



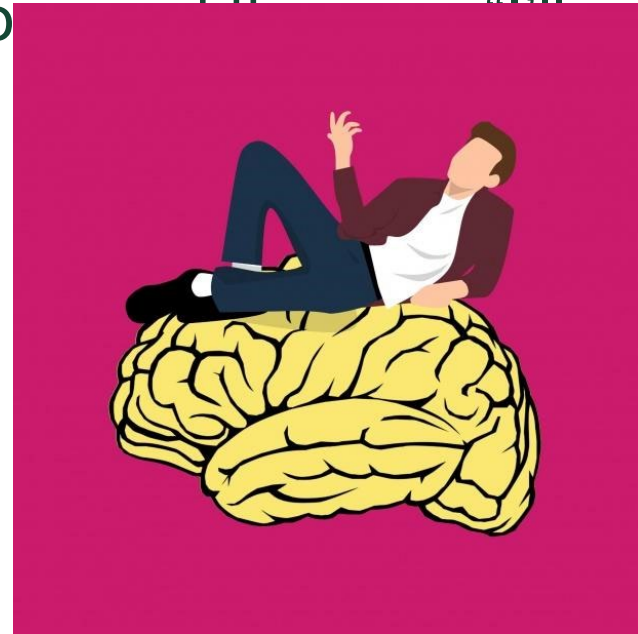
Key to Effective Intercultural Communication

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



How are you?

I am fine.

I am not fine. I just got spanked by my mom.

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?

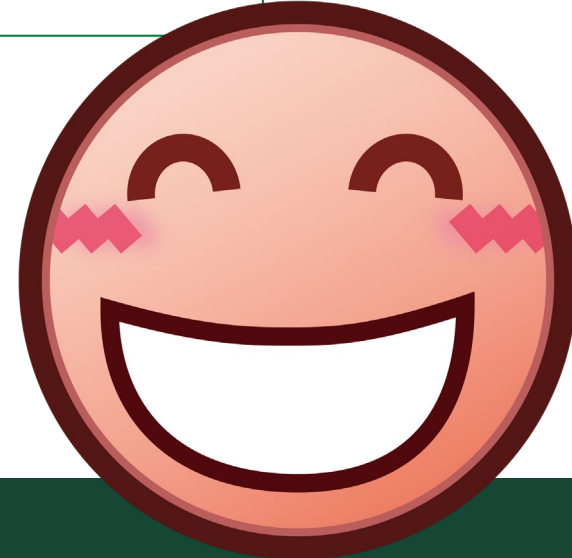
An entirely human and non-intrinsic method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by a system of voluntarily produced symbols (Sapir, 1968)

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?

