Intercultural Resource Pack

Intercultural communication resources for language teachers

Derek Utley

An Introduction to Intercultural Studies

by James R. Chamberlain

A cultural anecdote

Twenty years ago I moved from a small town in the American Midwest to Stuttgart, Germany. I clearly remember my first day in the city: it was a sunny spring day and I was full of the promise and excitement of new adventure. As I strolled down the main shopping street, passers-by would catch my eye, and of course I greeted them with a hearty 'Guten Tag!' Not to do so would have been rude. In fact, where I come from, making eye contact with other people obliges one to acknowledge their status as a fellow human being with a hi, a hello, or a nod and a smile.

But the Stuttgarters didn't return my greeting. Most of them ignored me; some gave me what seemed to be bemused, perhaps condescending smiles; and a few stopped in their tracks, looked at me and scratched their heads as if to say, 'Do I know that guy?'

I soon learned that German city dwellers don't usually greet strangers on the street, although they'll look you up and down and straight in the eye. And yet, after twenty years in this country, I still have to repress the urge to say hello when I make eye contact with someone on the street, and deep down I'm a little disappointed that they don't want to greet me. I try not to hold it against them.

It is a long and often arduous journey from the natural state of believing that the way we do things at home is the only right way, to the learned state of accepting foreign ways as neither better nor worse, but just different. And happy the person whose path is made a bit smoother by that judicious bit of knowledge, advice or instruction. For all the importance that intercultural communication in recent years has gained – in business and industry, in politics and diplomacy, in tourism and travel – it is still at its core a basic human problem: how to cope with displacement, with being a stranger in a strange land.

Forewarned is forearmed, and those who prepare others for sojourns abroad, or help to ease visitors into their new and unaccustomed surroundings, are providing a truly human service. But trainers need preparation too, and Derek Utley offers here invaluable assistance in the form of photocopiable activities for intercultural communication training. The modular design of *The Intercultural Resource Pack* allows trainers to construct a program that leads their students through a process of guided discovery, from increased knowledge of other cultures (and hence their own), to heightened sensitivity to other value systems, whether these be in faraway lands or in one's next-door neighbor. This process in turn fosters openness, tolerance and acceptance, which help us meet the real challenges of intercultural encounters: behavior management, speech accommodation, and role flexibility.

What is culture?

Myriads of definitions of culture abound, from the pragmatic ('the way we do things around here') to the academic ('a shared system of assumptions, values and beliefs of a people which result in characteristic behaviors').

But perhaps the best way to understand culture is by analogy with children learning their first language – instinctively, unconsciously, contingent upon their environment. They also are performing a feat of linguistic genius. Yet this is just one of many skills to be learnt: besides linguistic competence, children are also acquiring communicative competence, i.e. learning to use the appropriate speed and volume of speech, pitch and tone of voice, chuckles, sighs, gasps, etc. to communicate a highly nuanced range of emotions. Beyond these so-called paralinguistic features, children are also learning extra-linguistic communication: gestures, how and when to make eye contact, how close to stand to different people, when it is their turn to speak, etc.

As children continue to grow and to learn, they in time acquire cultural competence: a vast web of interconnected knowledge which includes, among other things, which groups of people should be accorded the most respect, which behaviors are acceptable for men and which for women, which foods one may eat, what is funny and what is not.[1] In short, children become fully socialized members of a community, and the constellation of values, norms and behaviors they have learned can be summed up with the word 'culture'.

Culture and communication

The culture we have acquired – the ways in which we have learned to see and think about the world – will of course influence how we communicate. By growing up in a certain society, we have come to expect certain behaviors (including verbal ones) as normal, others as appropriate only to specific situations, and others as taboo. We could say that our culture has fitted us with a set of filters that influence both our perceptions and our conceptions of the world.

In their book *Communicating with Strangers*, Gudykunst and Kim outline several notions about communication, including these assumptions:

- Communication is a process involving the encoding and decoding of messages.
- Communication takes place at varying levels of awareness.
- Communicators make predictions about the outcomes of their communication behavior.
- Intention is not a necessary condition for communication.
- Every communication message has a content dimension and a relationship dimension.[2]

The way we formulate our own ideas, and the way we interpret the utterances of others, are subject to various influences, whether your interlocutor be a human being from an exotic culture or the person most close to you ('Yes, dear, that's what I said, but that's not what I meant!').

The several layers of influence that surround each human being function as conceptual and perceptual filters, that is,

> mechanisms that delimit the number of alternatives from which we choose when we encode and decode messages. More specifically, the filters limit the predictions we make about how strangers might respond to our communication behavior. The nature of the predictions we make, in turn, influences the way we choose to encode our messages. Further, the filters delimit what stimuli we pay attention to and how we choose to interpret those stimuli when we decode incoming messages.[3]

Or put more plainly, our culture endows us with a set of expectations as to how people should act and react when we communicate with them. And these expectations are, at home and among our own, usually met. Once we are placed in an alien or a multicultural environment, however, we may find that our expectations are inaccurate; but this doesn't stop people from holding on to these expectations all the more tenaciously. This natural reaction is called ethnocentrism, the basic human tendency to believe that the way we learned to do certain things is the (only) right way.

Intercultural communication training

'Culture, a system of beliefs and values shared by a particular group of people,' writes Craig Storti,

> is an abstraction which can be appreciated intellectually, but it is behavior, the principal manifestation and most significant consequence of culture, that we actually experience. To put it another way: it is culture as encountered in behavior that we must learn to live with.
>
> The adjustments we must make to a new culture are invariably of two kinds: we have to adjust or get used to behavior on the part of the local people which annoys, confuses, or otherwise unsettles us; and we have to adjust our own behavior so that it does not annoy, confuse, or otherwise unsettle the local people. So long as we are put off by or consistently misconstrue the behavior of the locals and so long as we repeatedly provoke or baffle the locals by our own behavior, we can never expect to feel at ease abroad or to be wholly effective in our work.[4]

Aims and goals

The overall aim of the trainer is to raise the trainees' awareness of their own inherent ethnocentrism, and then offer exercises and experiences to help them leave that ethnocentrism behind.[5] Pragmatically, this means teaching people to manage their behavior so that it harmonizes with that of a different culture. But because behavior is the outward manifestation of a system of assumptions, values and beliefs, the trainee will also need to understand this system (appreciate it intellectually) and to feel comfortable living under it (accept it on an emotional, or affective, level).

Intercultural trainers have, therefore, three main *goals*. These are:

1 cognitive, that is, adding to the learner's stock of knowledge

2 affective, that is, changing the trainee's attitude by developing openness, tolerance, acceptance and awareness, and

3 behavioral, in which the trainee learns the 'dos and don'ts' of the new environment.[6]

Trainers also deliver *content*, the information to be conveyed:

- the 'what' of facts and figures, anecdotes and descriptions
- the 'how' of appropriate behavior in particular situations, rules of address and conduct, 'dos and don'ts', and
- the 'why' of cultural phenomena, using knowledge of the particular historical development of the target culture.

Finally, trainers must consider the *process* by which changes are effected in the trainee. A cognitive approach may be chosen, using such methods as lectures, readings and discussions. A more experiential approach is also possible, in which the trainee's temperament, emotions and interpersonal skills are brought into play. Examples of methods here include games, role-plays, simulations and ethnographic interviews.

The Intercultural Resource Pack offers trainers a wide range of materials with which to deliver the content of intercultural communication training. The activities help the trainer achieve the cognitive, affective and behavioral goals of training, and they serve as a springboard into the real world of experiential intercultural interaction. Through them the student should begin the enriching process of making the strange seem familiar and the dangerous seem delightful, and should gain that cultural understanding that grants us the sense and sensitivity to be both gracious hosts and gracious guests upon this island Earth.

Notes

1 Cf. Edward T. Hall's *The Silent Language*, New York: Anchor Books, 1997, particularly chapter 3, 'The Vocabulary of Culture'.

2 Gudykunst, W. and Kim, Y., *Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communications* (4th Edition), New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002, pp. 6–9.

3 Ibid., p. 31.

4 Craig Storti, *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (2nd Edition), Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 2001, p. 15.

5 Cf. Milton J. Bennett, 'A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 10, 1986, pp. 179–200.

6 Cf. Janet M. Bennett, 'Modes of cross-cultural training: Conceptualizing cross-cultural training as education', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 10, 1986, pp. 117–134, and Virginia Milhouse, 'Intercultural Communication Education and Training Goals, Content, and Method', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 1996, pp. 69–95.

Recommended reading

Acton, William R. and Walker de Felix, Judith (1986) 'Acculturation and mind' in Valdez, Joyce Merrill (ed.) *Culture Bound: Bridging the Cultural Gap in Language Teaching*, pp. 20–32, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Brislin, R. W. (1999) *Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior* (2nd Edition), Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Brislin, R. and Cushner, K. (1996) *Intercultural Interactions: A Practical Guide* (2nd Edition), Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Fantini, Alvino (1997) *New Ways of Teaching Culture*, Alexandria: TESOL.

Gibson, R. (2002) *Intercultural Business Communication*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gudykunst, W. and Kim, Y. (2002) *Communicating with Strangers: An Approach to Intercultural Communications* (4th Edition), New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hall, Edward T. (1997) *Beyond Culture*, New York: Anchor Books.

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Hall, Edward T. (1997) and Hall, Mildred Reed (1989) *Understanding Cultural Differences: Germans, French and Americans*, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

Hofstede, G. and Hofstede, G.J. (2004) *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Third Millennium Edition), New York: McGraw-Hill.

International Journal of Intercultural Relations, published quarterly since 1977 by Elsevier Science Ltd, ISSN 0147-1767 (see especially Vol. 10, 1986).

Landis, D. and Bhagat, R. S. (eds.) (1996) *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (2nd Edition), Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Samovar, L. A. and Porter, R. E. (2003) *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (10th Edition), New York: Wadsworth.

Storti, Craig (2001) *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (2nd Edition), Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

Trompenaars, Alfons, Hampden-Turner, Charles and Trompenaars, Fons (1997) *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Aims
- To collect as many ideas as possible on the many different components of culture.
- To show how the concept of culture, and its components, can be interpreted differently by different individuals or groups.

Procedure

1 If your students are not familiar with mind maps, spend a few minutes developing a simple mind map on the board or overhead projector. Choose a subject you know well, based on the mind map in this activity. For example:

Central topic: media; branching topics: television, radio, newspapers, magazines. Extend if necessary (for example, newspapers can be morning or evening, national or local). Make sure they understand that the idea of a mind map is to loosely link together different ideas and thoughts around a central theme.

Introduce the concept of culture by asking questions like:

- What is culture for you?
- What does it involve?
- What shapes culture?

Invite the students to express their ideas as freely as possible, without too much discussion at this stage.

2 Ask the students to look at the mind map, and check that the words are understood and the links clear. Explain that the elements given are not intended to be a complete list, but simply a selection. If necessary, go through a branch such as 'Social life', showing the links through to the final column. Ask individuals for examples of how such aspects as 'gender' (the differing social and work roles of male and female) are viewed in their own cultures.

3 Form pairs or groups to do task 1: find suitable words to fit in the spaces numbered 1 to 6. The words should be relatively easy to find, but allow time for discussion, and accept anything which students can explain satisfactorily. Compare and discuss results.

4 Do the same for task 2, either in groups as before, or in an open session, asking for ideas on ways of continuing some of the lines outwards. For example, the line Physical – body language – gestures could be continued with 'hands, body, feet', with students then giving examples of how gestures can differ from culture to culture.

