



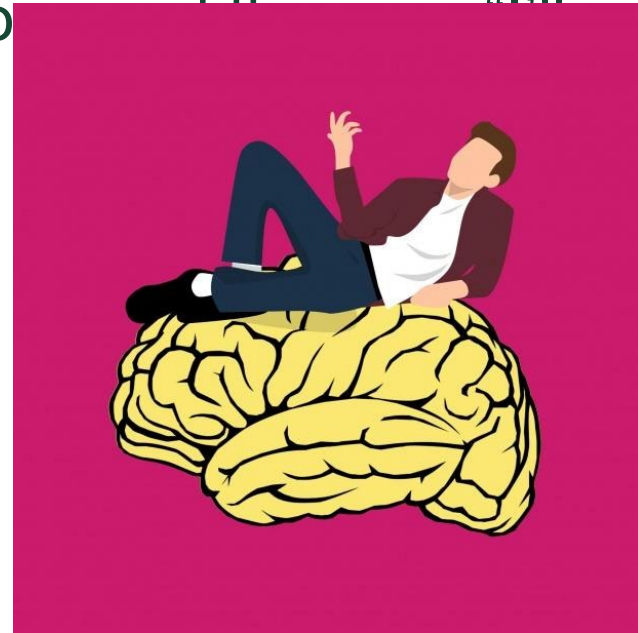
Key to Effective Intercultural Communication

Thu Tran, Assistant Teaching Professor
Department of English and Technical Communication

Consider this

When you request for support from someone, think about it.” What does it mean?

- Possible meaning 1
- Possible meaning 2



Overview of the session

These slides cover

- ▶ Nexus between language and culture
- ▶ Important concepts in intercultural communication
- ▶ Ways to enhance intercultural communication effectiveness



What is language?

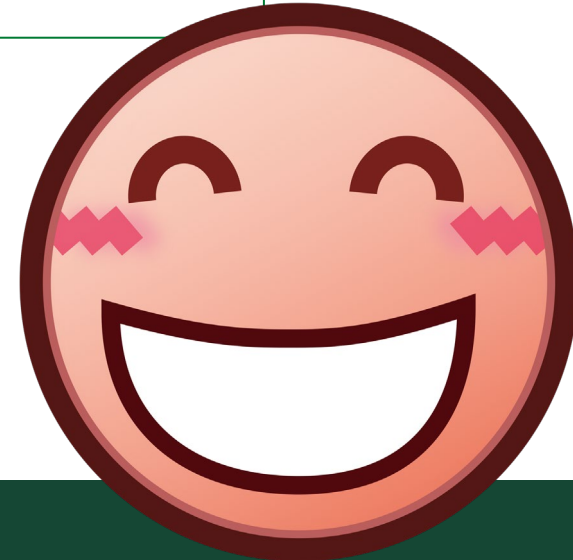
An entirely human and non-intrinsic method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by a system of voluntarily produced symbols (Sapir, 1968)

Signs that convey meaning (Patrikis, 1988)

A system of signs that have cultural values (Kramsch, 1998)

A system of verbal and non-verbal signs to express meanings (Tran, 2010)

Symbolic system referring to concepts and conceptual understanding (Altarriba & Basnight-Brown, 2022)



What is culture?

