6.4: Contextualizing Intercultural Communication (Summary)

From theory to practice...

Here are some considerations in respect to communication in different environmental and professional contexts:

- **Adjust your language and communication style to the environment in which you are located.** In familiar settings, this is likely something you do automatically – speaking informally with friends over lunch, while using a more formal style in responding to a professor in the classroom. However, in unfamiliar settings, this may not come as easily. Heightened cultural sensitivity is especially needed in sites of significant cultural importance – places of worship, monuments. Speaking loud in a hallowed space, like the top of a holy mountain is inappropriate, as is snapping selfies of yourself naked.

- **Beware of pragmatic transfer in speaking in formal settings.** In most business and professional situations in many parts of the world, a more formal language register is expected. This means not only using formal modes of address and typical politeness formulas, but also watching out, if you are not speaking your native language, for keeping the formulation of "speech acts" (like greetings or leave-taking) in line with cultural norms. We often will instinctively translate word for word set phrases we use all the time, but that can sometimes cause miscommunication or awkwardness.

For discussion and reflection...

**Time and speed in cultural contexts**

*After watching Honoré’s "In praise of slowness" and Zimbardo's "Psychology of time"...*

- What is your assessment of the concepts of time and speed presented in the videos? How does time effect your life...
(in terms of relationship building, work, school)? What do you make of the "slow" movement? Are you aware of schools or companies "slowing time" or enabling more free time? Comment on experiences you have had related to concepts/traditions of space and time across cultures.

Alternative approaches to built spaces

After watching the videos on space and architecture by Kéré, Hardy, and Phillips...:

- Are we victims of "groupthink" and conformity in terms of housing design? How do you assess the importance of using traditional building materials? How does living in the communities discussed in the videos effect the way of life and cultural values and behaviors? How do you think the design of the 2 schools discussed, the "Green School" in Bali and the Gando school in Burkina Faso may effect learning experiences of students? What are your experiences, if any, with cultures having different kinds of living arrangements, housing, bathroom cultures?

International businesses

- Comment on experiences you have had related to international business, for example, different kinds of consumer practices, changes that US companies make in selling abroad (i.e., McDonalds, Wal-Mart)

Key terms

- **Built environment**: Adaptations to the terrestrial environment, including architecture, housing, lighting, and landscaping
- **Chuchotage**: Form of interpreting in which the interpreter stands or sits alongside a small target audience and whispers a simultaneous interpretation of what’s being said; the term chuchotage is French for whispering
- **Consecutive interpreting**: Interpreters wait for the speaker to pause before interpreting; the interpreter may interpret after every sentence, or may take notes and then interpret several minutes of speech at once
- **Environmental context**: The geographical and psychological location of communication within some cultural context
- **Fixed-feature space**: Space bounded by immovable or permanent fixtures, such as walls
- **Gatekeeping**: The process through which information is filtered for transmission or dissemination
- **Guanxi**: Chinese for relationship or connection, refers to the importance of personalized networks of influence in the Chinese business community
- **High load**: A situation with a high information rate
- **Informal space**: Space defined by the movement of the interactants
- **Information rate**: The amount of information contained or perceived in the physical environment per some unit of time
- **Low load**: A situation with a low information rate
- **Monochronic time orientation**: Cultural temporal orientation that stresses the compartmentalization and segmentation of measurable units of time
- **Polychronic time orientation**: Time as cyclical, people perform multiple tasks simultaneously
- **Pragmatic equivalence**: Refers to words in two languages having the same effect on the reader/listener in both
languages

- **Semifixed-feature space**: Space bounded by movable objects, such as furniture
- **Simultaneous interpreting**: Process which allows people to communicate directly across language and cultural boundaries using specialized technology and professional interpreters who are trained to listen to one language while speaking simultaneously in another
- **Taiso**: Tai (body) + so (hardening) is a generic Japanese term for conditioning or exercising, a regular part of the daily routine in many Japanese factories

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## Resources

### Space and housing across cultures

- [Diébédo Francis Kéré: How to build with clay... and community](https://www.ted.com/talks/diebedo_francis_kere_how_to_build_with_clay_and_community?language=en)
  
  TED description: "Diébédo Francis Kéré knew exactly what he wanted to do when he got his degree in architecture... He wanted to go home to Gando in Burkina Faso, to help his neighbors reap the benefit of his education. In this charming talk, Kéré shows off some of the beautiful structures he's helped to build in his small village in the years since then, including an award-winning primary school made from clay by the entire community."

  
  TED description: "You've never seen buildings like this. The stunning bamboo homes built by Elora Hardy and her team in Bali twist, curve and surprise at every turn. They defy convention because the bamboo itself is so enigmatic. No two poles of bamboo are alike, so every home, bridge and bathroom is exquisitely unique. In this beautiful, immersive talk, she shares the potential of bamboo, as both a sustainable resource and a spark for the imagination. 'We have had to invent our own rules,' she says."

