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## **Intercultural Communication in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

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Culture

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### **1 Introduction**

Intercultural communication exists as long as people from different cultures come into contact with one another. When the communication process involves culturally diverse people, some misunderstanding will happen. When intercultural contacts and interactions take place, some negotiation will be necessary.

Technology and science have made our world borderless and have increased contact among cultures. A global economy and market place, and the emergence of multicultural organizations and work forces require that we should help our students develop their communication skills and abilities appropriate to a multicultural society and to life in a global village.

The main purpose of foreign language teaching is to enable the students to communicate in this new language. Here lies a second very important function of knowledge about the culture; it is also strategic knowledge.

This paper will suggest practical methods to improve students communicative skills and abilities in intercultural communication, and will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1 How should intercultural communication be defined within the framework of foreign language teaching, in this case, English teaching?
- 2 What are to be its main aims ?
- 3 What concepts of "culture" and "communication across cultures" are to be introduced?
- 4 What should be the basic approach of the teaching?
- 5 How are students to be encouraged to develop their communication skills?

### **2 Cultural Aspects of English Teaching**

We might look at the cultural aspect of foreign language teaching from two perspectives. The first one is the outward view: we try to place English language teaching in the Japanese school system within a global framework of English language teaching worldwide. On the one hand, this perspective needs to take into account the role of English as the international language. On the other hand, English language teaching in Japan as a foreign language is part of teaching about the world, of global education, and should also reflect global issues.

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The second perspective is the inward view: it focuses on the relationship between language learning and culture learning. As foreign language teachers we have to be aware of this relationship and suggest ways in which it may be reflected in English language teaching curricula and teaching methods. This paper concentrates on this second perspective. Of course, the role of English in the world today affects ideas of cultural learning within English language teaching. The two perspectives mentioned cannot be kept separate.

### **3 Aims of Intercultural Communication are to**

- (1) introduce the concept of intercultural communication
- (2) provide a general orientation and overview of intercultural communication
- (3) provide insight into cultural differences
- (4) demonstrate the relationships between culture and perception
- (5) develop intercultural understandings, attitudes, and performance skills
- (6) develop face-to-face interaction skills with people from other cultures
- (7) understand features of non-verbal communication and their cultural variations

### **4 An Intercultural Curriculum with a Framework for Teaching Culture**

This paper outlines a curriculum to help students develop improved intercultural communication skills in foreign language learning. Although some aspects of intercultural training can be developed by providing students with information in the form of lectures and reading, students need to go beyond learning information to developing understanding. This can be achieved through activities to move them from knowing about a foreign culture to knowing about themselves. The syllabus specifies skills as well as content, values and assumptions as well as topics, self-awareness as well as texts.

### **5 Conclusion**

Teaching English for intercultural communication in the areas of attitude, knowledge and communication skill outlined in this paper requires teachers who have the competence to bring the foreign culture into the classroom. This does not mean that teachers need to have an encyclopedic knowledge of all English language cultures plus their own; neither does it mean that they have to be bilingual. But it does imply that the successful study of intercultural communication will call upon English teachers who have a good proficiency in English communication.

## Activities in Inter-cultural Communication Classes

The basic aim of an inter-cultural communication class will be to help students learn to communicate with people who do not share their own cultural background. Learning these intercultural skills involves learning about cultural differences, learning how to behave in a foreign environment, knowing why people behave as they do, and understanding something of their own attitudes and assumptions.

The underlying assumption in the activities mentioned below is that communication, language, and culture cannot be separated. Successful inter-cultural communication demands cultural fluency as well as linguistic fluency. In order to communicate effectively in English, students need more than just competence in English grammar and vocabulary. They must also have an awareness of the culturally-determined patterns of verbal and non-verbal communication, the styles of spoken and written language that are appropriate for particular situations, and the differences in communication styles between their own and English-speaking cultures.