Outcomes

Suggestions for the missing words are:

1 traffic   2 independence   3 spoken
4 work times   5 home   6 speed

Development

Continuation of the lines could be extensively developed by students who are particularly interested. Some may wish to restructure and add new elements to the mind map as well as extend it.

Many of the topics can lead to discussion of emotive or abstract topics such as driving habits ('traffic'), fashion ('dress'), bluntness ('directness of speech').

Discussion could also centre around the origin of the word 'culture'. It is based on the Latin word 'cultus', meaning growing or cultivating a crop or a plant. This illustrates one important aspect of culture, which is that it is something which has always and will always be changing and modifying itself in both large and small ways.

Encourage students to be open in their definition of culture. It is a very flexible concept, and they should be encouraged to be open and tolerant.

Although this mind map attempts to divide up culture into different parts, students will realise that there is a large amount of overlap, because of the complexity of the subject.

To begin with, students may suggest some obvious differences between cultures such as food, dress and language. Acknowledge that these are indeed differences, at the same time encouraging them to bring out less easily perceived differences such as attitudes to authority or family.

Linked activities

1.2, 1.3

Further reading

For examples of dividing up culture into seen and unseen, implicit and explicit, etc., see chapter 2 ('What is Culture?') of
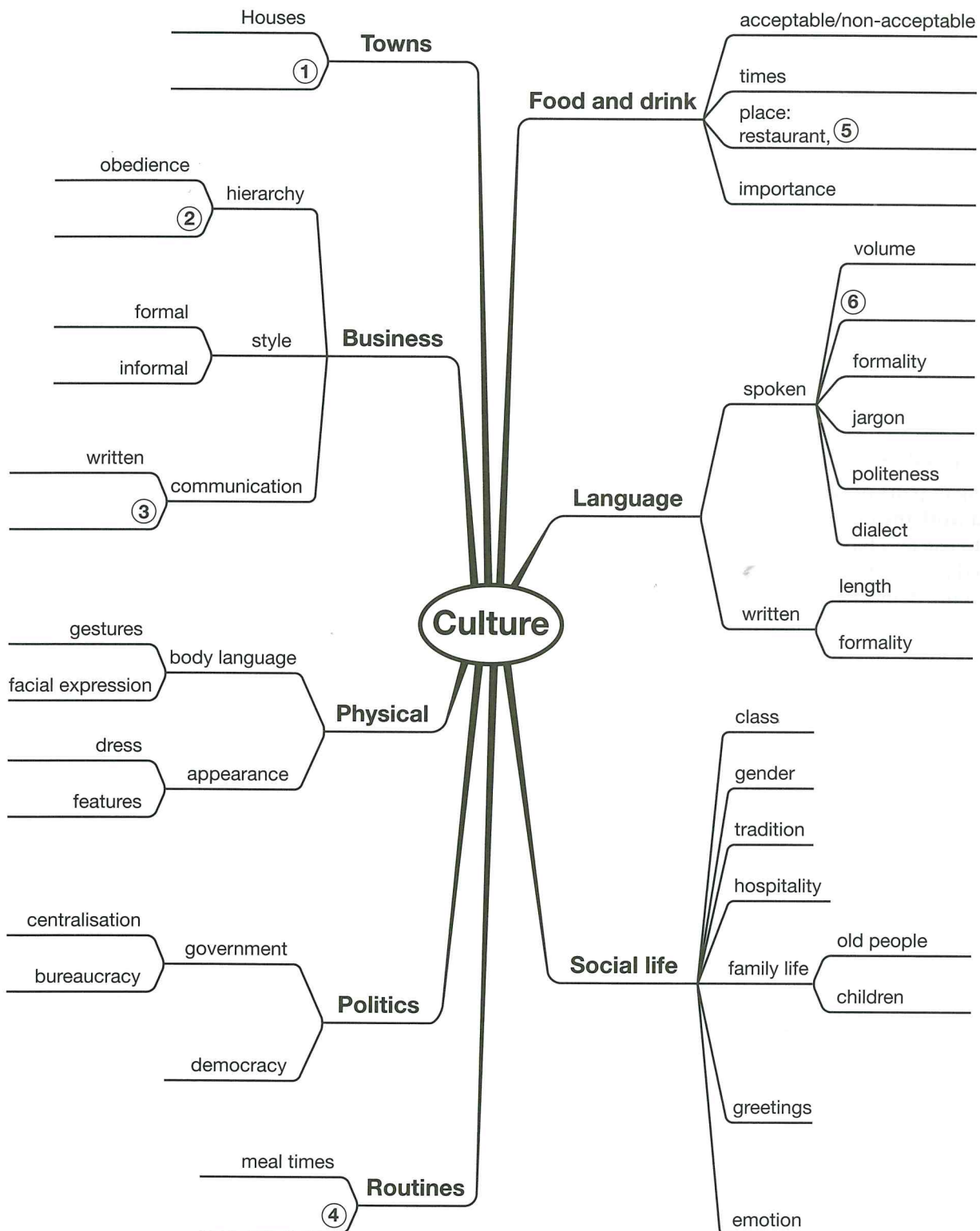
The Silent Language, by E. T. Hall, 1997, New York: Anchor Books

as well as chapter 4 ('Hidden Culture') of the book

Beyond Culture, by E.T. Hall, 1997, New York: Anchor Books.

Brainstorming: What is culture for you?

What is 'culture' for you? The word has many meanings and is open to many interpretations.

The aim of this mind map is to try to identify as many of the components of culture as possible. Follow the lines out from the central word 'culture'.

1 Complete the spaces numbered 1 to 6 with a suitable word or phrase.

2 Continue the lines outwards with suitable ideas.

Towns
- Houses
- ①

Business
- hierarchy
  - obedience
  - ②
- style
  - formal
  - informal
- communication
  - written
  - ③

Physical
- body language
  - gestures
  - facial expression
- appearance
  - dress
  - features

Politics
- government
  - centralisation
  - bureaucracy
- democracy

Routines
- meal times
- ④

Culture

Food and drink
- acceptable/non-acceptable
- times
- place: restaurant, ⑤
- importance

Language
- spoken
  - volume
  - ⑥
  - formality
  - jargon
  - politeness
  - dialect
- written
  - length
  - formality

Social life
- class
- gender
- tradition
- hospitality
- family life
  - old people
  - children
- greetings
- emotion

Aims

- To examine the expectations people have when meeting people from other cultures.
- To see how these expectations can affect the attitudes and behaviour of both sides.

Procedure

1 Ask the students to imagine that they are about to meet a person they have never seen before – a surprise visitor or a long-lost relative, for example, or a person they have often heard spoken of but never met. What expectations would they have, and what would they be based on? Also ask the students what they expected to see and experience when moving to a new school or a new company. What were their expectations of their future colleagues? Do we all form the same picture?

Draw out the fact that these ideas are usually very subjective, sometimes based on false information or emotion. Draw the parallel with our expectations of people from other cultures: our ideas of them are often based on scanty information or experience, but often affect the way we behave towards them.

2 Ask students to read task 1, and check that they understand the words and the task: they should select two different nationalities with which they are familiar and try to predict what preconceived ideas each of the two characters will have about the other. At this stage do not raise the question of where these ideas come from. Form pairs or groups to do the task, and ask a spokesperson to report back. Discuss and compare results.

3 Introduce task 2, which is simply a discussion of the usefulness or otherwise of expectations. Though they are a useful and natural way of preparing for an unknown situation, they carry the possible dangers of inaccuracy, prejudice and stereotyping. Some examples of both useful and potentially harmful expectations may well have come out in the preceding discussions.

Outcomes

Task 1 will not yield uniform results, but should illustrate the point made in task 2 that expectations can have both positive and negative effects.

Development

The discussions above should lead to a consideration of what we think about other nationalities and other cultures before we actually come into contact with them. It should raise the question of prejudice and stereotypes. Everybody makes assumptions about people or situations with which they are not familiar. These assumptions are a necessary part of preparation, and can contribute to a successful contact. They can also lead to the creation of stereotypes and prejudices which are forced onto the situation, and which may clash with the reality. A person who sees ready-formed attitudes in another may well find them offensive, particularly if, as can often be the case with stereotypes, those views are negative.

Linked activities

1.4, 1.5, 2.5, 2.8, 6.4

Further reading

The crucial role that expectations play in our experience of other cultures is explained in

The Art of Crossing Cultures (2nd Edition), by Craig Storti, 2001, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

See also:

Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior, by Richard Brislin, 1999, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

1.8 Expectations

Before meeting someone from another culture, people often form ideas of what to expect. These may be founded on fact, on hearsay or on imagination.

These expectations could be a useful form of preparation, or they could lead to stereotyped ideas which get in the way of successful communication.

1 Think of two different nationalities. Imagine what qualities people from each of those countries would expect to find in the other before they met. Choose from the list below, but add any others you think likely.

communication in short sentences	little direct eye contact
direct style of communication	lots of talk about food
displays of emotion	lots of gesticulation
emotional volatility	loud speech
emphasis on entertainment	periods of silence
extrovert behaviour	quiet speech
extreme politeness	reserved behaviour
rapid speech	slowness to speak
indirect style of communication	talkativeness
limited body language	

2 Do you think that expectations that you have before you meet someone from a different culture are generally helpful or unhelpful?

Aims
- To examine an example of a situation in which two different cultures have to work together.
- To think about how to make such a situation work.

Procedure

1 Ideally, students should read the case study before coming to the lesson. Explain the aim of this activity, which is based on a real business case.

2 Check that students understand the text and the list of possible actions. In task 1, it is worth noting that the suggestions fall into two broad categories: steps to modify Dave's behaviour, and steps to modify that of the local company.

3 Divide the class into pairs or small groups and ask them to discuss the pros and cons of each of the possible actions listed, prioritise them and make any additions they feel necessary. Each group should appoint one person to take brief notes.

4 Ask the spokesperson from each group to present their group's ideas by summarising the main points. Allow time for questions and comments.

5 Encourage comparisons and discussion of each group's ideas.

Outcomes

It should be possible for students to arrive at a realistic list of actions which should include opportunities for development for both the Canadian and the Taiwanese groups. It might be stressful for everybody involved in the project to include all the options.

Discussion of possible actions that Dave could take should lead to an awareness of the way in which normal business management problems can become more complicated where there is a strong cultural element – in this case the clear contrast between Canadian and Taiwanese styles. This activity also provides scope for experiencing a real decision-making situation.

Development

Students should work in the same groups to prepare a short action plan for Dave and his company. The form and length of the report should be adapted to the experience of the group. Each group should prepare its action plan on paper, whiteboard, flipchart, or OHP transparency. Written reports can be distributed between the groups for comparison.

Linked activities

1.7, 1.10, 6.11

Further reading

For further exercises and case studies see

Intercultural Business Communication, by Robert Gibson, 2002, Oxford: Oxford University Press

and also pp. 207–214, 'Case Study: Salman Rushdie and The Satanic Verses', by Janet M. Bennett in

Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods (Volume 1), by Sandra M. Fowler and Monica G. Mumford, 1995, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

This case study exemplifies a contrast between two working cultures: Canadian and Taiwanese.

Canada

Taiwan

Read the text and the list of possible actions. Then make recommendations as to what the Canadian should do.