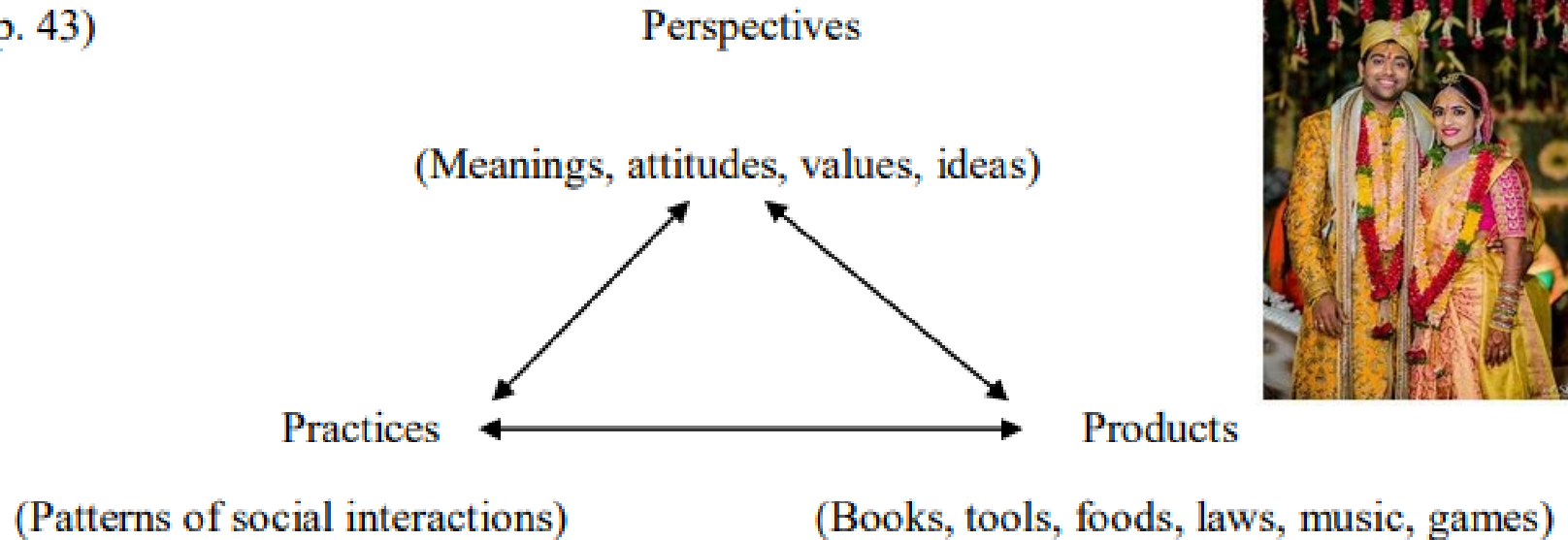


- ▶ Whatever it is one has to know or believe to operate in a society (Goodenough, 1957)
- ▶ Relative and changeable in time and space (Fox, 1999)
- ▶ A way of life, context where people exist, think, feel, and relate to others, the glue binding people together (Brown, 2007)
- ▶ The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning (1996) depicted culture as a triangle that includes philosophical perspectives, behavioral practices, and tangible and intangible products.



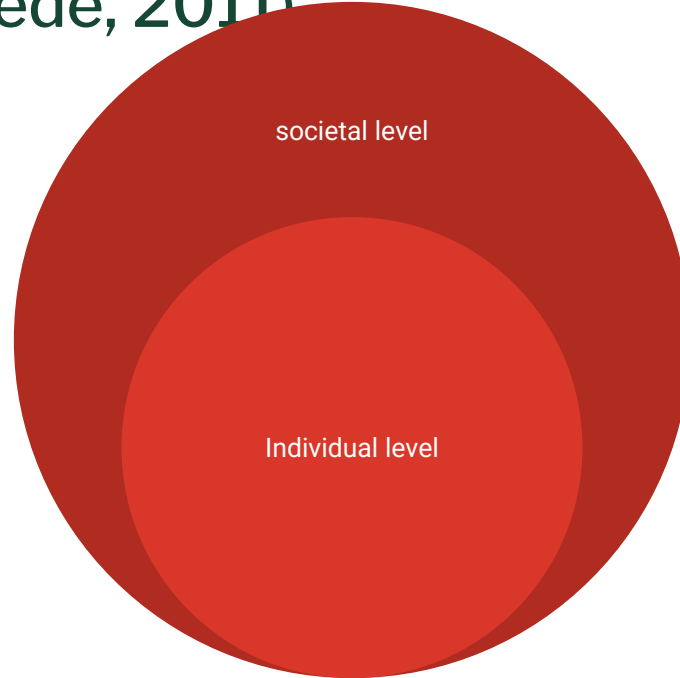
Culture as a triangle

Figure 1: What constitutes culture? (The National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, 1996, p. 43)



Societal versus individual cultural levels

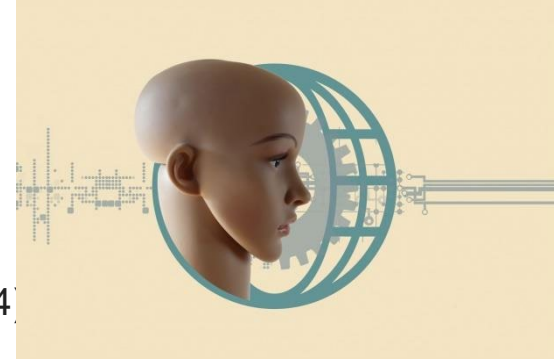
(Fox, 2001; Hofstede, 2011)



Culture in the age of AI

Cultures affect people's perspectives about AI and its potential (Ge et al., 2024)

Technology shapes culture (Moxley, 2024)



The CONDUIT metaphors

Thoughts and ideas = object

Language = container

The speaker puts an object (ideas) into a container (language) and gives it to the listener.