### 1 Recognizing cultural images and symbols

- 1.1 Words and images      1.2 Show and tell

### 2 Working with cultural products

- 2.1 Headlines   2.2 Front-page features   2.3 Topics in the news   2.4 Today's TV schedule

### 3 Examining patterns of everyday life and extending cultural experiences

- 3.1 Introduction                      3.2 Greeting                      3.3 Kissing, hand-shaking, hugging  
3.4 Dating customs                      3.5 Shopping habits

### 4 Making a comparison with cultural/social behaviors

- 4.1 Serving tea to guests   4.2 Giving a present      4.3 Attending a party  
4.4 Degrees of politeness   4.5 Ways of opening/closing meetings   4.6 Silence  
4.7 Eye contact during interaction                      4.8 Nemawasi

### 5 Exploring values and attitudes

- 5.1 Proverbial values      5.2 Commercial values      5.3 Stereotypes

### 6 Examining patterns of communication

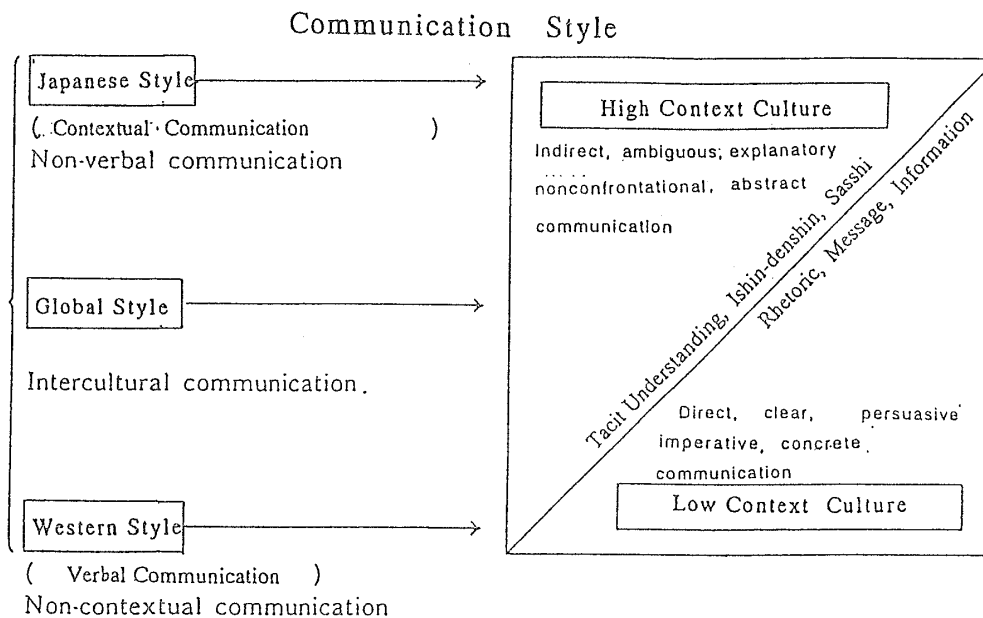
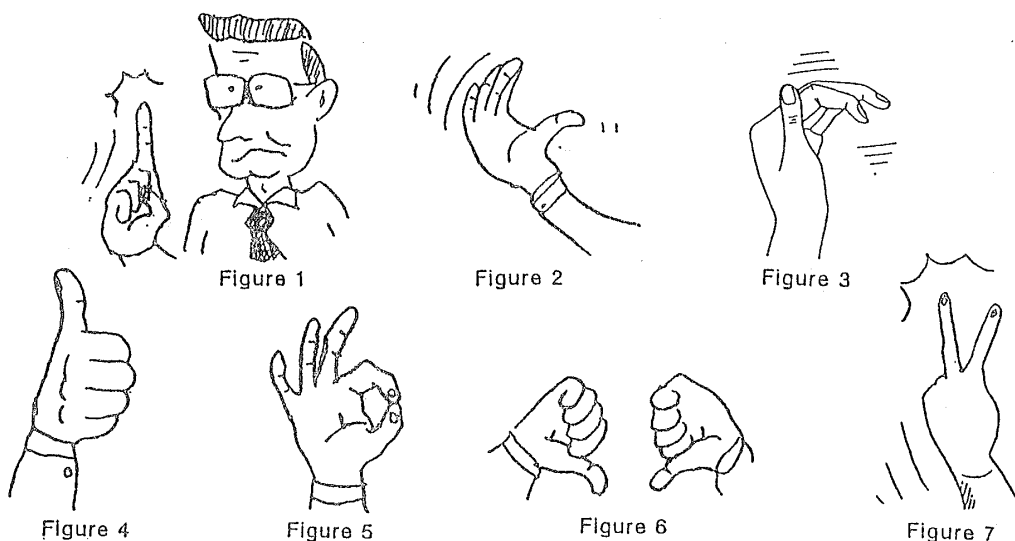
- 6.1 Ask, answer, and add   6.2 Cross-cultural introduction   6.3 Short talk  
6.4 Non-verbal communication