1 Choose from the list below those activities you think he should carry out.

2 Rank them in order of priority.

3 Add any other actions you think necessary.
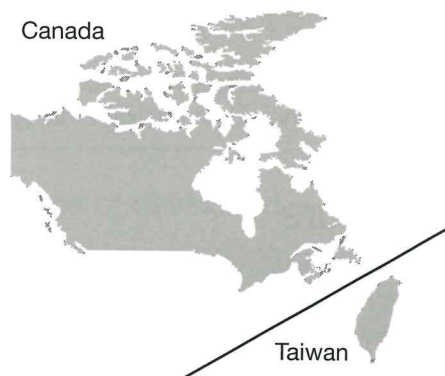
Document1

Dave Thompson is a Canadian working for a 'Baby Bell' company which owns shares in a Taiwanese mobile phone company. They have recently acquired a licence to operate in this crowded and competitive market. Dave has been posted to Taiwan on a three-year contract. He has now been living there for three months. He has good experience of the mobile phone business, both technically and strategically, and was previously involved in the start-up of a new mobile phone company in Lithuania.

He believes he has the opportunity to make the new company a great success by adopting the management style of his home company: open, innovative, confident and aggressive.

In Taiwan he faces a tradition based on Chinese hierarchies and family-run businesses. The Taiwanese company Dave works for belongs to one of these families, but the current generation sees the advantages of a western approach in what is for them a new kind of business. So they back his efforts to 'turn the company around'.

Dave's biggest problem is one of time: he wants to get on with building up a western-style company, and is prepared to trust people, take risks, and act fast to improve market share in a rapidly developing market. The deregulated market is not so transparent to him, depending as it does on old traditions, complicated business practices, and personal connections. On top of all this, only a few of his top managers speak English. The rest of his managers speak Mandarin, and have to be addressed through an interpreter.

Although Dave is keen to leap into action, his colleagues need time to build up trust with him, as with all strangers. They also believe in consensus, not the kind of questioning and challenging of ideas which leads easily to conflict. At meetings, they always appear to accept what Dave suggests, deferring to his status as a respected senior and an outsider.

Dave decides he must do something. He draws up the following list of possible actions:

- learn Mandarin
- bring in more Western managers
- organise lectures for his employees on Western business practices
- learn more about Taiwan
- slow down his approach
- send some of his managers to work in North America
- organise a one-day seminar on business cultures
- organise a meeting at which all the cultural problems are discussed
- bring in a local management consultant

2.1 The culture onion

Procedure

1 Ask students which cultures they feel they are influenced by: how their ideas and their behaviour are moulded to some extent by the people and events around them. Include large groups such as nationality, and also smaller ones such as clubs or teams.

2 Look at the culture onion and ask if other layers could be added in addition to those already discussed. Possibilities include geographical regions within a country, social class, departments within a company and work teams.

3 Form groups to discuss task 2. Ask each group to rank the relative importance of the different cultures mentioned so far, in shaping people's ideas and behaviour. At this stage they should be thinking in general terms, although of course every person is a unique product of different influences, including individually inherited characteristics. Thinking generally should help recognise and avoid the danger of stereotyping. Compare results through a spokesperson from each group, and encourage discussion.

4 Introduce task 3. Ask the groups to choose a person whom they can briefly analyse in terms of how representative they are of the cultural groups they belong to. Ask a spokesperson to report back from each group, and encourage discussion.

Outcomes

This activity should encourage students to consider how far we are a product of our different cultures, and how far we are unique individuals. It should also allow them to reflect on the complex cultural situations in which we all live and work.

Development

Culture is normally associated with the place where you were born or have spent most of your life, usually a country. This is because countries often share vital characteristics such as history, climate, laws, art or geography. But there are other groups which have their own distinctive cultures, for example:
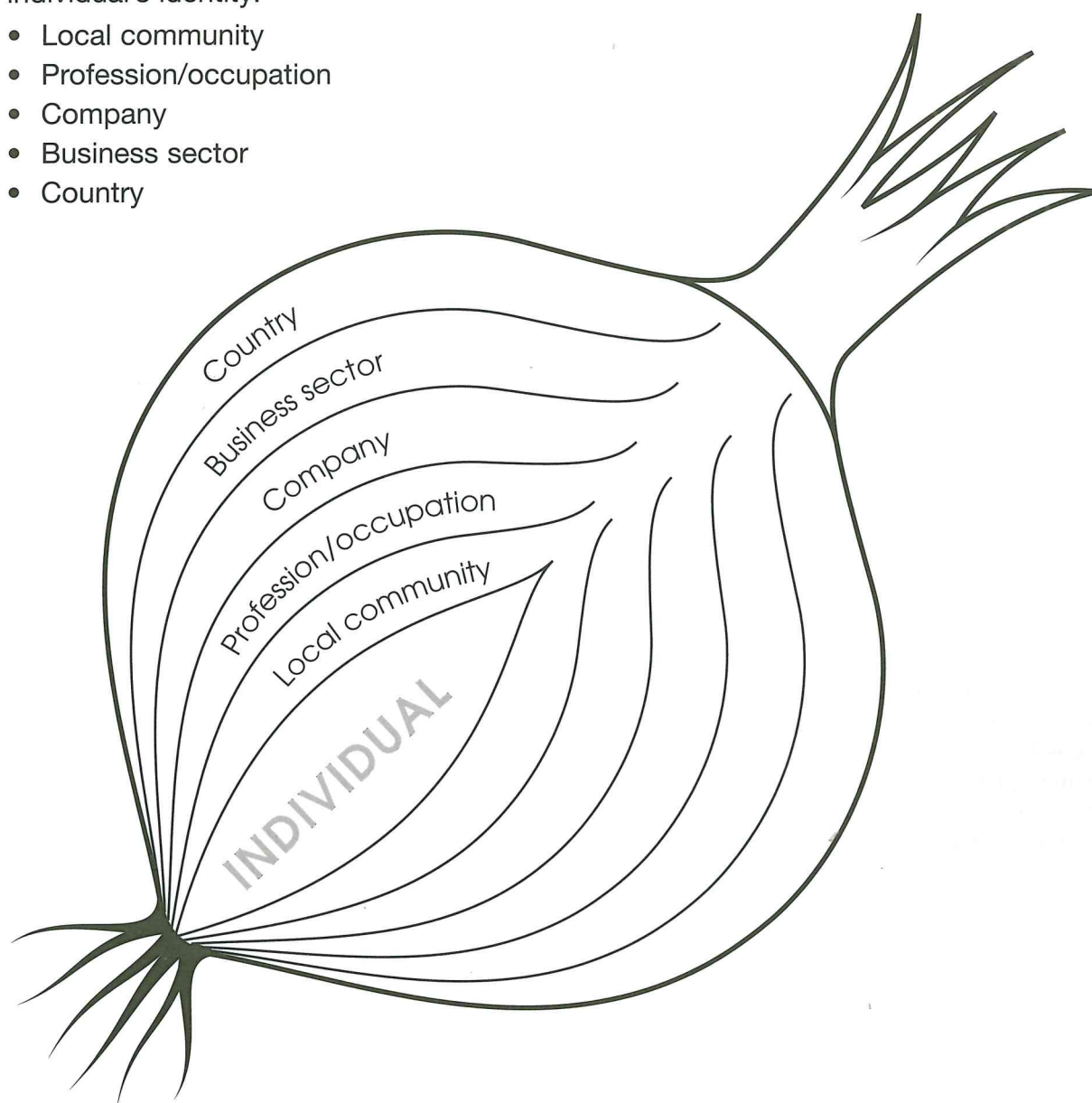
- a larger geographical area:
  south-east Asia, North America, southern Europe
- a part of a country:
  California, Siberia, western Norway, Yorkshire
- a company:
  IBM, Ericsson, Nissan, Alcatel
- a team:
  China Sea project team, new software implementation project
- a function:
  mechanical engineers, financial controllers
- a professional association:
  the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, the British Medical Association.

At the centre of all these groups is the individual, whose combination of inherited genes and specific environmental influences have made him or her a unique person.

This individual will be a member of many different cultures.

At the same time as sharing some of the characteristics of each of these groups, he or she as an individual will have much in common with people outside the same groups.

Categories will inevitably overlap: a Colombian employee of Ericsson may derive certain cultural characteristics from his or her country and others from the company. The former could make him or her different from an Ericsson employee in Britain; the latter could make him or her different from a Colombian working for Siemens.

Linked activities

2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 3.1, 6.4

Further reading

The many influences that colour our acts of communication are thoroughly analysed in

Communicating with Strangers (4th Edition), by William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim, 2002, New York: McGraw-Hill.

For valuable insights into the dimensions of national culture and how these affect societies, institutions and the workplace, see

Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, by Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, 2004 Third Millennium Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill.

The onion shows five different layers of culture which might affect an individual's identity:

- Local community
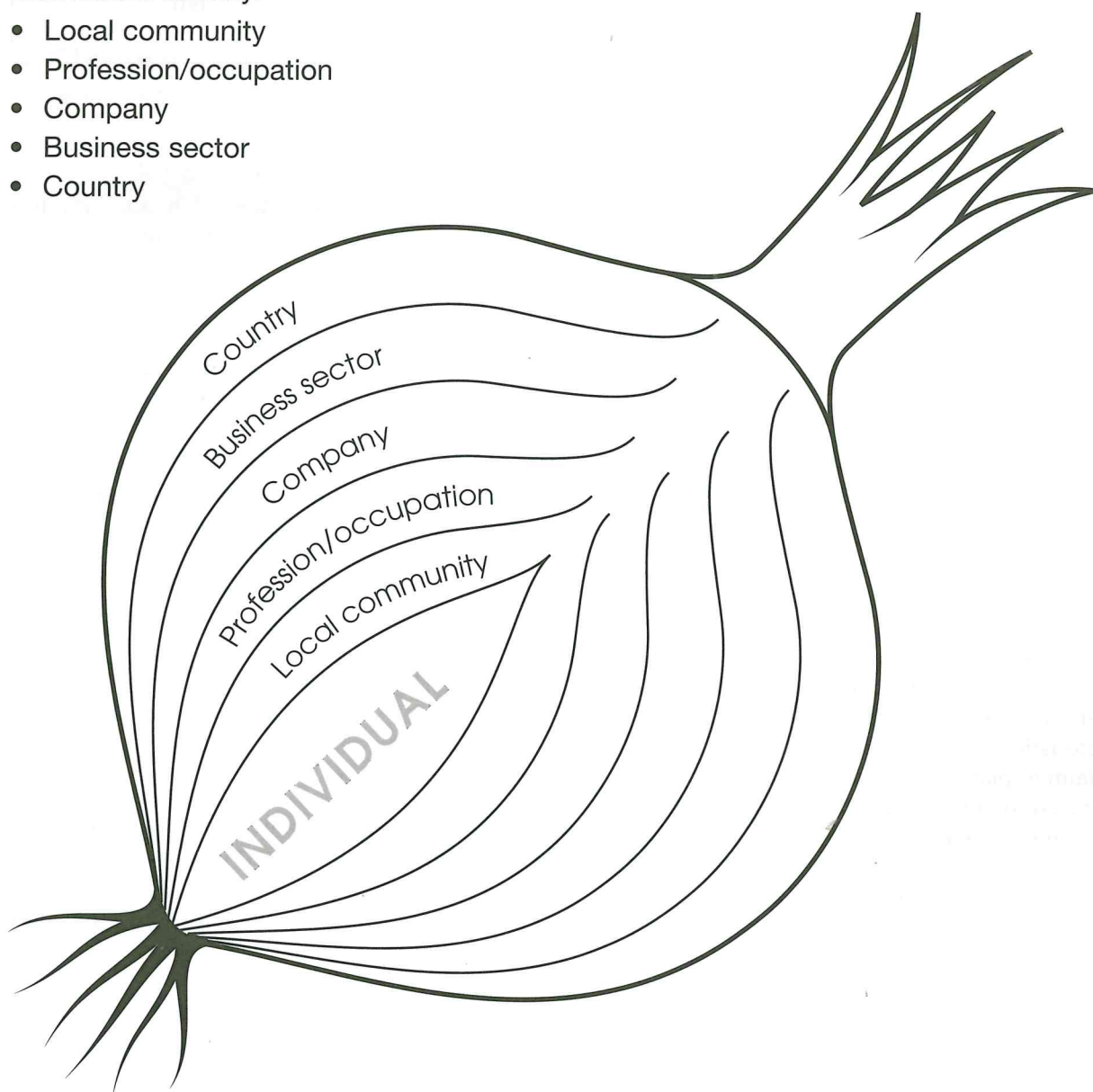- Profession/occupation
- Company
- Business sector
- Country

Country
Business sector
Company
Profession/occupation
Local community
INDIVIDUAL

1 Can you add other layers to the onion?
2 Which layers of culture do you think are the most influential on a person's behaviour?
3 Choose a person you know quite well and explain how he or she has been influenced by the different cultures he or she belongs to.

