Communicating Across Cultures

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HRDLS Intercultural Program
Objectives

- Enhance awareness of how communication styles impact your day-to-day work and interactions
- Explore practical ways to communicate more effectively across cultural and linguistic barriers in sensitive and culturally-appropriate ways
- Learn tips to leverage existing knowledge and adapt communication practices with your global colleagues, clients and partners
“The biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

~ George Bernard Shaw
What communication challenges do you experience?
Communication Challenges

- Language and accents
- Mode of communication
- Context of messages
- Different time zones
- Technology infrastructure
- Information sharing
- Cultural programming
The Three “I’s” of Communication

Intent ≠ Impact

Interpretation
Poll 2

1. What do you see as the top challenge that impacted their meeting?

2. How might this meeting impact their future collaboration?
BLINK Model

**Become Aware**
Help yourself become more aware about your cultural preferences through reflection and self-assessment tools. You will be able to apply this knowledge to the next BLINK steps.

**Listen**
Listen not only to the words being said but also to what is NOT being said. Take note of your reactions and what thoughts are going through your mind.

**Inquire**
Stop and ask yourself what role culture is playing: both in what the other person is saying as well as your inner voice and reactions.

**Name**
Name what you have learned in the last two steps (Listen and Inquire). To do this, you share with the other person the aspects of your cultural preferences that are influencing the conversation.

**Keep Communicating**
Ask clarifying questions, request more information, and follow-up in another conversation.

- "I think what you're saying is _____. Is that right?"
- "Can you tell me more about ____?"
### BLINK - Becoming Aware of Cultural Differences

**(Cultural dimensions based on CultureWizard)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Impact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hierarchy</strong> (Egalitarian vs. Hierarchical)</td>
<td>Hands on/ Hands off; levels of power and empowerment. Supervision and authority vs. space of autonomy for team effectiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group</strong> (Individual vs. Group)</td>
<td>I vs. We; independent vs. interdependent; individual vs. consensus; group harmony. Personal priorities and decisions vs. group priorities and decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships</strong></td>
<td>Importance/time devoted to building relationships and, developing trust (if team-building and trust are your priority or deliveries)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>How is much context is needed? Are you comfortable disagreeing/ saying NO/giving constructive feedback and calling out undesired behaviors? How do you address face issues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong> (Fluid vs. Controlled)</td>
<td>Sense of punctuality and priorities. How would you react if someone fails to deliver on time as promised</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Change</strong> (Averse vs. Tolerant)</td>
<td>Rules, procedures, step-to-step plans, doing it right vs. flexibility, initiating changes, and trial and error. Your comfort level with uncertainty and unpredictable changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formality</strong> (Formal vs. Informal)</td>
<td>Levels of formality and appropriacy: dress codes, protocols, titles of addressing, office set-up. What is the new dress code for working at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong> (Work-life Balance vs Status)</td>
<td>Which is more important for you: well-being, work/life balance or social or work accomplishment? Would you tend to work in the evenings and weekend</td>
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**Note:**
- **Dimensions** refer to cultural differences and their impact on various aspects of work and relationships.
- **Hierarchy** reflects egalitarian vs. hierarchical power structures.
- **Group** focuses on individual vs. group dynamics.
- **Relationships** consider transactional vs. interpersonal interactions.
- **Communication** addresses direct vs. indirect approaches.
- **Time** explores fluid vs. controlled environments.
- **Change** looks at averseness vs. tolerance to changes.
- **Formality** discusses formal vs. informal settings.
- **Motivation** balances work-life balance vs. status goals.
Are you fully present when listening to others?
Listen not only to the words being said, but also to what is NOT being said
  o Is the speaker using nonverbal language that is as significant as the words themselves?
  o Can you read “between the lines” for any unspoken messages?

Note your inner voice
  o What are your reactions to what the speaker is saying?
  o Does what is being said make you feel happy, angry, sad, anxious, or otherwise?
How Well Do You Listen?

Mind Full, or Mindful?
“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts.”

~ Thich Nhat Hanh
How effective were you at staying present?
How much communication is verbal?

- Words 7%
- Pitch/tone 38%
- Body language / gestures 55%

Source: Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA
What Miscommunication Occurs?
In your opinion, which was the most disrespectful non-verbal behavior that took place in this video?
Non-Verbal Communication

- Use of silence
- Eye contact
- Touch
- Space
- Posture
- Gestures
Style A
1: Taking turns with little interruptions or silence
2:

Style B
1: Brief to long moments of silence during an interaction
2:

Style C
1: Frequent interruptions
2:

What is your default style?
Expressing Emotion

Controlled with little display of emotion

Highly expressive / emotive
Pause and ask if there is gap in your communication due to cultural differences

Ask questions to better understand the other’s intention and to check assumptions

Be open and inquire to appreciate different lenses and perspectives in communication
Sample Questions for Effective Inquiry

- How would you handle this issue?
- What ideas do you have?
- Let me make sure I understand you...
- This is how I see it, please share your perspective...
- What I heard you say was..., is that correct?
“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and freedom.”

~ Viktor Frankl
In chat, share:

▪ How could Basheera and Jerome communicate differently in their conversation?
Losing face occurs when:
- you admit to not knowing or understanding something
- you admit to making a mistake
- you receive negative feedback (in public)
- someone openly disagrees with you

Saving face occurs when:
- you take the blame for a problem instead of pointing the finger
- say no indirectly (i.e. we’ll consider it, that’s a good idea, but…”
- you downplay your superior knowledge or expertise

Giving face occurs when:
- You treat someone with honor, dignity and respect
- you compliment someone
- you do something to increase someone’s self-esteem or self-worth
Tips for Giving and Receiving Effective Feedback

- Pause to check your emotions; avoid being reactive
- Ask your counterpart how s/he perceived the situation to gauge his/her awareness of the issue
- Avoid making comments that will put your counterpart on the defensive
- Focus on the behavior, not the personality of the individual
- Ask how your counterpart thinks the situation could have been done better, requesting specific examples
- Avoid giving negative (and sometimes positive!) feedback in a public environment
During extremely stressful interactions, keep the channels of communication open
- Ex. “Could we find a different time to talk about it again?”

Ask clarifying questions
- Ex. “I think what you’re saying is X. Is that right?”

Request more information
- Ex. “Can you tell me more about Y?”

Look for consensus
- Ex. “Is there another way to accomplish our goal?”
Best Practices for Successfully Communicating Across Cultures

- Speak slowly, articulate clearly and simplify your words
- Avoid using cultural jargon, idioms, acronyms and humor
- Ask for clarification if you don’t understand something
- Paraphrase and summarize to ensure understanding
- Ask open-ended questions to avoid yes/no answers
- Send meeting agendas and other documentation well in advance
- Establish speaking protocols during meetings to avoid interruptions and allow everyone a chance to speak
- Beware of formalities across hierarchies, age and rank
- Keep written documentation of meetings that are distributed to all parties with clearly defined actions
- Listen actively and beware of different meanings of gestures and body language
What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.

— Pericles
Thank you!