Example: “One-on-one meetings are as difficult as my words don’t get through.”



as difficult as my

The CONDUIT metaphors

Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, page 11.

- ☐ It's hard to get that idea across to him.
- ☐ I gave you that idea.
- ☐ Your reason came through to us.
- ☐ It's difficult to put my ideas into words.
- ☐ When you have an idea, try to capture it immediately in words.
- ☐ Try to pack more thought into fewer words.



Problems with the CONDUIT metaphors

“It’s the least I can do.”



Differences across cultures

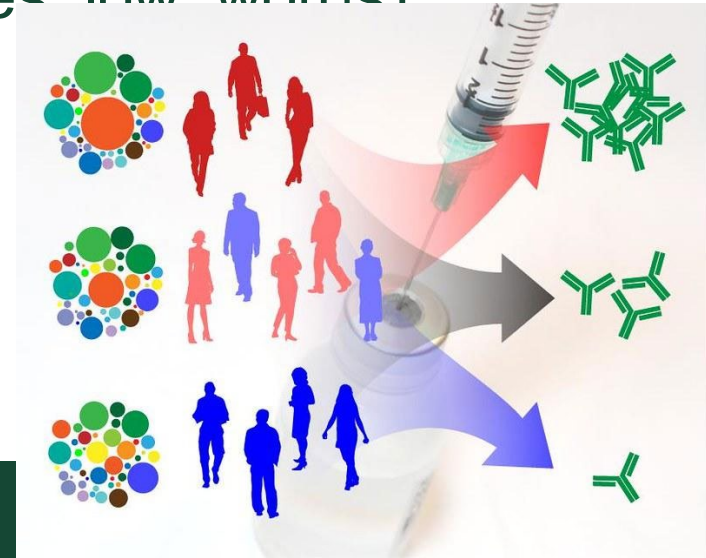


Linguistic variation	Concept about time	Social conformity
<p>English: take medicine</p> <p>Vietnamese: drink medicine</p> <p>Chinese: eat medicine</p>	<p>Event-based cultures (late when coming after others)</p> <p>Clock time cultures (late after the starting time)</p>	<p>Uniqueness is valued.</p> <p>Conformity is valued. (Japanese proverb: The nail that sticks out gets hammered down.)</p>

Key concepts in intercultural communication

Communication styles

tone, volume, **speed of speech**, eye contact, **proximity**, emotional expressions, self-disclosure, formality, directness, context (high: verbal and non-verbal cues low: words) orientation to self or others



Key concepts in intercultural communication

1. Enculturation (your own culture)
2. Acculturation (another culture)
3. Cultural/cross-cultural awareness
4. Cultural identity
5. Culture bump and culture shock



Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

(Bennet, 1993)

Ethnocentric stages

(a person's own culture is central to reality)

Denial (one's own culture is the only correct one)

Defense (one's own culture is superior to others which are considered a threat)

Ethnorelative stages

(a person's own culture is seen as one of many possibilities)

Reversal (the new culture is seen as superior to one's own culture; one is critical of their primary culture)

Minimization (cultural differences are considered less important than similarities)

Acceptance (one's own culture is viewed as one among other equally complex cultures)

Adaptation (cognitive and behavioral adaptations are employed depending on contexts)

Integration (incorporating various cultures into one's worldview, shifting competently back and forth across cultures)

6 cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2011)