The onion shows five different layers of culture which might affect an individual's identity:

- Local community
- Profession/occupation
- Company
- Business sector
- Country

Country
Business sector
Company
Profession/occupation
Local community
INDIVIDUAL

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> **Aims**
> - To explore the concept of culture.
> - To develop ideas about the main components of culture.
> This activity may be used as a shorter alternative to **1.1**, or as an addition to it.

Procedure

1 Ask the students if they can give a short definition of what culture is for them.

2 Read the introduction to the activity, to raise awareness of the factors listed in the three bullet points. Culture:

- can be influenced by many factors such as geography, history and climate
- can be shared not only by the members of a national culture such as the Japanese or the Brazilians, but also by people of one company, one region or one profession
- can show itself in observable behaviour such as gestures, but also in non-observable phenomena such as attitudes and taboos.

3 Ask the students to look at the five definitions of culture. Check any unknown vocabulary and that they understand the ideas.

4 Working in pairs or small groups, students should work through tasks 1 to 3. Encourage them to use as a basis for discussion the three bulleted points at the beginning of the activity. Each of the definitions carries expressions relevant to these points, such as:

- 'conditioned', 'programming' 'learned programmes', 'passed on'
- 'group of people', 'you', 'the human mind', 'generation', 'a society'
- 'beliefs, values and norms', 'think, feel, interpret and react', 'action', 'know and believe'.

5 Ask volunteers from each pair or group to present and comment on their group's choice with any comments, additions or even internal disagreements.

6 Encourage comparison and discussion of the different definitions. This should lead to a more open discussion of the concept and components of culture.

Outcomes

A search for their 'best' definition may be motivating, but the most important thing in this activity is to generate, compare and expand ideas. It will be useful to point out that each of the different definitions focuses on different features:

A abstract ideas such as beliefs and knowledge as well as the idea of a collective group
B reactions, conditioning and programming
C conditioning and programming
D actions, conditioning and programming
E abstract ideas such as beliefs and knowledge as well as society.

Development

Finding the 'perfect' definition will be difficult if not impossible. Use the definitions to help students become more aware of how cultures develop and how they manifest themselves. If the three concepts shown in the bullet points can be made clear, they will form a good basis for further understanding.

Linked activities

1.1, 1.3

Further reading

A thoroughgoing exercise in the definition of culture was undertaken in

Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions, by A.L. Kroeber, C. Kluckholm and W. Untereiner, 2001, New York: Greenwood Press.

For a more concise discussion with an emphasis on culture's inherent values, see chapter 1 ('Values and Culture') of

Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations, by Geert Hofstede, 2001 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

'Culture' can mean different things to different people.

Think about:

- how culture is created – by geography, climate, history, coincidence?
- what groups of people can be said to have a culture – races, countries, companies?
- in what ways you see, hear or experience it – by behaviour, attitudes, gestures?

Look at these five definitions of culture.

1 Select the one you think is closest to your own idea.
2 Identify any missing elements in each definition.
3 If not satisfied, produce your own, better definition.

A

The sum total of all the beliefs, values and norms shared by a group of people.

B

The way you have been conditioned in a society to think, feel, interpret and react.

C

The collective programming of the human mind.

D

A large pool of experience composed of learned programmes for action and passed on from generation to generation.

E

All you need to know and believe in order to be accepted in a society.

My definition:

Procedure

1 Ask students what they know about icebergs in order to elicit the fact that a large part (about seven eighths) is normally below water level. They may observe similar characteristics in, for example, people (some have well-hidden characteristics) or families.

2 Check that students understand the significance of the illustration and then present task 1, which deals with national culture in general, rather than one specific culture. Ask them to put each of the components from the list into one of the categories A, B and C. They should work in pairs or small groups to complete the task.

3 Take each section – A, B and C – separately, asking a spokesperson from each group to run through their list, and ask for comparisons and comments from other groups.

4 Now do task 2, which relates this topic to a specific culture. Form groups to examine one particular culture (the members may be from that culture or not, but should have some experience of it). They should list at least two components from each category which are important in that culture.

5 Ask a spokesperson from each group to briefly summarise what the group has discussed. Invite comment and discussion.

6 Brainstorm task 3, which will collect any elements identified in the discussions which do not appear in the list.

Outcomes

The categorisation of components should produce a certain amount of agreement, with plenty of scope for differing interpretations and consequent discussion.

This is one possible categorisation:

A artefacts, directness of speech in business, driving habits, greetings, emotion shown in public, physical gestures

B balance between work and home, corruption, family life, gender – roles of males and females, humour, organisation of companies, personal friendship, press and other media, punctuality in business, social life: public and private

C democracy, social organisation and class, treatment of outsiders/foreigners, values and beliefs.

Development

Tasks 2 and 3 give students the opportunity to think about the characteristics of different national cultures. This could lead to work on profiling different cultures (see Linked activities below).

They could also give rise to thinking about the difference between profiling your own culture as opposed to profiling cultures to which you do not belong, for which the Linked activities below will also be a useful follow-up.

Linked activities

1.4, 1.5, 3.3, 3.4

Further reading

Other models which help to visualise culture include Hofstede's pyramid, see pp. 14–17 in

Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations, by Geert Hofstede, 2001 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

and the onion diagram in

Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport in Talk Across Cultures, by Helen Spenser-Oatey, 2001, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.

1.3 | The culture iceberg

When you observe people from a certain culture, some characteristics – such as dress and the way people greet each other – are easy to see. Others are not so easy.

Culture is sometimes compared to an iceberg, some of which is visible, but much of which is difficult to see, or invisible.
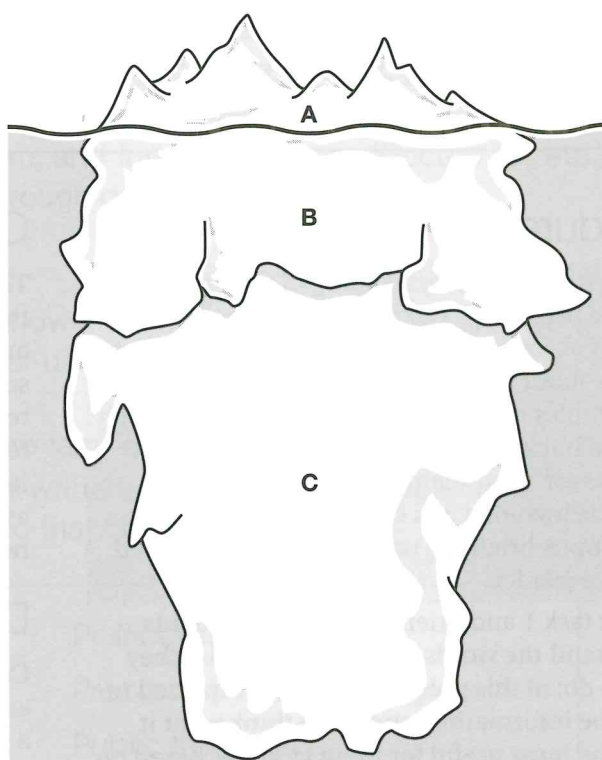
1 Look at the list of components of national culture, and place each one in one of the three categories:

A things which you can recognise quite easily

B things which take some time to recognise

C things which you recognise only when you are very familiar with a culture.

Artefacts: art and architecture	☐	Humour	☐
Balance between work and home	☐	Organisation of companies	☐
Corruption	☐	Personal friendship	☐
Democracy	☐	Physical gestures	☐
Directness of speech in business	☐	Press and other media	☐
Driving habits	☐	Punctuality in business	☐
Emotion shown in public	☐	Social life: public and private	☐
Family life	☐	Social organisation and class	☐
Gender – roles of males and females	☐	Treatment of outsiders/foreigners	☐
Greetings	☐	Values and beliefs	☐

2 Are any of these more important than others in understanding a particular national culture with which you are familiar?

3 Add any other elements which you think are important in defining a national culture you know.

2.3 | Gender

Aims
- To focus on the role that gender plays in defining cultures.
- To identify some gender characteristics.

Procedure

1 The role of gender in society is a big and potentially controversial topic. Try to limit the scope of this activity by focusing on communication, and by explaining that 'masculine' and 'feminine' are labels used to identify two broad clusters of characteristics rather than to describe the way all men and all women communicate. Open up discussion by asking students what they understand by the two terms when applied to communicating styles.

2 The first two paragraphs should help summarise this discussion. Make sure the list in task 1 is clearly understood, and ask students to work in groups to separate them into the predominantly masculine and predominantly feminine. Explain that there is no absolutely 'correct' division (some of the words may be interpreted in different ways) but that certain trends may appear. Compare results through a spokesperson from each group, and discuss how far they conform to a regular pattern. If desired, copy the list in Outcomes onto the board or flipchart or onto an overhead transparency. Compare this list with theirs and discuss any differences.

3 Depending on the students in your class, decide with them whether they should discuss national or corporate culture in tasks 2 and 3. Students should work in pairs or small groups and try to decide in general terms whether the culture in question is predominantly masculine or feminine, based on the qualities suggested above, and whether they would prefer it to be otherwise. Ask a spokesperson from each group to describe results, and encourage discussion.

Outcomes

The following division is offered merely as a guideline drawn from a mainly British or European standpoint: there is obviously scope for different interpretations of some of the words. For example, cooperating could be seen as a strong element of male teamwork or as an important part of female supportive collaboration. The important thing is that students form a clear idea of choices and variety in communicating styles.

Feminine	Masculine
Advising	Challenging
Affiliating	Competing
Asking	Contesting
Communicating	Correcting
Confirming	Criticising
Consulting	Directing
Cooperating	Humiliating
Empathising	Informing
Enquiring	Ordering
Networking	Protesting
Reconciling	Reacting
Sharing	Solving

Development

There is a considerable body of specialist and popular literature on this subject, on which most people have strong opinions. Discussion should follow quite easily, and one of your main roles may be to contain it within the confines described above.

Linked activities

2.4, 2.5, 6.3, 6.9

Further reading

See chapter 4 ('He, she and (s)he') for background on the cultural constructs of masculinity and femininity in

Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, by Geert Hofstede and Gert Jan Hofstede, 2004 Third Millennium Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill.

2.3 | Gender

Gender can play a fundamental role in defining the identity of an individual or the culture of a group.

Certain companies or groups are said to have characteristics which are predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine. These characteristics tend to be based on a general view of the roles of men and women, rather than the notion that 'men/women always do this'.

1 Based on your own feeling for what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine', divide the following actions or characteristics into those you would describe as predominantly masculine and those you would describe as predominantly feminine. Put M or F by each one.

