Communication Skills for Library Staff
Emphasizing the Multicultural Experience

By Dr. Nara Venditti

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Objective

Increase your personal effectiveness when communicating across cultures
Why communication?

- Communication with customers is vital to creating a successful relationship.
- Yet, we are rarely taught how to communicate effectively, especially in multicultural setting.
Demographic Shift is Happening All Across the Land

- Foreign born constitute 12.4% of US population
- One in five speaks language other than English at home
- At any given time we have about 0.5 mln of international students in our educational institutions
- Minorities are responsible for 70% growth
- About one million enters this county annually
Communication Model

- Filters/Prejudices/Perceptions
- Encoding
- Transmission
- Decoding
- Understanding

Feeds Back Understanding

Adapted with permission from Claire Bloom, MSEL, MSST.

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Barriers to Communication

- Poor Listening Skills
- Cultural Barriers
- Language Barriers
- Stereotyping
- More Barriers
What Interferes with Listening?

1. **Customer was unclear** (felt rushed, spoke with accent, grammatically incorrect, more…)
2. **You were unclear** (spoke fast, used jargon, terms, idioms, acronyms, more …)
A Selective Listener

- Often interrupts the speaker
- Plans what to say next
- Does not support the speaker verbally or non-verbally
- Tunes out
What is culture?

- System of values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions in a given society
- “Culture is a medium evolved by humans to survive” – Edward Hall
- Culture is learned
- Foreign culture is like a secret code

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Iceberg Model of Culture

VISIBLE:
Dress, food, music, dance, what people say, behavior

INVISIBLE:
Norms, values, assumptions, expectations, habits, attitudes, tradition, family structure
How cultures differ? 
By communication styles!

- Low Context Cultures (e.g., the US, Scandinavia, Russia, Germany)
- High Context Cultures (e.g., Middle Eastern, Asian, Latin American)
Communication considerations of Cultural Differences

By verbal and non-verbal content

Non-verbal communication
(eye contact, smiling, laughing, touching, space)

Attitude to time
Gift giving

Marriage and courtship
Grieving

Emotional responses
Individual or Group

Task or relationship

******* there are other considerations*******
American Culture
Major Values

- Freedom
- Equality
- Individualism
- Optimism
- Directness
- Efficiency
- Respect for the law
- Future orientation
- Self-promotion

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Some Hispanic Cultural Values

- Familism
- Simpatia
- Respeto
- Gender issues
- Loyalty
- Power distance
- Time orientation

Amado Padilla

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Some Chinese Cultural Values

- Mianzi – face
- Guamxi – relationships, networking
- Kegi – politeness
- Inner and outer circles
- Renquing – reciprocity
- High appreciation for education
- Li and surface harmony
Language Barriers

- Cultural References
- Meaning nuances
- Slang
- Idioms
- Acronyms
- Different versions of English
- Accent
- There may be others

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Lost in Translation 😊

- Please leave your values at the front desk
- You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid
- Fly in leather – fly naked
- Nothing sucks like Electrolux
- “Borrow” is not “buy”
Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication
Speaking/Listening Tips

1. Do not shout
2. Enunciate clearly
3. Use simple, common English
4. Do not speak fast. Slow down.
5. Repeat main points
6. Do not rephrase, or rephrase only to simplify

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7. Work with written material or use pictograms
8. Be patient; use pauses
9. Check audience’s comprehension
10. Verify your comprehension
11. Ask to repeat the phrase
12. There are more tips
Some Tips for Active Listening

1. Nod, smile, maintain a pleasant expression
2. Confirm verbally
3. Support the speaker verbally and non-verbally
4. Use restating and pacing techniques

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Steps to confirm your understanding
(when a person is unclear or speaks with accent)

1. Use a confirming statement
2. Summarize key facts
3. Ask if your understanding is correct
4. Clarify misunderstandings (if necessary).

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Selected Cultural Tips

1. Colors can communicate
2. Flowers may mean different things
3. Gift giving etiquette varies
4. Some cultures use sarcastic humor
5. Acceptable personal space varies across cultures
How they say it with white

- In many European cultures white expresses innocence and purity. Very often it is associated with young love. It is the color worn at weddings.

- In contrast, in many Asian cultures white is color of mourning and death. It is the color worn at funerals.
Some Language Tips

1. Reduce potentially confusing phrases (idioms, acronyms, slang)

2. Understand that choosing a wrong word is a common mistake with non-native speakers

3. Realize that same concepts can have different interpretations in different cultures
4. Use LinguoClick$ to build relationships
   (these are words and phrases that connect and build relationships, see “thank you” in different languages)

5. Spell key words and proper names

6. Learn the correct pronunciation of the foreign name
The Naming Game

- Naming tradition varies across cultures
- To learn more about addressing etiquette across cultures, click below for my article on the subject
  
Translation Tips

- Picking a translator
- Back translation
- www.polytalk.info
How do you learn about cultures?
Use NARA™ formula

N  ●  Never assume
A  ●  Ask your students/customers/clients
R  ●  Relate to them on many levels
A  ●  Ask the expert
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Merci
Gracias
Думуюшьшук
Спасибо
Danke
ありがとうございます
Thank You