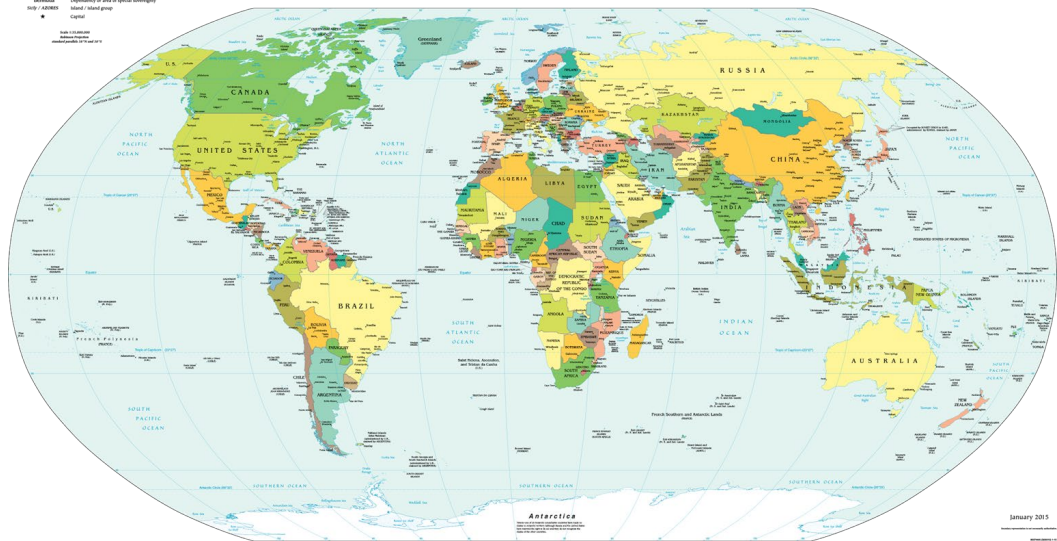
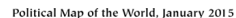
Small power distance (children are treated equals)	Large power distance (children are should be obedient)
Uncertainty acceptance	Uncertainty avoidance
Collectivism (focus on “we”)	Individualism (focus on “I”)
Masculinity (gender roles are great)	Femininity (gender roles are minimal)
Short-term orientation (US, Australia ...)	Long-term orientation (East Asian, Eastern & Central Europe)
Indulgence(freedom of speech is important)	Restraint (freedom of speech is not a primary concern)

Cultural humility (Guskin, 2013)

Questioning the supremacy of our culture and understanding the validity of another's culture puts us in a learning mode.

Instead of assuming our comprehension of another culture, we ask questions to clarify what is meant.

We need to respect the fact that misunderstanding and miscommunication is possible.

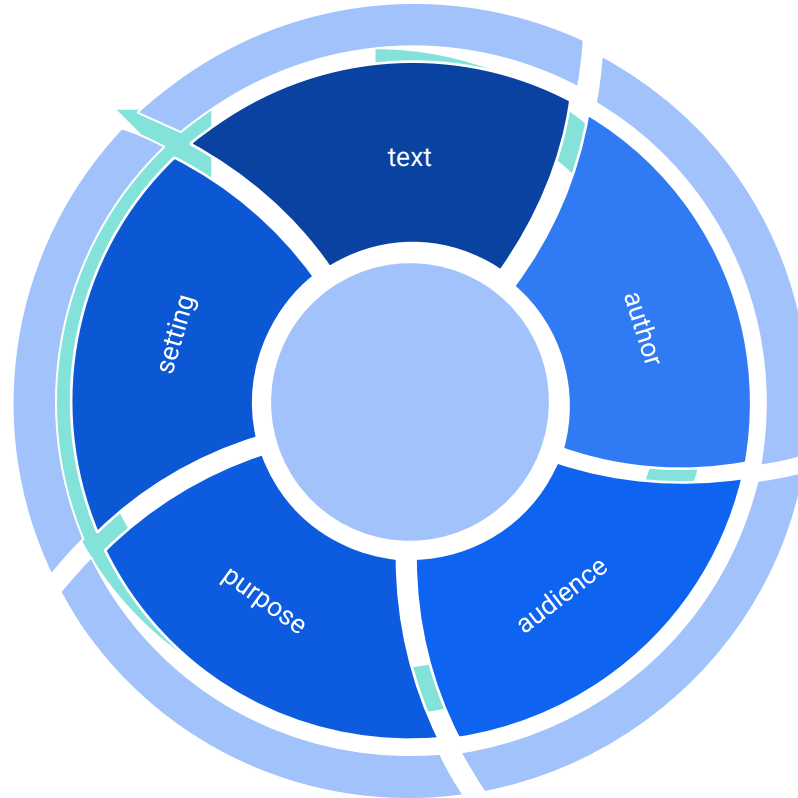


Striving for excellence in intercultural communication

Author

1. curiosity
2. suspension of judgment
3. cognitive flexibility
4. cultural humility
5. tolerance of ambiguity