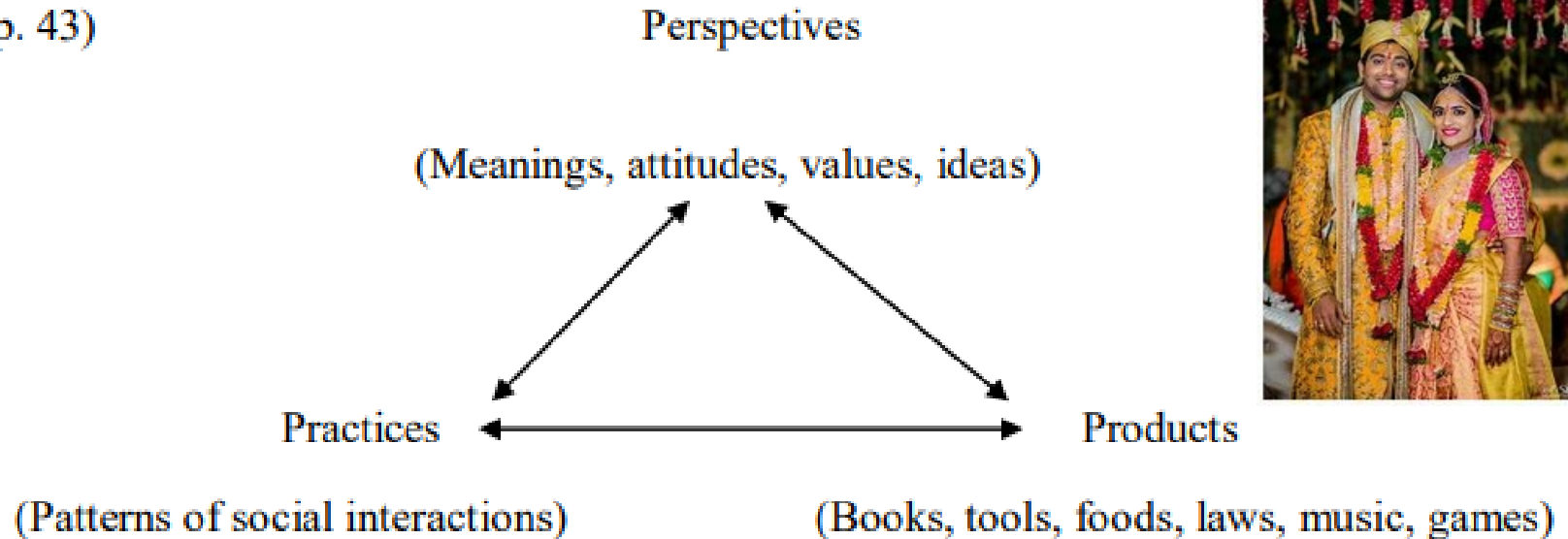


- ▶ Whatever it is one has to know or believe to operate in a society (Goodenough, 1957)
- ▶ Relative and changeable in time and space (Fox, 1999)
- ▶ A way of life, context where people exist, think, feel, and relate to others, the glue binding people together (Brown, 2007)
- ▶ The National Standards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



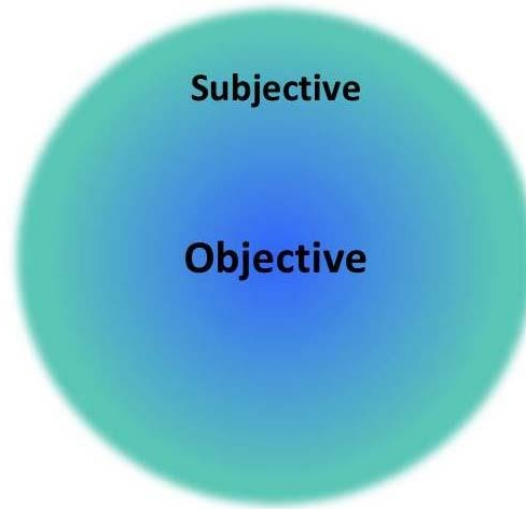
Culture as a triangle

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



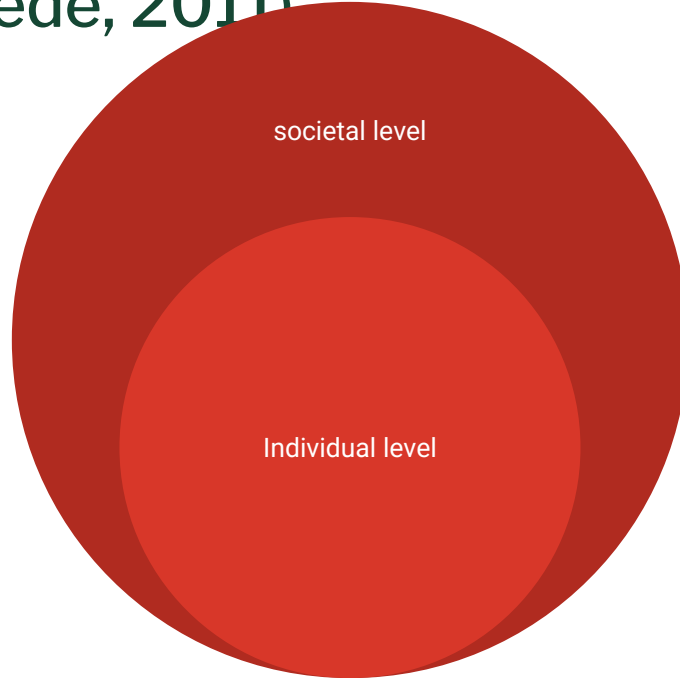
Objective versus subjective culture (Bennet, 1998)

Objective Culture	Subjective Culture
Institutions Products	Beliefs Values Behaviors



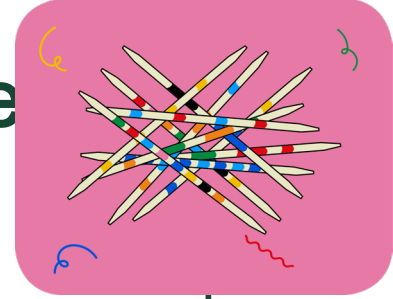
Societal versus individual cultural levels

(Fox, 2001; Hofstede, 2011)