Advising ☐	Directing ☐
Affiliating ☐	Empathising ☐
Asking ☐	Enquiring ☐
Challenging ☐	Humiliating ☐
Communicating ☐	Informing ☐
Competing ☐	Networking ☐
Confirming ☐	Ordering ☐
Consulting ☐	Protesting ☐
Contesting ☐	Reacting ☐
Cooperating ☐	Reconciling ☐
Correcting ☐	Sharing ☐
Criticising ☐	Solving ☐

2 Would you describe your own culture (national or corporate) as predominantly masculine or predominantly feminine?

3 Which of the above characteristics would you wish to be more evident, and which less evident in your own organisation?

or yourself?

Aims
- To show that gender can have an impact on communication style.
- To identify sources of potential conflict when different styles meet.

Procedure

1 Ask students to reflect on conversations which they have had with people in the past. Ask them what makes a successful conversation, and why some conversations are not successful. Ask if they think mixed groups of men and women have more difficulty than single-gender groups. If so, why? This could suggest that each gender has a different style of communication. Try to avoid stereotyping by explaining that 'masculine' and 'feminine' refer to styles of communicating rather than to a division between the sexes. Many people have a blend of these two sets of characteristics.

2 Check that students understand the introduction and four dialogues, and explain that in task 1 they have to identify which of the speakers in each dialogue has a more masculine style and which a more feminine one. Ask them to do the activity in pairs or small groups, then compare answers and discuss the results.

3 Explain task 2: to identify the main differences in style of the two characters. Students may use their own words, but those given in Outcomes could be given as examples.

Outcomes

The most common categorisation is:

1 A feminine, B masculine
2 A masculine, B feminine
3 A feminine, B masculine
4 A feminine, B masculine

A successful conversation requires listening, showing respect, showing understanding and interest, sympathising and turn taking. Body language, facial expression and eye contact are also very important.

Breakdowns in effective communication occur because:

1 A is cooperating, consulting, reconciling; B is contesting, correcting, challenging.
2 A is challenging; B is enquiring, empathising.
3 A is asking; B is directing, ordering.
4 A is asking, communicating, enquiring; B is competing, informing, contesting.

Development

Ask for more examples of the kind of breakdown shown in these dialogues, from life and from fiction. Ask students to rephrase the dialogues so that more positive communication results.

Linked activities

2.3, 2.5, 6.1

Further reading

For the effects of gender on communication, see *Gender and Discourse*, by Deborah Tannen, 1996, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

People with very different communication styles often have difficulty developing a real understanding. Two styles which can produce conflict come from so-called 'masculine' and 'feminine' cultures. The terms do not necessarily relate to all men and all women, but are used to denote characteristics often seen to be typical of each gender.

Read the following dialogues.

1 Identify A and B as 'masculine' or 'feminine'.
2 Summarise the difference in approach of the two people.

1

A: There's a good film on television this evening, it's about a mad doctor.

B: Yes, I know. He's not mad actually, just eccentric.

A: There was a good review of it in the newspaper yesterday.

B: It was on Monday. I remember, I read it on the train.

A: It sounds quite interesting.

B: Yes, not quite so good as that one we saw about ghosts last week.

A: It would be something different from what we usually see, that will be nice.

B: Really? I thought we saw a film about a mad doctor just a few weeks ago.

2

A: Morning.

B: Morning, how are you feeling today?

A: I'm OK. Why do you ask?

3

A: What time do we take off tomorrow?

B: Be ready by 10.30.

4

A: ... and what do you do?

B: I'm a product development manager, working mainly in the area of bearings for the automotive industry. I'm responsible for development worldwide, so I travel quite a lot, especially in south-east Asia. How about you?

A: I'm a journalist.

B: Oh, my brother's a journalist, he's freelance, but he works a lot for the New York Herald. He's done that for quite a few years now ...

A: Oh, that sounds interesting.

B: Yes, it is, but it has its boring moments. I could have been a journalist too, but I was good at engineering ...

Aims

- To discover some of the forces which cause people to adopt stereotypical attitudes.
- To assess their relative importance.

Procedure

1 Ask students if they can imagine the landscape and the people of a country they have never visited. Ask them how they gathered these impressions. The landscape can be seen in photos, but there may be a variety of inputs about people, such as films and books, or friends who have made a visit. Ask if there is a possibility of getting prejudiced or one-sided views from these.

2 Ask students to look at the list and, working in pairs or groups, to do task 1, adding any other influences they can think of. If so, quickly add these to the list.

3 Set the pairs or groups to work on task 2. Within each group they should try to come to some agreement, in order to promote discussion. Each group then appoints a spokesperson to explain what they chose and why. Encourage comment and discussion.

Outcomes

Many different outcomes are possible, but students should increase their understanding of how attitudes are formed in themselves and in other people.

Development

Ask students to evaluate their own attitudes to other cultures in general or to any specific one, and to try to find out where they came from. Encourage comparison between students.

Linked activities

2.5, 2.6, 6.4

Further reading

See 2.7.

2.8 Where do stereotypes come from?

Stereotypes usually involve negative views of other cultures. How are they formed?

1 Look at the list below and add any influences you think are missing.
2 Select the four which you consider most common.

Inherited characteristics

Parents and family

The media

Friends

Education (school, university)

Inferiority complexes

The neighbourhood

Clubs and societies

Religion

Travel

Laziness

Fear

A sense of superiority

Limited imagination

Lack of experience of people

Poor communication skills

Envy

Procedure

1 Ask the class what is meant by stereotype (an exaggerated, often uncomplimentary view of someone from another culture), and ask for examples. It should not be too difficult to establish that the most common stereotypes are often untypical of the group they portray, and almost always out of date. But it may be possible to argue that there is an element of truth in some of them: the challenge is not to apply a blanket description to a whole group of people.

2 Introduce task 1, and ask pairs or groups to match the two columns. Compare each group's results, and tell them the results in Outcomes below. Discuss any discrepancies and consider to what extent these national stereotypes are justified and to what extent they are inaccurate.

3 Introduce task 2. Form pairs or small groups to come up with some examples of stereotypes. Ask a volunteer from each group to summarise the feelings of their group. Encourage a class discussion as to the validity of these stereotypes.

4 Finally, ask students to reflect and comment on stereotypical views of their own national culture.

Outcomes

The stereotypes suggested:

British – hypocritical
Germans – arrogant
Italians – cowardly
Spaniards – lazy
Swedes – sex-mad

This activity should allow an open discussion on the danger of stereotyping and to what extent it makes cooperation difficult between different nations. It should not be difficult to prove that it is unlikely for all the inhabitants of one country to have one over-riding characteristic.

Development

It may be interesting to consider where certain stereotypes originated. The idea that all Swedes are sex-mad probably had some link with Ingmar Bergman's films, and that Scots people are said to be mean probably originated from a time when food was very scarce. It could also be interesting to mention individuals who go completely against the stereotype, such as 'the shy Italian' or 'the talkative Japanese'. Other examples can be given from the students' own national culture or cultures.

Linked activities

1.5, 1.8, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8

Further reading

For the genesis and functions of stereotypes and prejudice and their effects on attitude, see pp. 169–205, chapter 6 ('Intergroup Relations: Cultures in Contact') in

Understanding Culture's Influence on Behavior (2nd Edition), by Richard Brislin, 1999, Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

2.5 | Stereotyping

Sexism, racism, ageism and religious intolerance are examples of prejudice which are only too frequently observed. Another form of prejudice is stereotyping, which occurs when someone claims that members of another culture all share the same, often inferior or offensive characteristics.

A recent report from the European Union listed some of the national perceptions which make cooperation difficult.

1 Match each of the nationalities with the stereotype you think is often attached to it:

British	
	hypocritical
Germans	
	cowardly
Italians	
	sex-mad
Spaniards	
	arrogant
Swedes	
	lazy

2 Which nationalities are stereotypically associated with the following characteristics?
- Obsessed with fashion
- Slow-thinking
- Insincere
- Obsessed with tradition
- Mean
- Reserved
- Obsessed with food

Aims

- To recognise the kinds of attitude commonly held towards other cultures.
- To evaluate these attitudes.

Procedure

1 Introduce the idea of different attitudes to other cultures by asking students about attitudes they have met. Students should be brief. Don't allow them to begin long anecdotal stories. Limit discussion to a few minutes at this stage.

2 Students should read the statements. Check that they understand the sentences and what they have to do in task 1. Get them to fill in their responses individually. They should then work in small groups and compare and contrast their responses.

3 A spokesperson for each group should then summarise the results for the rest of the class. Compare and discuss these, and see if there is some sort of consensus.

4 Tasks 2 and 3: individually, students should now select their 'best' and 'worst' statements and be prepared to justify them.

5 As a class activity, invite individuals to present their 'best' and 'worst' statements, explaining and justifying their choices. Invite comment and discussion.

Outcomes

The reactions of individual students to these statements will obviously differ. There is room for a good deal of disagreement, so it is not necessary to look for a consensus. However, it would be useful for students to pick out those with which they agree and formulate a short description of what they know and think about culture and attitudes in general.

Development

Students may like to consider which of the statements show a helpful approach to formulating attitudes towards culture in general and other cultures in particular. Some, such as 9 and 12, could be said to be negative, while 8, 13 and 14, for example, suggest flexibility and tolerance.

Linked activities

2.5, 2.7, 2.8, 4.8, 6.12

Further reading

See 2.5.

2.6 | Evaluating attitudes

How do you form your attitudes towards people from other cultures? Do you expect them to be very different from you? Do you think of them as all being the same? Are you aware of how you appear to them?

1 Read the statements below and show how much you agree or disagree by putting the appropriate number in the box:

5 = Agree strongly   4 = Agree   3 = No opinion   2 = Disagree   1 = Disagree strongly

1 *Observation of different cultures allows us to form patterns.* ☐

2 *I don't wish to be classified. I am an individual.* ☐

3 *Generalisations capture similarities and hide differences.* ☐

4 *Regarding people of the same culture as all being the same is harmful and dangerous.* ☐

5 *People from other cultures often act strangely.* ☐

6 *Ignoring the differences between cultures is dangerous.* ☐

7 *We can categorise certain groups of people according to how they behave.* ☐

8 *We must learn to recognise the existence of different but equally valid styles.* ☐

9 *Different is dangerous.* ☐

10 *The fish is the last one to recognise the water.* ☐

11 *Statistical facts about cultures help us classify them.* ☐

12 *Other people don't try to adapt enough.* ☐

13 *One man's meat is another man's poison.* ☐

14 *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.* ☐

2 Select the statement which most appeals to you, and justify it with examples.

3 Decide which one you find least accurate.

Aims

- To identify some of the factors that can shape a national culture.
- To show the difference between describing your own national culture and describing somebody else's.

Procedure

1 Ask students for ideas on the main factors which shape and define different national cultures. Encourage them to include attitudes and institutions as well as the more obvious behavioural aspects.

2 Explain that they should study the lists and do task 1 in pairs or groups, adding or removing any items they think necessary. If they have no suggestions, move quickly on to task 2.

3 The aim of task 2 is, with the help of the lists, to provide useful information for a visitor to a given country. Each student should consider their own country and another one; in multicultural classes this will mean forming pairs, but larger groups can be formed in less varied classes. You may prefer to ask students to select the three or four most important factors. Feedback through a spokesperson should pick out which factors are important, and how the visitor can benefit from being aware of them.