(Bennet, 2009)



Audience

- different knowledge
- assumptions
- values
- culture

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)

Common expectations for effective communication

(King & Bailey, 2021; Bullock & Sanchez, 2021, Emerson, 2021)

- Speak slowly and enunciate
- Eliminate cultural references
- Avoid idioms and abbreviations
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues
- Watch your tone
- Practice active listening

*Communication
is the*



Fostering effective intercultural communication

Based on Deardoff (2008)

1. Attitudes
2. Knowledge
3. Skills





Bring the attitudes of

respect, openness, humility, and
curiosity to the conversation with other people.

Knowledge

Acquire fundamental knowledge of intercultural communication to communicate across cultures with confidence and humility.

- elements of culture
- enculturation
- acculturation
- cultural or cross-cultural awareness
- cultural identity
- culture bump
- culture shock
- cultural dimensions
- Intercultural communication through the lens of constructivism
- cultural humility, elements of intercultural competence



Skills

Sharpen intercultural communication skills via



- Practicing active listening
- Employing linguistic brevity and clarity (simple, short words, sentences, and questions; limited use of abbreviations, jargons, and idiomatic expressions)
- Putting an emphasis on comprehension (summarizing key points to ensure interlocutors fully understand them and prompting interlocutors to relay the message received to ensure accuracy of the message)
- Embracing exploration and explanation of cultural differences

Fostering effective intercultural communication

Recap

- Bring the **attitudes** of respect, openness, and curiosity to the conversation with people of diverse backgrounds.
- Acquire fundamental **knowledge** of intercultural communication to communicate across cultures with confidence and humility.
- Sharpen intercultural communication **skills** via active listening, linguistic brevity and clarity (simple, short words, sentences, and questions; limited use of abbreviations, jargons, and idiomatic expressions), emphasis on comprehension (summarizing key points to ensure interlocutors fully understand them and prompting interlocutors to relay the message received to ensure accuracy of the message), explanation of cultural differences.



References

Allen, S. (2018). Creative diversity: promoting interculturality in Australian pathways to higher education. *Journal of International Students*, 8(1), 251-273.

Altarriba, J., & Basnight-Brown, D. (2022). The Psychology of Communication: The Interplay Between Language and Culture Through Time. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 53(7-8), 860-874. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00220221221114046>

Arends, R. I. (1998). *Resource handbook. Learning to teach* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Bennet, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experiences* (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Bennet, M. J. (1998). Intercultural communication: A current perspective. In M. J. Bennet (ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: selected readings* (pp. 1-34). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Bennet, J. M. (2009). Cultivating intercultural competence. In D. K. Deardorff (Ed), *the SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (121-140). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Brown, S., & Eisterhold, J. (2004). *Topics in language and culture for teachers*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Bullock, D. & Sanchez, R. (2021). What's the best way to communicate on a global team? Harvard Business Review. Retrieved on February 21, 2024 from [What's the Best Way to Communicate on a Global Team? \(hbr.org\)](https://hbr.org/2021/02/whats-the-best-way-to-communicate-on-a-global-team/)

References

Chomsky, N. (1972). Language and mind. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Dewey, J. (1938) *Experience and Education*. New York: Collier Books.

Deardoff, D. K. (2008). Intercultural competence: A definition, model, implications for education abroad. In V. Savicki (Ed.), Development intercultural competence and transformation: Theory, research, and application in international education (pp.32-52). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

DuPraw, M. E. & Axner, M. (nd). Toward a More Perfect Union in an Age of Diversity: Working on Common Cross-cultural Communication Challenges. Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html#TASKS>

Elliott, S.N., Kratochwill, T.R., Littlefield Cook, J. & Travers, J. (2000). *Educational psychology: Effective teaching, effective learning (3rd ed.)*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill College.

Emerson, M. S. (2021) 8 ways to improve your communication skills. Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://professional.dce.harvard.edu/blog/8-ways-you-can-improve-your-communication-skills/>

Fox, R. (2001). Constructivism examined. *Oxford review of education*, 27(1), 23-35.

Ge, X., Xu, C., Misaki, D., Markus, H. R., & Tsai, J. L. (2024, May). How culture shapes what people want from AI. In *Proceedings of the 2024 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (pp. 1-15).