The nexus between language and culture

4 Major claims



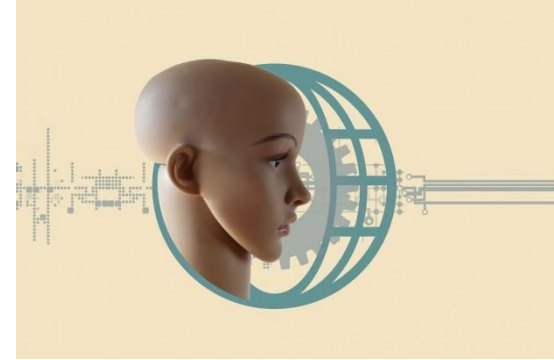
- a. Language determines culture or worldview (Strong version, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis)
- b. Language has a strong influence on culture or worldview (Weak version, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis)
- c. Language is innate and independent of culture (Chomsky, 1972; Pinker, 1994)
- d. Language use is based on metaphorical thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980)

Culture in the age of AI

Cultures affect people's perspectives about AI and its potential.

Research from Ge et al. (2024) shows that:

1. Chinese participants: it is less important to control AI rather than to connect with AI.
2. European American respondents prefer AI not to have the ability to influence (e.g, autonomy and emotion).
3. African American participants have the same view as European American participants about the need to have control over AI but they are between Chinese and European American participants regarding connection with AI.



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 have been difficult as my words don’t get through.”



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.



Argument is war

Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, page 4.



Your argument is indefensible.

He attacked every weak point in my argument.

I demolished his argument.

I've never won an argument with him.

Time is money

Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pages 7-8)

You're wasting my time.

This gadget will save you hours.

I don't have time to give you.

How do you spend your time these days?

The flat tire cost me an hour.

You need to budget your time.

How much time do you have left?



Problems with the CONDUIT metaphors

“It’s the least I can do.”



Differences across cultures

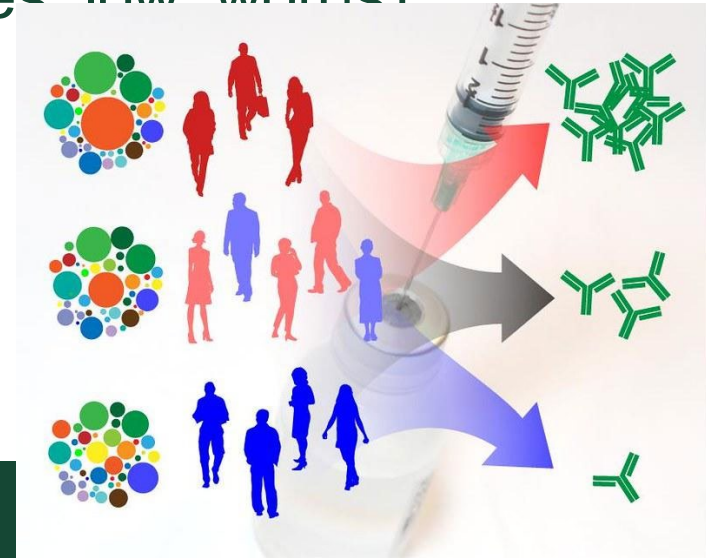


Linguistic variation	Concept about time	Social conformity
English: take medicine Vietnamese: drink medicine Chinese: eat medicine	Event-based cultures (late when coming after others) Clock time cultures (late after the starting time)	Uniqueness is valued. Conformity is valued. (Japanese proverb: The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

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

Enculturation (your own culture)

Acculturation (another culture)

Cultural/cross-cultural awareness

Cultural identity

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)

5 intercultural learning dimensions (Paige, 2006)

learning about oneself as a cultural being

learning about the elements of culture

culture-specific learning

culture-general learning (concepts such as intercultural development, adjustment, adaptation, culture shock, acculturation, and assimilation)

learning about learning (e.g., strategies for intercultural learning).

Constructivism: Intercultural Communication

(Fox, 2001, p. 24)



- (1) Learning is an active process.
- (2) Knowledge is constructed, rather than innate, or passively absorbed.
- (3) Knowledge is invented, not discovered.
- (4a) All knowledge is personal and idiosyncratic. (4b) All knowledge is socially constructed.
- (5) Learning is essentially a process of making sense of the world.
- (6) Effective learning requires meaningful, open-ended, challenging problems for the learner to solve.

Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978)

For Intercultural communication

Can

Things I can do now.

Can +

Things I can do with help.

Cannot

Things that are beyond my
ability at the moment.

