club in Salt Lake City. When entering the sauna with her friend, a couple of men who had been in there for a while started a friendly conversation with the student and one of the first questions were "What's your religion?" The student was very surprised and taken aback since it would be unthinkable in her home culture to ask a stranger about his/her religious affiliation which is regarded as an absolutely private matter.

1. Try to find an open-minded conversation partner from another culture you are interested in and inquire about differences in permitted conversation topics. Are there any differences in who is allowed or expected to initiate the conversation? Are there any differences in status or gender in approach to conversation?

- **Volume**

Can you hear me?

Some cultures seem not to mind at all if people sitting very close to each other in public spaces talk in very loud voices. An Englishman was once on a plane and the Dutch person in the seat behind was

telling another passenger (who he had never met before) about his work as a secondary school teacher.

The other passenger was interested, and listened to the long monologue (with occasional sounds of agreement – see below) until the plane landed. The Englishman was astonished to find that the Dutchman had been sitting five rows back!

Conversely, after spending some time in a Mediterranean country, you can get the impression on returning to northern Europe that people are in mourning and only allowed to speak in low voices.

There are exceptions. The difference in volume (and body language – see below) between Spanish and Portuguese people is very striking indeed. Which do you think tend to speak loudly, and which quietly?

1. How loud do you think people in your culture are compared to other cultures?
2. Are people who speak very loudly tolerated, ignored or considered irritating in the cultures you are familiar with?
3. What do you think the reasons for loudness could be in some cultures (for example, cheerfulness, self-confidence, spending a lot of time outdoors)?

- **Non-verbal communication**

Of course, another feature of conversation which is largely absent from other text-types is the simple fact that you can see, and even touch, each other. So body language, facial expression, eye contact, proximity and movement all come into play and add to your verbal message. Cultural differences abound here, too. Just standing too close to someone can make them feel uncomfortable. As can standing too far away.

Shaking Hands

A German student at a party in England found it surprising that only the men wanted to shake hands with her when she was introduced. Women in the company tended to just wave and back away. In her culture, women also shake hands when they first meet.

1. What gestures do people use in cultures you know when they meet?
2. Do you keep eye contact when you have a conversation with someone you have just met?
3. In terms of body language, eye contact, personal space and physical contact, what exactly is considered offensive in your culture and the cultures you are familiar with?

Men Touching

A central European technician working in Saudi Arabia for a few months seemed rather concerned about the way he perceived Arab men touching each other. In a letter home he reported that “they were standing very close to each other in buses, touching each other’s backs, shoulders, necks and even hips, embracing and even walking in the streets with their hands on each other’s hips. “Are they all gay?” he asked and felt rather disturbed.

In most European cultures, it seems, it is much more common and acceptable for women to touch each other in friendly ways than for men, and socialization for this behavior starts at a very young age. Kindergarten-age girls can frequently be seen hugging and kissing whereas boys of the same age tend to "touch violently" if at all.

1. What are the respective attitudes to this type of behavior in your culture and any other cultures you are familiar with?

Personal Space

People from different cultures are often seen "chasing" each other around the room during a friendly conversation. One of them keeps stepping forward to get closer to the other person, and the other keeps stepping back to allow for a little more space between them. This happens because the two people involved need different sized protective bubbles around themselves. In other words, the space around them that they consider "their own" differs in size.

The concepts of "personal" and "public space" are also largely culturally determined. They not only refer to the "personal space" a person sees as the area they need around themselves for comfortable social interaction, but also extend to questions of housing and urban development. Compare which rooms of an apartment/house would be considered "public"(open to visitors at all times) and which are considered "private" (bedrooms, but also rooms like pantries, attics, basements, etc.) in your culture or any other cultures you are interested in.

- **Directness**

Complaining and Criticizing

A Hungarian chemical engineer in her late 30s, working for a multinational company, was fluent in English, French and German. She had been using these languages in day-to-day professional communication both formally and informally for over a decade. Yet, it took her several years to discover that the reason why she was experiencing some difficulty in personal communication with her native speaker partners was that she seemed too blunt and straightforward to them especially with her complaints and criticism. When she shared her feelings with her partners they realized that this had actually been the case, but as they had not learnt or used foreign languages, they could not understand why someone who was fluent in her language use was not "fluent in her attitudes". Her partners had interpreted this as contradictory and put it down to a disagreeable personality. The story had a happy ending but it has several lessons for second and foreign language teachers and learners.

(Based on Holló and Lázár, 2000a)

1. Does your culture tend to be more direct or more indirect when giving opinions?

2. Can you be straightforward when you want to tell a colleague that you do not agree or do not like their outfit?
3. Could you tell a friend you did not like her new hairstyle? And if so, how would you go about it?
4. Have you ever become embarrassed because you (or someone in your company) were more direct in conversation than expected?