Outcomes

Focus on the difference between describing aspects of your own national culture and those of another. Did students find it easier to do one than the other. Also ask students to identify any differences between how they see their own national culture and how others see it. Is one view more critical than another? Were they surprised by the (in)accuracy of other people's views? There should be a variety of responses here, leading to discussion.

Development

Ask the class to develop their ideas into a more generalised description of their own national culture, still focusing on the key factors. This is similar to the exercise in 3.4; here it may also be applied to a culture other than the student's own.

Linked activities

3.3, 3.4

Further reading

A short discussion of how cultures originate can be found in pp. 25–8 in

Culture's Consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations, by Geert Hofstede, 2001 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

See also

The Silent Language, by E.T. Hall, 1997, New York: Anchor Books.

3.1 Cultural influences

National cultures are formed and influenced by a wide range of factors.

The lists below contain some of these factors, grouped into three main categories: structural, social and physical.

STRUCTURAL

Geography

Communications

Climate

Population density and spread

Centralisation of power

Role of religion

Political system

Role of authority

SOCIAL

Balance between family and work

Class distinctions

Dress

Punctuality

Emotional displays

Ideas of physical beauty

Taboos

Humour

Respect for age

Gender

Politeness to the outsider

PHYSICAL

Physical contact

Physical gestures

Physical distance

Speech: volume, speed

Handshakes and greetings

Body language

1 Look through the lists and make any improvements you think necessary: add items which are missing, and take away any which you consider to be unimportant.

2 Try to decide which of these factors are important in shaping:
- your own national or regional culture
- another culture which you know well.

Aims
- To show how certain physical actions are more acceptable than others in different cultures.
- To define what is and is not acceptable in different situations.

Procedure

1 Ask students to think of certain physical actions which annoy them, such as people who speak loudly, or gesticulate excessively, or stand close to you when they speak. Discuss whether the same actions are annoying to everyone, and whether they would be more acceptable in some cultures than in others. You may also consider the attitudes of people from other cultural backgrounds to greetings, such as handshakes, bows, kisses and hugs.

2 Introduce task 1, checking understanding of the actions and of the instructions. Working in pairs or small groups, encourage students to agree on one response, rather than say 'It depends'. Encourage them also to give graphic examples of what is or is not acceptable, such as a gentle and an over-vigorous scratch of the head. This should provide some light relief.

3 Move on to task 2 and ask for feedback and encourage comparison and discussion.

4 If the question has not already arisen, ask the class whether their answers would be different if they were referring to an informal situation such as a group of friends at a social gathering. This would help to show that within the same national culture there can be enormously different norms for different social settings.

Outcomes

Encourage students to consider whether the actions can be divided into three groups:
- generally unacceptable, such as yawning
- generally acceptable, such as nodding your head
- variable, depending on how you do it, such as hands on hips.

This will not necessarily bring consensus, but will encourage experimentation and discussion.

Development

Students could be encouraged to think about what actions are generally considered unacceptable in their own country. This could lead to a discussion of possible taboos, such as the discussion of death, cannibalism, or incest, and how these are changing.

Students could also consider and discuss whether there are any actions in their country which are acceptable for men but not for women.

Linked activities

5.5, 6.12

Further reading

For an amusing survey of body language across the globe, see

Gestures: The Do's and Taboos of Body Language Around the World, by Roger Axtell, 1997, New York: John Wiley.

3.2 | Body language

Different physical signals mean different things to different people, depending on factors such as nationality, status and situation.

1 Look at the list of physical actions below. Put the appropriate number in the box to say if in your national culture they are:

1 = perfectly acceptable   2 = just about acceptable

3 = unacceptable in a formal situation such as a business meeting

2 Choose a culture other than your own and decide which of the actions would be in a different category.

(1) laughing loudly	☐
(2) scratching your head	☐
(3) touching somebody on the arm as you speak to them	☐
(4) looking somebody straight in the eye for 5 seconds or more	☐
(5) sitting with your legs wide apart	☐
(6) adjusting your clothing: tie, bra, trouser belt	☐
(7) moving close to someone	☐
(8) standing with hands on hips	☐
(9) crossing your arms	☐
(10) putting your feet on the table	☐
(11) not looking at someone when you speak to them	☐
(12) yawning	☐
(13) whispering to a colleague	☐
(14) nodding your head emphatically	☐
(15) blowing your nose	☐
(16) smoking	☐

Aims
- To explain the Hall method of distinguishing between two groups of contrasting cultures.
- To illustrate the kind of language and behaviour representative of these cultures.

Procedure

1 Ask students to describe any experiences they have of the way different companies approach time. This could contrast the one-thing-at-a-time approach with multi-tasking, and will prepare for the monochronic/polychronic distinction shown in the activity. Do the same with the slightly less black-and-white distinction between high context and low context cultures (see Further reading).

2 Introduce the activity, checking that the words are clear. Ensure that pairs or groups take decisions as collectively as possible. Ask for feedback and discussion, reconciling any differences and comparing results.

3 Ask groups to discuss whether any of these cultural characteristics are predominant in any cultures they know. Americans, for example, are found by many people to have a low context style, and the Japanese a high context style.

Outcomes

1 Monochronic   3 High context
2 Low context   4 Polychronic

Development

Ask students in small groups to think of situations in which the four characteristics given are significant: for example, when giving a presentation or introducing a factory tour, the presenter can use a high or low context style. Many students will benefit from the opportunity to illustrate these two pairs of styles, so groups could be encouraged to develop mini role-plays. The short extracts in the activity could serve as a starting point.

Linked activities

4.1, 4.2, 4.8

Further reading

E. T. Hall's writings are a rich mine of anecdotal examples of culture. He outlines his system of Primary Message Systems in chapter 3, 'The Vocabulary of Culture', in

The Silent Language, by E.T. Hall, 1997, New York: Anchor Books.

Another source for Hall's thinking is

Understanding Cultural Differences by E. T. Hall, 1990, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

Background briefing

Edward T. Hall is considered by many to be the founder of the study of intercultural communication. He grew up in New Mexico and worked on Navajo and Hopi reservations there, becoming a practical student of anthropology before going on to study it more formally at university. During the Second World War, he commanded an African American regiment in Europe and the Philippines; after the war he conducted research on the US military government administration of Truk.

These wide-ranging experiences with various cultures fuelled Hall's ground-breaking work in intercultural communication. His work in the human use of space, time and context has become the foundation for many further studies.

Space: Hall pioneered the study of the human use of space, called *proxemics*. In *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), Hall shows that human perceptions of space are moulded and patterned by culture.

Time: In many of his writings E. T. Hall discusses the way time is used to structure human experience. Cultures tend to be either monochronic or polychronic: in monochronic (linear, divisible) time, events are scheduled one at a time and this schedule takes precedence over interpersonal relationships; in polychronic time many things occur simultaneously, and interpersonal interaction is more important than being 'on time'. His most in-depth treatment of the cultural perception of time can be found in *The Dance of Life* (1983).

Context: In *Beyond Culture* (1997), Hall discusses the phenomena of high versus low context cultures, which to a large extent correspond with polychronic and monochronic cultures respectively. High and low context refers to the amount of information that a person can comfortably manage.

4.7 The Hall model

In his books *The Silent Language* and *Understanding Cultural Differences,* E.T. Hall distinguishes between two pairs of contrasting cultures:

High context cultures, in which people speak indirectly, show respect, and maintain harmony. They consider it rude to be too direct.

Low context cultures, in which people speak directly, and say what they mean without adding unnecessary details or formulae. They are suspicious of people who speak indirectly.

Monochronic cultures, in which people like to do things one at a time and in sequence.

Polychronic cultures, in which people prefer to do many things at the same time.

Which styles do you think are represented in these extracts?

A I'm afraid I can't fit a meeting in today. This morning it's my weekly team meeting. Then I've planned two hours' work on the budget. I could see you tomorrow at 11 o'clock, between a visitor who leaves at 10.45 and a scheduled lunch appointment.

B *Do come to the point. I need to get back with a decision by four o'clock.*

C In the circumstances it would seem to be inappropriate to attribute more than a general description of those characteristics we will be seeking in our new employee.

D Don't worry about the timing. Just come when you're ready. I have a few things going on at the moment, but I'm sure we can always squeeze in a discussion of your problem.

Procedure

1 Students can read the text in preparation for the class.

2 Ask students for any examples they may have of cross-cultural friction, from their work or leisure experience. Ask if any of these could have been avoided by trying to agree norms of behaviour or communication beforehand. Establish that this kind of friction is always possible in multicultural groups, and that this activity examines the possibility of avoiding it by setting up norms.

3 Check that the sentences and tasks are clear, and ask pairs or groups to collate their responses. In task 1, students first give their responses individually, but then in their groups they can add together the scores for each statement, giving each one a group score. Ask groups to compare scores, identifying and discussing any major differences. At this point task 2 may be introduced, asking for alternatives for statements with which students disagree.

4 For task 3, brainstorm any extra ideas under either of the headings, business and social, and ask for comments from the rest of the class.

Outcomes

There are no fixed outcomes, but plenty of opportunity to discuss ways of containing a wide range of cultural behaviours even within a single code.

Development

Discussion can examine the legitimacy of this exercise and could then lead on to general questions about project teams. It is often commented that the human relations problems caused by the coming together of a disparate range of people can be greater than those caused by technical or practical problems.

Linked activities

5.2, 5.6, 6.3, 6.6

Further reading

For a handy catalogue of cultural conventions across the globe, see

Do's and Taboos Around the World, by Roger Axtell, 1993, New York: John Wiley.

5.5 Observing conventions

A multicultural project team which meets regularly both for business and socially may try to establish certain rules about behaviour.

1 Read the list of provisional guidelines below, and then put the appropriate number in the box:

5 = Agree strongly   4 = Agree   3 = Neutral   2 = Disagree   1 = Disagree strongly

2 Suggest an alternative to those with which you disagreed (2 and 1).

3 Add any other items you consider necessary.

Business

1 Arriving late for an appointment is unforgivable.

2 A company's image is reflected in the way its people dress.

3 Talk to all people as colleagues, not subordinates.

4 Say what you mean clearly and directly.

5 Interrupting somebody who is speaking at a meeting is impolite and counter-productive.

6 Never say directly that you don't agree with somebody.

7 Meetings should have a strictly observed timetable.

8 Always explain to a colleague any doubts you have about their suggestions.

9 Never disagree with a superior.

10 Never say 'no' to a request.

11 Always ask for permission to speak in a meeting.

12 Always offer to do something, even if you are not sure you can.

13 Always pretend to listen, even if you are not doing so.

14 If somebody offends you, always explain to him/her what has happened.

Social

1 Dress casually for social events.

2 Always separate business life from personal life.

3 If you don't know what to say, talk about the weather.

4 Never ask anyone their age.

5 Men should talk to women differently from the way they talk to men.

6 Only speak when you are spoken to.

7 Never disagree with a suggestion about what to do or where to go.

8 Make sure you pay for any food or drink you are offered in a restaurant.

9 Always consult a guest about what they would like to do.

10 Use compliments freely.

11 Don't discuss salaries.

12 Employees' spouses should not talk about work.

13 Never talk about colleagues.

14 Always arrive a little late at social functions.

Aims

- To examine the part played by individual characteristics in a person's cultural profile.
- To exemplify different styles of communication, and relate them to cultural types.

Procedure

1 Ask for examples of particular styles of communication that students have observed in their daily lives or in the media. Encourage contrasts such as direct/indirect, formal/informal (see the list in the activity). Ask where these differences come from – from inherited characteristics or from the environment in which people live and work. Encourage discussion.