ZPD

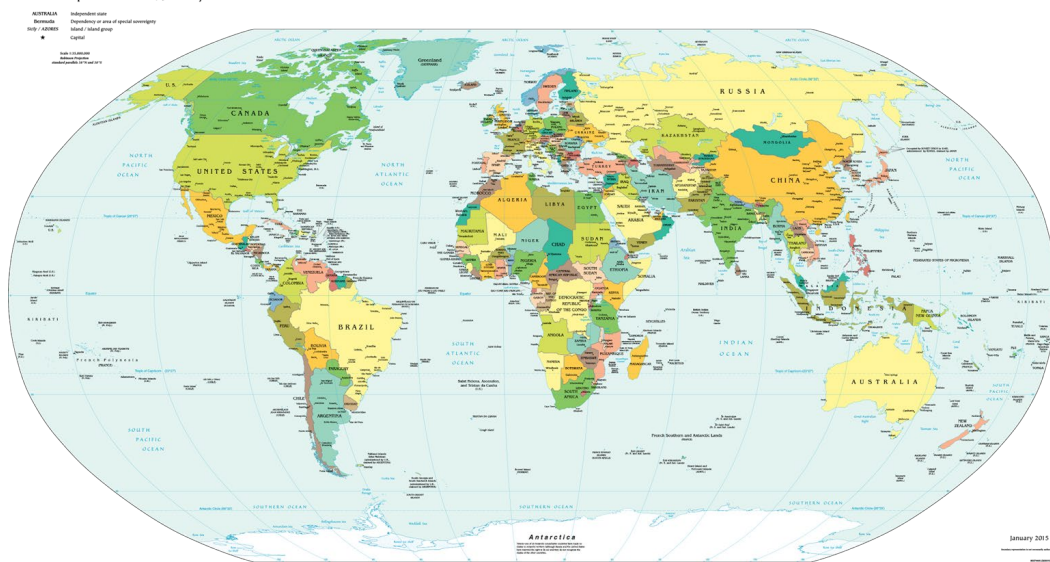
Cultural humility (Guskin, 2013)

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.

Political Map of the World, January 2015

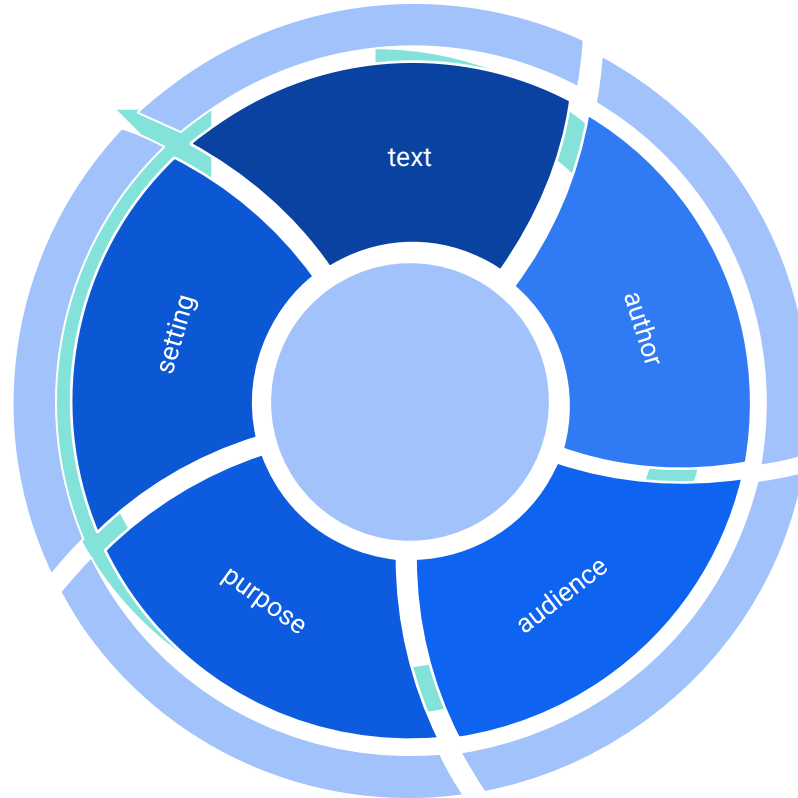


Striving for excellence in intercultural communication

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*



Elements in intercultural competence

(Deardoff, 2008)



- Knowledge and comprehension (cultural self-awareness, sociolinguistic awareness, and deep cultural knowledge)
- Skills (listen, observe, evaluate, analyze, interpret and relate)
- Attitudes (respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery)

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.



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