- [Dan Phillips: Creative houses from reclaimed stuff](https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_phillips_creative_houses_from_reclaimed_stuff?language=en)
  
  TED description: "In this funny and insightful talk, builder Dan Phillips tours us through a dozen homes he's built in Texas using recycled and reclaimed materials in wildly creative ways. Brilliant, low-tech design details will refresh your own creative drive."

### Perceptions of time

- [Philip Zimbardo: The psychology of time](https://www.ted.com/talks/philip_zimbardo_the_psychology_of_time?language=en)
  
  TED description: "Psychologist Philip Zimbardo says happiness and success are rooted in a trait most of us disregard: the way we orient toward the past, present and future. He suggests we calibrate our outlook on time as a first step to improving our lives."

- [Carl Honoré: In praise of slowness](https://www.ted.com/talks/carl_honore_in_praise_of_slowness?language=en)
  
  TED description: "Journalist Carl Honore believes the Western world's emphasis on speed erodes health, productivity and quality of life. But there's a backlash brewing, as everyday people start putting the brakes on their all-too-modern lives."
Privacy and online selves

- Jennifer Golbeck: The curly fry conundrum: Why social media “likes” say more than you might think

TED description: "Do you like curly fries? Have you Liked them on Facebook? Watch this talk to find out the surprising things Facebook (and others) can guess about you from your random Likes and Shares. Computer scientist Jennifer Golbeck explains how this came about, how some applications of the technology are not so cute — and why she thinks we should return the control of information to its rightful owners."

- Juan Enriquez: Your online life, permanent as a tattoo

TED description: "What if Andy Warhol had it wrong, and instead of being famous for 15 minutes, we’re only anonymous for that long? In this short talk, Juan Enriquez looks at the surprisingly permanent effects of digital sharing on our personal privacy. He shares insight from the ancient Greeks to help us deal with our new 'digital tattoos.'"

Translating and interpreting

- More than words | Laura Burian, Miguel Garcia & Barry Olsen

TED description: "Can you distinguish language translation from language interpretation? In what may be the first ever tri-lingual TEDx talk, Laura Burian, Barry Olsen, and Miguel Garcia demonstrate the power of human cognition as they explain the subtle but important differences between professional translators and interpreters"

Corporate culture and business etiquette

- Margaret Heffernan: Why it's time to forget the pecking order at work

TED description: "Organizations are often run according to “the superchicken model,” where the value is placed on star employees who outperform others. And yet, this isn’t what drives the most high-achieving teams. Business leader Margaret Heffernan observes that it is social cohesion — built every coffee break, every time one team member asks another for help — that leads over time to great results. It’s a radical rethink of what drives us to do our best work, and what it means to be a leader. Because as Heffernan points out: 'Companies don’t have ideas. Only people do."

- Ricardo Semler: How to run a company with (almost) no rules

TED description: "What if your job didn’t control your life? Brazilian CEO Ricardo Semler practices a radical form of corporate democracy, rethinking everything from board meetings to how workers report their vacation days (they don’t have to). It’s a vision that rewards the wisdom of workers, promotes work-life balance and leads to some deep insight on what work, and life, is really all about."

- Ernesto Sirolli: Want to help someone? Shut up and listen!

TED description: "When most well-intentioned aid workers hear of a problem they think they can fix, they go to work. This, Ernesto Sirolli suggests, is naïve. In this funny and impassioned talk, he proposes that the first step is to listen to the people you’re trying to help, and tap into their own entrepreneurial spirit. His advice on what works will help any entrepreneur."

Country Profiles - Global Guide to Culture, Customs and Etiquette Fre
Kwintessential
- International Business Etiquette, Manners, & Culture From cyborlink.com

Cultural training companies
- Intercultural Consulting, LLC
- Cultural Awareness International (relocation services)
- Intercultural Success
- Intercultural Consulting
- Intercultural Training Institute Numerous presentations by IC comm scholars and others

References


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Zurich airport: Siqbal, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zurich_Airport_Arrivals_Lounge.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zurich_Airport_Arrivals_Lounge.jpg)


Hedge around house in Germany, Steffen Heinz, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hexenhecke1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hexenhecke1.jpg)
Tokyo subway: Tim Adams, https://www.flickr.com/photos/36217981@N02/13155481125


Women in leadership: ThinkIT

https://www.thinkitassociation.org/media/65813/women-in-leadership1.jpg

Multicultural school group: Eurobas

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sustainable_development_exhibition_Plan%C3%A8te_mode_d%27emploi_at_Paris._24_September_2009.jpg

Traffic in India: Yann, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Road_traffic,_Gwalior.jpg