2 Introduce task 1, in which students have to put the list of words into pairs of opposites. Make sure they are familiar with all the words, and explain that some of the words are similar in meaning, and that more than one set of pairings is possible. Check the responses, including any additions, and introducing where possible examples of well-known figures who represent these styles. A suggested set of responses is given under Outcomes.

3 Explain that task 2 requires a little self-analysis in relation to students' own communication styles. In pairs, each student chooses five words from the list that best describe his/her style. Partners may be allowed a brief comment, but then individuals report back to the whole group on their results. Again, brief comment may be allowed, but avoid too much analysis as this could prove complicated and potentially embarrassing.

4 In task 3, ask pairs or groups to read the dialogues and ascribe describing words – about four or five words each, from the list or other sources – to each of the four styles. Groups then feed back their results, giving examples to explain their decisions, and discussing any disagreements.

5 Ask for views as to whether any of the describing words fit any specific national cultures. For example, do some nationalities tend to be more formal or more impassive than others? Draw on students' experience as much as possible, rather than on their impressions, and ask for examples.

Outcomes

Task 1: Suggested pairings
analytical/instinctive; articulate/reserved; atheistic/religious; cautious/impulsive; cooperative/competitive; direct/indirect; emotional/impassive; erratic/stable; extrovert/introspective; flexible/rigid; follower/leader; formal/informal; generous/mean; gregarious/loner; humorous/serious; listener/speaker; methodical/spontaneous; observer/participator; optimistic/pessimistic; proactive/reactive; quiet/talkative

Task 3: Suggested descriptions of styles
A – articulate, impulsive, direct, speaker, proactive
B – reserved, cautious, indirect
C – cooperative, extrovert, generous, gregarious
D – cautious, competitive, reserved, loner?, mean?

Development

Further examination of individual communication styles could be undertaken. Classes whose members know each other well and have confidence in each other could talk about class members; in other cases, discussion is best limited to figures from the media or from local society. Some radio or TV interviewers, for example, have a very aggressive style, while others have a gentler approach.

Consider also whether certain styles can be attributed to specific companies or professions as well as nationalities.

Linked activities

1.8, 3.2, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.10

Further reading

An excellent exercise for demonstrating the culturally determined values that underlie individual characteristics is 'Cross-Cultural Value Cards' and can be found in pp. 33–7 of 'Cross-Cultural Value Cards' in

Developing Intercultural Awareness, by L. Robert Kohls and John M. Knight, 1994, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

6.1 | Individual characteristics

Individual characteristics may be inherited (due to genetics or 'nature'), or learnt (from the environment or due to 'nurture'). The following is a list of some of the words – nouns and adjectives – used to describe people and their characteristics, and particularly the way they communicate.

1 Arrange in pairs any words which are opposites or nearly opposites. Add any other words which you consider important.

analytical	follower	leader	reactive
articulate	formal	listener	religious
atheistic	generous	loner	reserved
cautious	gregarious	mean	rigid
competitive	humorous	methodical	serious
cooperative	impassive	observer	speaker
direct	impulsive	optimistic	spontaneous
emotional	indirect	participator	stable
erratic	informal	pessimistic	talkative
extrovert	instinctive	proactive	
flexible	introspective	quiet	

2 Choose the five which best describe you and your own communication style.

3 In these short dialogues, describe the types of communicator represented by each speaker: A, B, C and D.

1

A: OK, come on, let's get this proposal finished.

B: I'm not sure we have all the facts.

A: We've got enough to be going on with. We can always add a few more later, or work them out roughly.

B: Do you think that's accurate enough?

A: Of course. We'll go back later and adjust them if the client thinks there's any sort of discrepancy. Let's not be too scrupulous about this, we don't have all week to do it, you know. Everything will be OK.

B: Perhaps we should just wait a little bit longer?

2

C: Those sales figures for the new product range look pretty good.

D: In fact there are some of the old products included in those figures, so they're not quite accurate.

C: Yes, but on the whole they are impressive. The R & D people did well.

D: I should think so, with their increased budget. Anybody could do well with almost double the money.

C: I think it's impressive. Anyway, we're having a little celebration this evening. Are you coming?

D: Actually, I have quite a lot to do tonight …

Aims

- To illustrate ways in which individual styles of communication can be profiled using a number of parameters.
- To relate these styles to different cultures.

Procedure

1 Explain that this activity is about identifying overall characteristics of communication styles, both of individuals and of cultures. Ask for the opposites of styles such as direct (diplomatic/indirect), inductive (deductive), and any others from the list, quoting examples.

2 Check that the sets of parameters and their explanations are clear, then introduce task 1. Form pairs in which each person identifies the description which best fits him or herself. Encourage them to use modifiers such as 'very systematic', 'fairly diplomatic', or even 'in the middle'. Partners should briefly express their reactions to the choices. Ask pairs to feed back the results for brief comment by the class.

3 Do task 2, forming small groups to consider how these parameters can be used to describe national characteristics. Explain that generalisations will be necessary (see activity 2.7, The bell-jar graph), so ask for specific examples wherever possible. In monocultural groups, choose both the common culture and one other. Multicultural groups should choose a maximum of two, to be decided by the group themselves. Ask a spokesperson from each group to report back, and compare similarities and differences in their respective reports.

Outcomes

Students should arrive at a short profile of their own communication style. Although the list of parameters is wide, it may be possible to add some more to the list (for example: loud, quiet, etc.).

Development

Students could present verbally or in writing a short summary of the prevalent communication style of a cultural group with which they are familiar: this could be a country, a region, a company, a profession, etc.

Linked activities

2.7, 3.2, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4

Further reading

An effective training video that illustrates these points is

Communicating Styles, by Jeremy Comfort and Derek Utley, available through York Associates (www.york-associates.co.uk).

6.3 | Communication styles

People communicate in different ways. Here are some sets of parameters which help identify communication styles.

1 ● Systematic – organic

Some people like to present information, or deal with topics, in a systematic, sequential manner. Others prefer to explore things randomly, relying on instinct or experience to help them touch upon the major areas.

2 ● Direct – diplomatic

Some people go straight to the point of a communication, with no time spent on introduction, preparation or formality. Others will spend time on social talk or on related matters before moving to the central point.

3 ● Formal – informal

Some people use formal and possibly complex language as opposed to a more relaxed, familiar and friendly style; the tone of voice can be distant or intimate.

4 ● Inductive – deductive

Some people make a suggestion or state an idea, then explain or justify it; others will present information first, then draw a conclusion or recommendation from it.

5 ● Head – heart

Some people rationalise and speak objectively and reflectively; others speak instinctively, following their feelings.

6 ● High context – low context

Low context communicators state the message simply and clearly, with no redundant material; for high context communicators, the situation, surroundings and other associated details are an important part of the communication.

7 ● Colleague – friend

Some people treat others as a colleague with whom they have a strictly professional relationship; others assume that most other people are their friends, and treat them as such.

1 For each set of parameters, select the characteristic that best describes your own communication style.

2 Do the same for another culture (national, corporate, etc.) with which you are familiar.

Procedure

1 Ask the class what they think has made them who they are, particularly in terms of the way they communicate with other people. Encourage them to think of innate characteristics as well as traits they have acquired from the different environments they have been in.

2 Check that the language of the task is clear. Then ask students to do it in pairs, suggesting that they keep the question as open as possible, and using the guidelines where necessary. Each student should take about five minutes, the partner simply listening and asking occasional questions if they wish. Each student should then give feedback on his/her partner, summarising and pointing out anything they found particularly interesting. Ask for general comments as to whether students were aware of any strong cultural influences they had felt during their lives from any of the factors mentioned in the activity.

Outcomes

Students could prepare a short verbal or written summary of the points they have covered, describing their personal development.

Development

Students may wish to consider how representative they are of the national culture they belong to. If so, why? And if not, why not?

Linked activities

2.1, 2.5, 3.1, 5.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.9

Further reading

See 6.1, 6.2.

6.4 | Where do you come from?

In order to define some of your own cultural characteristics, consider the question *Where do you come from?*

Work with a colleague, and speak for five minutes on the subject. Interpret the meaning of the question in the way you think most suitable. Be as honest as you can. Try to cover some of the points below.

Nature

Inherent personal characteristics, inherited at birth: emotional and physical attributes

Nurture

Early life: general environment, family atmosphere, friends, school, social groups

Education

School, college, university: the influence of teachers and colleagues, and of the subjects you studied

Work

The influence of job, daily work activities and working environment

Nationality

Any characteristics you consider fairly typical of your nationality, including any regional features

Organisation

The culture of the organisation you work for

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Work

The influence of job, daily work activities
and working environment

Nationality

Any characteristics you consider fairly
typical of your nationality, including any
regional features

Organisation

The culture of the organisation you
work for

Procedure

1 Ask students for any particular rules they have observed in meetings, such as all remarks being directed to the chairperson, or participants holding up a hand in order to get permission to speak; or even to talk about experiences where there appeared to be no rules at all. This should draw out a wide range of procedures and understandings, some visible (holding up the hand), some simply understood (senior people have more right to interrupt). You may at this point discuss the relative merits of strict discipline in meetings, as opposed to a more natural, organic approach. There are arguments on both sides.

2 Explain that the task consists of holding a number of short meetings, in each of which a rule or convention is to be observed. Check that students understand the list of rules, and look at the list of topics. Form groups, ideally of five or six, and ask each group to choose a topic (they may take one of their own choice if they wish). (The topics in themselves are not of great significance here since the focus will be on the process.)

One member should be chairperson and one member should make sure the rule is observed, pointing out any failures to comply. Run the task once, and ask for feedback from a spokesperson. Get each group to have as many meetings as possible, applying a different rule in each one.

Issues which arise could include the level of politeness of both language and behaviour, the exercise of the right to speak and to interrupt, and the use of humour.

Outcomes

General feedback and discussion should focus on what it is like to have to remember and apply rules in a way which you rarely have to do in a familiar situation. This is a regular feature for most people new to multicultural meetings: if possible, draw on students' experience of such situations. This practice should make students more aware of what other participants are thinking and doing, and help them adapt to a given situation.

Development

Ask students to consider what for them would be the best set of rules to apply for an efficient meeting. This should raise the question of length of contributions, clarity of language and argument, the right and need to interrupt and clarify, and the need to avoid jargon which excludes certain people. This last point may lead on to the question of interaction between native and non-native speakers (see activity 6.8).

Linked activities

3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, 4.8, 5.1, 5.5, 6.3, 6.4, 6.8, 6.9

Further reading

See 6.5.

Following the rules

Rules of behaviour in a meeting are often followed unconsciously, and when different people have different rules this can lead to confusion.

Hold a series of mini-meetings lasting up to ten minutes with a group of three to six people on one of these topics:

- Technology of the future
- The lack of contact between people in modern society
- The separation of work and leisure
- Gender and work opportunities
- The effect of the internet on society

For each meeting, select one of the following rules and apply it firmly.

Rule 1

Before each individual can speak, he/she must briefly summarise what the previous speaker has said.

Rule 2

Each time a participant has spoken for more than 30 seconds, another participant must try to interrupt politely. The speaker must give way within 10 seconds.

Rule 3

If they don't agree with something the speaker says, participants must interrupt and express another view clearly and firmly.

Rule 4

After one minute of speaking, a participant must hand over to another person.

Rule 5

As soon as somebody says something which is jargon or too technical for colleagues to understand, other participants clap their hands.

Aims

- To discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of English as an international language.
- To examine ways in which it can best be used as an international language.