- **Activities and projects**

1. Watch people carefully next time you are in a lift, on a train or in another public space. Try to observe cultural, age and gender differences in the way people start conversations with strangers. If you can understand the language, make a mental note of what was said and the topic. Report your findings in class.
2. Specifically, what advice would you give a middle-aged English person who sits in a train reading an English newspaper? Other people in the compartment address him (in English) and ask him a series of questions about the reasons for his visit, his background, British geography and so on. They seem unaware that the English man feels very uncomfortable, even embarrassed, and simply want to get on with his paper.

- Is it common for strangers to start a conversation with you on, for example, a long train journey? Obviously, age and gender play roles here, but if this is not common in your culture, how would you react?
- Consider the situation above and stage a little role-play, placing it in your culture or another culture you are familiar with. Try to give precise directions about how far apart people would sit, how long a silence would last after entering the train compartment, who would start the conversation and how? Who would end it and how?

3. Take the story about complaining and criticizing above and try to explain what may have happened. What do you think the "happy ending" was and how do you think it was arrived at?
4. Interview some people about non-verbal communication in their culture.
5. Non-verbal communication includes people's use of space. Spatial arrangements also reflect issues of power and dominance. Think of the palaces which rulers (worldly or clerical) built for themselves to demonstrate their power and how little space there is often reserved for children in urban housing and public spaces!
    - Pay attention to how much personal space is allotted to employees in an office. Are employers' offices and desks much bigger than everybody else's?
    - How far do you stand from your boss when you are asking for a raise or complaining about working conditions?
    - Alternatively, compare typical classrooms/lecture halls: how is the space meant for the teacher marked? How big is it in comparison to that of the individual pupil/student?

- Also note the freedom of the person in authority in making or not making use of the space allotted to them. The teacher can sit at their desk, wander a around or even sit on a pupil's desk – none of which the students are allowed to do.

- **Language work**

1. Informal spoken language

It is important as a foreign language learner to realize that conversation is a very different sort of language from all others. It is a text created by two or more speakers, and it has very different rules and conventions from other types of text. Can you think of any differences before reading on?

- Features of informal conversation:

1. It has a different grammar. Some examples: "Me, I like a hot bath in the morning. Can't do without it, can I? Know what I mean? Showers I hate."

2. Stress and intonation play a crucial role in making the meaning and the speaker's attitude clear. Compare:
   - "*I thought* he said he was going to drive to town."
   - "I thought he said he was going to *drive* to town."
   - "I thought he said he was going to drive to *town*."

3. Fillers like "well", "you know" and "sort of" are common.

4. Vague language like "lots of", "about" and "… or so" are common.

5. Hyperbole is common:
   - "There were millions of people at the party."
   - "I was absolutely devastated when he didn't turn up."

6. "Asking for agreement", with question tags, rising intonation and phrases like "right?", "know what I mean?" are common.

7. At any time, non-speakers are expected to show they are listening, by nodding, or making noises like "Mmm", "Yeah", etc.

8. Incompleteness is quite acceptable:
   - "So what did he …"
   - "He … you know, he sort of looked …"
   - "Oh, I know. That's him all over.

This is only a short summary of some conversational features of English. None of these normally occur in texts like lectures, news broadcasts and formal interviews. Most of them do not occur in representations of conversation in soap operas, plays, films and English language course books.

- Which of these features are common in any other cultures and languages you know?

- **Proverbs and sayings**

Here are some English proverbs and sayings about talk. They seem mostly based on the assumption that people talk too much, or that people that talk a lot are not so wise or clever. Is this really true? Do other cultures make the same judgment? Are there equivalents in other languages and cultures?

- "Talk is cheap."
- "Actions speak louder than words."
- "Silence is golden."
- "We have one mouth and two ears."
- "Still waters run deep."
- "Empty vessels make the most noise."
- "Easier said than done."
- But ……. "Money talks.")

- **How a language changes**

The language of conversation changes very quickly. Fashions come and go. Using the latest expressions confirms your membership of a particular group. Here are a few current English expressions. By the time you read this, they may have disappeared, but they are typical.

- "Whatever." (That kind of thing)
- "Tell me about it." (I have had the same experience and I know how you feel.)
- "Don't go there." (I think it is too difficult a subject to discuss.)
- "I know." (I agree.)

Of course, these sorts of expressions are introduced by young people and older speakers may not even be aware of them. Do other cultures or languages you know about have similar phenomena?

Exercise 8

1. Practicing indirectness

The next two exercises give you a chance to practice the skill of indirect communication. In this first activity, you are presented with a series of seven direct statements. Try to rephrase them to make them more indirect, writing your suggestions in the blank space below each one. While these statements could be appropriate in some situations, the setting here is a meeting, where allowing people to save face is important. Suggested rephrasing of the first statement is offered as an example.