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### 6.4 Non-Verbal Communication

The aim of this activity is to discover the meaning of some common gestures. In class distribute the hand-out and ask the students to discuss the following questions:

- What does each gesture mean?
- Which of the gestures are different from the gestures used in Japan?
- Are there any gestures you should not use with certain people?
- How do misunderstandings occur through non-verbal communication ?



If emphasis in foreign language instruction is placed upon the way language and culture interact and influence the way one sees the world, there is a strong relationship between foreign language education and global education.

## Inter-cultural Communication Syllabus

Sessions	1	2	3	4
Topic	What is culture?	Anglo American Culture	Urban Culture	Family Life
Text	Extracts from UK, USA and Japanese newspapers, magazines.	Case studies illustrating differences between Anglo American and Japanese behavior and values.	Statistical information on the UK, USA. Maps and illustrations of towns Video of UK, USA.	Statistical information on the UK, USA & Japan. Profiles of different families.
Information	Descriptions and examples of material and non-material culture: dwellings, food, clothing, entertainment, jobs, education, religion, etc.	Anglo American and Japanese behavior in cross-cultural contact.	UK, USA way of life: townscapes, population distribution.	Variety of families in the UK, USA. Gender roles within the family. The role of parents. Relationship of children with parents.
Skills	Listing material and non-material culture. Describing cultural features. Distinguishing between different aspects of culture: material, physical, psychological, etc. Relating cultural categories to Japanese and British culture.	Identifying differences in behavior. Relating these differences to cultural differences. Explaining these differences. Suggesting ways of behaving in cross-cultural encounters.	Interpreting statistical and graphic information. Relating features of town design to historical development. Describing a town. Comparing & contrasting UK, USA with Japan.	Interpreting statistical information. Identifying similarities & differences among families. Describing the main characteristics of families. Comparing & contrasting with Japanese families.
Values & Assumptions	What are the common features shared by Anglo American and Japanese cultures? Why do both cultures share these features? What are some of the differences between the two cultures? Why are there these differences?	Why do Americans value open discussion of differences? Why do Japanese avoid open discussion?	What kind of dwellings do British & American people prefer? How important is the concept of privacy? What importance does the motor car have in the UK & American way of life? What are the typical shopping habits of British & American housewives?	In what ways do UK families vary? Why have families become smaller? How have gender roles changed? Why do so many women work? How important is individuality within the family?
Self-Awareness	What are the most important things in your life? Why are these things important?	With whom do you discuss matters openly? With whom do you maintain respectful distance?	How important is privacy to you? What are the most important features of a Japanese town? What are the typical shopping habits of Japanese housewives? Why do Japanese housewives shop in the way that they do?	How important is my family to me? How do my parents share responsibilities within the family? Who do I discuss my problems with in my family?