Geary, D. (2016). How do we get people to interact? International students and the American experience. *Journal of International Students*, 6(2), 527-541.

Gusking, A. (2013). On cultural humility. Paper for Encyclopedia of Intercultural Competence Retrieved on February 20, 2024 from <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58c476372994cae7ec689bb5/t/5a4430500d9297c68875a6a3/1514418261311/Final+Draft+on+Cultural+Humility+for+Encyclopedia+of+Intercultural+Competence.pdf>

Hofstede, G. (2011). Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede model in context. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1014>

King, C. S. J. & Bailey, K. S. (2021). Intercultural communication and US higher education: How US students and faculty can improve international students' classroom experiences. *International Journal of International Relations*, 82, 278-287.

References

Lakoff, G. & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

McLeod, S. (2024). Constructivism as a theory for teaching and learning. [Simplypsychology.org](https://simplypsychology.org)

Open Door 2023 Report on International Educational Exchange Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/international-students/>

Paige, R. M. (1993). On the nature of intercultural experiences and intercultural education. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experiences* (pp. 169-199). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Paige, R. M. (2006). Dimensions of intercultural learning. In R. M. Paige, A. D. Cohen, B. Kappler, J. C. Chi & J. P. Lassegard (Eds.), *Maximizing study abroad: a student's guide to strategies for language and culture learning and use* (pp. 40-41. Minneapolis: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition: University of Minnesota.

Paige, R. M, Cohen, A.D., & Shively R. L. (2004). Assessing the impact of a strategies-based curriculum on language and culture learning abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Studying Abroad*, 10, 253-276.

Paige, R. M. & Goode, M. L. (2009). Intercultural competence in intercultural education administration: Cultural mentoring. In D. K Deardoff (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 333-349). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Pederson, E. (1995). Language as context, language as means: spatial cognition and habitual language use. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 6, 33-62.

Pinker, S. (1994). *The language instinct*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.

Phillips, D. C. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. *Educational researcher*, 24 (7), 5-12.

Rogers, C. R. & Farson, R. E. (1987). Active listening. Excerpt from *Communicating in Business Today* R.G. Newman, M.A. Danzinger, M. Cohen (eds) D.C. Heath & Company. Retrieved on February 28, 2024 from https://wholebeinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/Rogers_Farson_Active-Listening.pdf

Sherry, M., Thomas, P., & Chui, W. H. (2010). International students: A vulnerable student population. *Higher Education*, 6, 33-46. [International students: a vulnerable student population | Higher Education \(springer.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10985-010-9140-0)

References

Stivers, T., Enfield, N. J., Brown, P., Englert, C., Hayashi, M., Heinemann, T., Hoymann, G., Rossano, F., de Ruiter, J. P., Yoon, K. E., & Levinson, S. C. (2009). Universals and cultural variation in turn-taking in conversation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 106(26), 10587–10592. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0903616106>

Tran, T. H (2010). *Teaching Culture in the EFL/ESL Classroom*. ERIC Document number [ED11819](#)

The US Department of Health and Human Services (nd.) Think cultural health: Communication styles. Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://thinkculturalhealth.hhs.gov/assets/pdfs/resource-library/communication-styles.pdf>

UC San Diego: International Students & Program Office: Tips for effective intercultural communication with culturally diverse students. Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://ispo.ucsd.edu/files/campus-partners/Effective-Intercultural-Communication.pdf>

University of Denver: Office of Teaching and Learning (nd.) Cross cultural communication tips. Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://otl.du.edu/plan-a-course/teaching-resources/cross-cultural-communication-tips/>

van Eerde, W., & Azar, S. (2020). Too Late? What Do You Mean? Cultural Norms Regarding Lateness for Meetings and Appointments. *Cross-Cultural Research*, 54(2-3), 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069397119866132>

Vande Ber, M. & Paige, R. M. (2009). Applying theory and research: The evolution of intercultural competence of U.S. study abroad. In D. K Deardoff (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 333-349). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction to sociolinguistics*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Washington University School of Medicine in Saint Louis (nd.) Office of diversity, equity & inclusion: Communicating across cultures. Retrieved on February 29, 2024 from <https://diversity.med.wustl.edu/resources/strategies-for-effective-communication-across-cultures/>

Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K. & Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 33:1, 63-75, DOI: [10.1080/03075070701794833](https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070701794833)