Direct	Indirect
• I don't think that's such a good idea.	• *Do you think that's a good idea? Are there any other ideas? I like most parts of that idea.*
• That's not the point.	• ……..……. ……
• I think we should....	• ……..

	…….
• What do you think, Mr. Cato? *(Calling on people sometimes embarrasses them. How can you find out what Mr. Cato thinks without directly asking him?)*	• ……. ……. ……. …….
• Those figures are not accurate.	• ……
• You're doing that wrong.	• ……
• I don't agree.	• ……

2. Decoding indirectness

This exercise is the opposite of the one you just completed. In this activity, you are presented with a series of indirect statements and asked to decode them—to explain in direct language what the speaker probably means. Looking at the first statement, "That is a very interesting viewpoint," remember that the person may mean exactly that, but *sometimes* it's an indirect way of saying "I disagree with you." In communicating across cultures, you need to *at least entertain the possibility* that the speaker may mean something other than what he or she has said. The first statement has been rephrased for you.

Direct	Indirect
• That is a very interesting viewpoint.	• That is a very interesting viewpoint.
• This proposal deserves further consideration.	• ……
• I know very little about this, but....	• ……
• We understand your proposal very well.	• ……
• We will try our best.	• ……
• I heard another story about that project.	• ……
• Can we move on to the next topic?	• ……

3. Harmony and saving face

As noted earlier, indirect communication owes much to the importance many cultures place on preserving harmony and saving face. In this exercise, you are presented with a number of specific incidents that require diplomacy. Applying the skills and techniques you've learned in this chapter, write below each description how you would handle the situation to avoid causing embarrassment or loss of face.

- **Crop failure**

Your boss has come up with a new scheme for improving crop yields in your province. Since you are the technical expert in this area, he has come to ask you for your opinion. His scheme is based on unreliable data and will in all likelihood not work in your part of the country. Its possible farmers could lose their whole crop if they try this experiment. **What is your response?**

- ……
  ……
  ……
  ……
  ……

- **End run**

In the clinic where you work, the supervisor you report to is ineffective. Because of this person's incompetence, the project you're working on is getting nowhere. You know if you could go directly to this person's superior, the manager of the entire division, you would get much better results—and get them much faster. But if you ignore or go around your supervisor, she will be hurt and embarrassed. **How do you resolve this situation?**

- ……
  ……
  ……
  ……
  ……

- **Moving up**
- The counterpart you work with is an agreable person but not very competent. Now your boss, who is also his boss, has called you into her office to ask you whether your counterpart should be promoted to a new position. **How do you respond?**

- ……
  ……
  ……
  ……
  ……

- **Tight sopt**
- At a faculty meeting, the head of your department states a position on an important matter. The school headmaster then turns to you and asks your opinion. You don't agree with the head of your department. **Now what?**

- ……
  ……
  ……
  ……
  ……

Exercise 9 Observing body language

Key objectives	• To develop learners' ability to attend to the body language of others. • To enable learners to speculate on the meaning of some important elements of nonverbal communication.
Time	1 hour
Materials	'Observing Body Language' handout

Background rationale

- Developing observation skills is an important part of enhancing cross-cultural effectiveness. This activity provides an opportunity for learners to pay active attention to the body language of people they see, and to speculate on what people may be trying to communicate in non-verbal ways, either consciously or unconsciously.

Procedure

1. Preselect a video showing some element of interaction or communication between people in another country or culture of interest. Three or four minutes of material are usually sufficient. Documentaries or news reports are often useful in this respect.
2. Give a copy of the 'Observing Body Language' handout to the learner and explain that the objective of the activity is to develop and practise observation skills.
3. Provide some basic background information about the context in which the video is set: describe who the participants are and what situation they are in.
4. Ask the learners to complete the handout as they watch the video. They may need to see the clip twice.

Observations and suggestions for discussion

- Learners will have their own ideas about what the non-verbal behaviours they observe signify, and these can form the basis of a useful and productive discussion. It is also useful to ask the learners to speculate on how their own body language is similar (or dissimilar) to that of the individuals they observe.

Observing Body Language handout

- Watch the video.
- Closely observe how people dress, greet and interact with each other. While watching, please tick the boxes that match your observations and reflect on what the individuals concerned are trying to communicate.
- Use the table below to report your ansers.
- What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their dress code?
- What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their greetings?
- What are the individuals concerned trying to communicate through their gestures and personal space?

Dress code	Greetings	Gestures and personal space
• Casual • Uniformed • Colourful • Formal • Eccentric • Neutral	• Collective greeting • Hugging • No touching • Neutral face • No greeting • Handshaking • Smiling • Individual greeting • Kissing • Touching • Emotion	• Stand close • Keep their distance • Avoid physical contact • Good eye contact • Avoid eye contact