Procedure

1 Ask the class about their attitudes to English, whether as their first, second or third language. Reactions may include a painful learning process, difficulties in expressing and understanding ideas, and happy experiences from social opportunities, travel and literature. The mix of both painful and positive experiences should be useful for this activity.

2 Introduce task 1, going quickly through the statements and checking understanding. In pairs or groups, students say whether they agree or not, and try to reach a consensus. Collect and compare results.

3 Introduce task 2, explaining that the intention is for the groups to try to decide whether each statement can be seen as an advantage for the language and its users, or as a disadvantage. There is no need for consensus here. Some possible reactions are to be found in Outcomes.

Outcomes

Some of the statements will be seen as advantages (its flexibility, its use on the internet) and some as disadvantages (its complexity, its colonial associations). Many, however, can be interpreted in different ways, such as its wide range of vocabulary, which on the one hand helps the expression of complex or sensitive ideas, and on the other makes it difficult to learn and sometimes to understand.

Sharing views and experiences on international English could lead to a more realistic and positive use of the language in an international context.

Development

Encourage the continued sharing of experiences of using English in multicultural settings, and discuss techniques for using the language constructively within certain limits, in order to avoid feelings of linguistic inferiority. Discussion of the role of the native speaker may come in here (see Activity 6.8).

Linked activities

Further reading

For a general overview of the role of English, see *English as a Global Language*, by David Crystal, 1998, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

English is the world's main business language, and for at least part of the 21st century it is bound to be the *lingua franca* of international business transactions But there is evidence that it will become less prevalent as the 21st century progresses.

The following statements about English as an international language all have their supporters.

Read the statements.

1 Say whether you agree with each statement or not.
2 Say whether you think each statement is an advantage or a disadvantage for international communication in general.

It is spoken by a large proportion of the developed world.

It is the language of the internet.

It has a relatively simple grammar.

It is considered to be a complex language.

It has a wide range of vocabulary.

A lot of people feel uneasy using it.

People from other language 'families' are disadvantaged.

You can make a difficult request very politely in English.

It is an old language, with many literary references.

It is the language of science and technology.

It is the international language of political, economic and cultural imperialism.

It is the language of international business.

It is being overtaken by Spanish in the USA.

There are more non-native than native speakers of English in the world today.

It will no longer be the dominant world language in 10 or 20 years' time.

It is a flexible language, adjusting rapidly to the demands of international use.

It is the language of the world's greatest economic power – the USA.

Other languages, such as Chinese, Spanish and Hindi, are growing rapidly in global importance.

English is used widely in all continents.

English is the world's main business language, and for at least part of the 21st century it is bound to be the *lingua franca* of international business transactions. But there is evidence that it will become less prevalent as the 21st century progresses.

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> You can make a difficult request very politely in English.
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>
> It is the language of the world's greatest economic power – the USA.
>
> Other languages, such as Chinese, Spanish and Hindi, are growing rapidly in global importance.
>
> English is used widely in all continents.

Aims
- To show how communication can be improved by adopting a number of simple techniques.
- To practise some of these techniques.

Procedure

1 Ask students about the common causes of breakdown or difficulty in communication. It may be best to focus on presentations they have attended, in which problems such as lack of preparation, lack of structure, excessive length, and unclear speech meant the speaker didn't get his/her point across. Difficulties of this sort are particularly common in multicultural situations. Explain that in this activity, ways are discussed and practised of avoiding some causes of breakdown.

2 Introduce task 1 and go through the list of techniques. You may ask for additional items here or during their discussion. Groups should then decide on the usefulness of the items. The results will be subjective, but the important thing is to discuss and examine the different techniques.

Ask for feedback from each group, collating and comparing results. Any techniques which are consistently ranked low could be dismissed.

3 Task 2 gives practice in some of these techniques. Encourage individual students to prepare a short talk on one of the suggested topics or another of their choice. They should each choose one of the techniques and concentrate on it. Alternatively, the topic could be dealt with by one group, with each member concentrating on one technique. The results could be amusing, and should lead to further discussion of the usefulness of the different suggestions.

Outcomes

Additional techniques could include:
- Make a strong start
- Explain and simplify jargon
- Put positive points before negative
- Be aware of the expectations of your colleagues
- Put simple things before complex

Development

The mini-presentation practice could lead to more general presentation practice, with particular consideration for the expectations of a multicultural audience and how to adapt to them.

Linked activities

3.1, 4.3, 5.6, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.10

Further reading

Both observations and reflection are needed to keep communication open and positive in cross-cultural environments. How these skills can be trained is outlined in

The Art of Crossing Cultures (2nd Edition), by Craig Storti, 2001, Yarmouth: Intercultural Press.

6.9 | Positive communication

When intercultural communication is in danger of becoming confused or of breaking down, certain techniques may be useful. Here are some of the more commonly used ones.

1 Rank them according to their usefulness by putting the appropriate number in the box:

5 = Very useful   4 = Quite useful   3 = Neutral   2 = Not very useful   1 = Useless

Add to the list if you can.

1   Use good tone and tempo

2   Emphasise the positive more than the negative

3   Be human, show warmth

4   Ask lots of questions

5   Keep It Short and Simple (KISS)

6   Structure things clearly and logically

7   Summarise often

8   Use body language

9   Check that you are understood

10   Show that you are listening

11   Say exactly what you mean

12   Use humour where you can

13   Avoid sarcasm

14   Clarify any doubts you have

15   Look for signs from the person or people you are speaking to

2 Give a short talk on one of the topics below. Choose one of the features from the list (for example, being short and simple, and/or trying to include a little humour), and use it as much as you can.

- The corporate image of my company or organisation
- Genetic engineering
- Globalisation
- The domination of American culture
- Stress and how to avoid it

Aims
- To show different stages of development in awareness of intercultural matters.
- To increase intercultural competence.

Procedure

1 Ask students about people they know with differing levels of cultural sensitivity. Discuss how the way they relate to people with different backgrounds shows itself (for example, lack of experience or refusal to understand, on the one hand, and beneficial experience and flexibility on the other), and consider ways of becoming more competent interculturally.

2 Introduce the task as being an attempt to define a progression in attitudes towards other cultures. Make sure the language is clear to them, then ask pairs to arrange the different attitudes in the most logical order. There is no fixed answer (although a suggestion is given in Outcomes), so encourage students to discuss different options. In the feedback session, discuss the desirability of different arrangements, taking the opportunity to discuss the reasons for each one.

Outcomes

Different versions are possible. This is one suggestion.

1 Monocultural approach – 'Everybody's the same really.'
2 Recognition of difference – 'There's something different about these people.'
3 Recognition of different types of culture – 'There are national and regional differences, and corporate and professional cultures, and …'
4 Realisation that most behaviour is culturally conditioned – 'There's probably a reason for this.'
5 Recognition of possible dangers – 'This could cause problems.'

6 Beginning to work on the study of other cultures – 'There's a lot to find out.'
7 Developing an interest in other cultures – 'This isn't as strange as I thought.'
8 Empathising – 'I see why they act like that.'
9 Trying different ways of doing things – 'This might work here.'
10 Learning by making mistakes – 'Oops, that was a bit of a disaster.'
11 Developing one's own style – 'I'm sure this should work well here.'
12 Becoming enthusiastic about cultural variety – 'What great potential!'

Development

Students could try to place themselves on the scale, or at least try to pick out attitudes which they feel they have. At the same time they could discuss ways of encouraging progress along the scale – simple measures such as travel, reading, and actively trying to meet people; or more organised measures such as courses and seminars.

Linked activities

1.4, 2.5, 3.1, 5.6, 6.4, 6.9, 6.12, 6.13

Further reading

For a collection of articles dealing with (inter-) cultural competence in a variety of environments, see chapter 7, 'Communicating Interculturally: Becoming Competent', in

Intercultural Communication: A Reader (10th Edition), edited by L. Samovar and R. Porter, 2003, New York: Wadsworth.

Awareness of culture, and competence in dealing with it effectively, takes time to achieve. Some of the different stages are listed in random order below.

Put them in what you consider to be the most logical sequence.

☐ Becoming enthusiastic about cultural variety ~ *'What great potential!'*

☐ Beginning to work on the study of other cultures ~ *'There's a lot to find out.'*

☐ Developing an interest in other cultures ~ *'This isn't as strange as I thought.'*

☐ Developing one's own style ~ *'I'm sure this should work well here.'*

☐ Empathising ~ *'I see why they act like that.'*

☐ Learning by making mistakes ~ *'Oops, that was a bit of a disaster.'*

☐ Monocultural approach ~ *'Everybody's the same really.'*

☐ Realisation that most behaviour is culturally conditioned ~ *'There's probably a reason for this.'*

☐ Recognition of different types of culture ~ *'There are national and regional differences, and corporate and professional cultures, and ...'*

☐ Recognition of possible dangers ~ *'This could cause problems.'*

☐ Recognition of difference ~ *'There's something different about these people.'*

☐ Trying different ways of doing things ~ *'This might work here.'*

6.12 | Dos and don'ts

Aims
- To examine different attitudes towards intercultural communication.
- To identify those which are most important for each individual.

Procedure

1 Ask students if they have any fixed views on intercultural communication. These views could be observations ('These people usually do this') or advice ('Always do this', 'Never do that'). See how much agreement can be found. It should not be difficult to establish that complete agreement on this subject is rare.

2 Explain that the object of this activity is to work towards a set of agreed views on intercultural communication, but that no two people need have exactly the same set. Task 1 is an introduction to some common attitudes. Make sure the language is clear, and ask pairs to decide on their own preferred versions. A few may be easy to agree on, but consideration will in most cases show the validity of each of the two different options. In number 1, for example, the meaning of 'deep down' is crucial: at a very deep level, everybody is 'human', at a higher level everybody is clearly different. So discussion should revolve around the issue of the level at which differences become significant, and how one recognises them.

3 In task 2, students should begin in pairs to compare their respective priorities, picking three (or more) statements which they consider important. They may modify or add to them if they wish. In the feedback session, pairs may give individual or joint conclusions, and results should be compared around the class.

Outcomes

Try to establish a class version of the statements. In order to do this, it will almost certainly be necessary to modify some of them; adding to them is also possible. The main objective, however, will still be to have a greater personal awareness of the issues involved.

Development

Interested students may wish to draw up a small personal 'rule book', or present their conclusions briefly to the class.

Linked activities

1.9, 2.6, 4.8, 5.3, 6.1, 6.9, 6.10, 6.13

Further reading

See 6.11.

6.12 | Dos and don'ts

Rules about intercultural communication are difficult to establish or agree upon. People tend to draw on their experience to formulate their own ideas.

1 Read the following list of statements, and for each one decide which version you think is most accurate.

2 Choose the three statements which you think are most important.

1	Do / Don't assume all people or groups are the same, deep down.
2	Everybody has a very easily observed cultural identity, except / including me.
3	Gestures usually / rarely mean the same thing to different people.
4	If you say something very clearly, most people / few people will understand exactly what you mean.
5	If you look carefully at the face of a person who speaks to you, you will generally / sometimes be able to work out what they mean.
6	'Yes' means 'Yes' always / sometimes.
7	The best way to get somebody to do something is / is not to ask them to do it directly and politely.
8	Other people's habits are usually / sometimes really interesting.
9	If you understand another culture, you will rarely / still find it hard to get on with people who belong to it.
10	Many / Few people can operate successfully in more than one culture.
11	It is possible to learn most / some important things about a culture simply by reading books about it.
12	Communicating with clients from a different national culture is basically the same as / different from communicating with clients from your own national culture.
14	Always / Never try to make the differences in culture explicit to the person you are dealing with.