Their own best resources: Students and real-world interaction, observation, and reflection

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Abstract

Students can use their experiences outside the ESL classroom to facilitate their own learning of culture and communicative competency. In a course I continue to design, students prepare for real-world interactions and learning. They practice communication strategies and discuss topics largely of their own choosing in a multi-cultural context. They then go out into the community to make cultural and communicative observations, and interact with native- and non-native speakers of English. This IPP presents various definitions of culture and communicative competency and gives suggestions for in-class and real-world activities, including communication tasks, observations, and reflections through journal writing.

ERIC Descriptors

Second Language Learning
Communicative Competence (Languages)
English (Second Language)
Speech Communication

Methodology/Classroom Practices
Class Activities

Culture
Cultural Awareness
Intercultural Communication

Curricula/Programs
Curriculum Development

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CHAPTER I

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

Introduction

I remember standing at a hot, dusty roadside bus stop waiting for the village "song taew," two-bench bus, to arrive and take me home. Transportation in rural Thailand really wasn't so bad, just incredibly unpredictable, and for a relative newcomer, completely illogical.

"When does the bus come?" I asked using my limited vocabulary in the local language. The elderly woman in the faded floral sarong grinned, exposing her bright-red, betel-nut stained teeth, and responded, "Five minutes."

"Ok, five minutes. That's not so bad," I told myself. I stood next to her under the tree and waited. Five minutes pass. No bus.

"In one hour," said a slight young man draped like a wet washcloth over a metal chair in the hot shade. "In one hour, the bus will come."

Great. Another hour. Another hour of waiting in this intolerable heat. I decided I may as well try to get comfortable. I started with a Coke from the snack vendor who had set up shop under the same tree where the man in the metal chair dozed. "Where are you going?" the vendor asked. I told her.

"There is no bus today," she said.

"What? No bus?" I asked, stunned. She had obviously heard me ask the man sleeping next to us what time the bus was coming. And she had probably heard the betel-chewing grandma tell me the bus was coming in five minutes, too.

Now what? I had to get home. Before panic could set in, I sat with my Coke - served in a plastic bag - and tried to think of what to do next.

Beep, beep!

I looked up. The bus had arrived.

Many months after that episode and dozens like it, I was finally able to make some sense of what happened. The kindly Thais at the bus stop probably didn't know what time the bus was going to come but didn't want to disappoint me by saying "I don't know." Doing so would may have caused someone to lose face. Three people within earshot gave me different information. Why, then, hadn't the old woman corrected the vendor when she told me the bus wasn't coming that day?

Anyway, why did I expect them to know what time the bus was going to come? Why did I expect they were going to ride the bus? The odds they'd have reason to take that bus to my village were slim, the odds they had the money to ride the bus in the first place even slimmer. When I thought about it more, I remembered the bus stop was the only source of shade in the immediate area. It's perfectly understandable that they would be hanging around the shady bus stop.

It was also fair to say that my concept of time was much different than that of the Thais. For the average American, five minutes is not the same as one hour - not even in the ballpark. Maybe there isn't such a big difference for the people at the bus stop. After all, the bus will come when it comes.

It didn't matter that I was able to speak enough of the language to ask "When does the bus come?" and understand the responses. The interactions went beyond language, and I learned late in my two-year Peace Corps tour in Thailand that successful

communication also relies on an understanding of the culture - a classic Edward T. Hall case study in which communication and culture are intertwined in a complex mix of symbols, behaviors, messages, beliefs, and values.

This realization was something I came into largely on my own as I made a life for myself in Northeast Thailand. U.S. Peace Corps trainers had set me up for my assignment through cross-cultural training sessions. But it took real-life interactions and participation in the culture for their lessons to sink in. So it was with memories of these experiences and my work at an intensive English language school that I designed a Communication/Culture curriculum for international students of English as a Second Language.

My initial goal was to provide students with communication strategies for interactions with native English speakers and to impart to them an understanding of how culture colors their interactions. And while students need to function to some extent in an ESL environment, they can be encouraged to take advantage of their surroundings to improve their communication and language skills. Having taught the course now for about two years, I've incorporated more multi-cultural activities into classroom and real-life (out-of-classroom) tasks with the understanding that students will likely find themselves using English with people whose native language is not upper-Midwest English and whose culture is not Midwest, North American.

Ultimately, I strive to show students they are their own best resources in learning language and culture. One of the course goals is to prepare students to make their own observations within the community and to reflect on what they observe and experience. They're encouraged to participate in the culture or cultures around them and use their

interactions and experiences to guide them to a greater understanding of who they and the people around them are. It is hoped that through such experiential learning, students will make much progress toward communicative competence and cultural understanding and awareness.

IPP Organization/Notes to the Teacher

What follows is a curriculum designed for adult students in an advanced-level ESL classroom. These adults come from various cultural backgrounds, and English is the common language among them. Some lessons and activities may be adapted for a children's ESL, low-level adult ESL, or adult/children's EFL classroom. Lessons are thematically-based and employ in-class activities that prepare students for real-world interactions, observations, and reflection. Each lesson begins with a brief explanation of the theme and content.

To start, this paper looks at definitions of culture, communication and communicative competence, and the relationship among them within the areas of intercultural communication and English as an International Language. Next is a more detailed description of the advanced Communication and Culture course I designed including course goals and guidelines. I also explain my teaching context in more depth and introduce the adult students who study the course.

In-class activities are described next. These activities provide students opportunities to discuss U.S. culture, the cultures of their classmates, and their own cultures. Connections between culture and communication are made, and students work on fine-tuning communication skills which are critical toward developing communicative

competence in the ESL environment. We also look at students' backgrounds, student/teacher expectations, student participation in the curriculum, and how in-class activities lead to real-world interactions and learning. The experiential learning cycle is discussed since it provides the framework for course activities. Students are introduced active listening skills, self-awareness, and awareness of others. We also examine the difference between generalizations and stereotypes, and observations versus judgments.

In the real world, students are asked to complete communication, observation, and reflection tasks. Such tasks give information about the ESL culture and allow students to make connections between communication and culture, to practice their communication skills, to improve their competence in the language, and to make observations within the community. Students are asked to reflect on these through journaling. These tasks together are intended to show students they can be their own best teachers of culture and communication. They can draw from their own experiences and backgrounds to learn more about their own cultures and languages and develop a greater understanding of the language and culture they've come to the U.S. to learn. In this section, I also explain more about the ESL students' environment and the resources available to them.

The fourth and final section of the curriculum presents thematic lessons and activities used for in-class and real-world tasks. Each lesson contains principal lesson objectives and a detailed explanation of class and real-world activities. Handouts and other supplementary materials required for each lesson can be found in the appendix. Two video tapes are also part of this curriculum. One video tape contains clips from movies and TV programs and the other is an educational program about regional language and culture in the U.S. A bibliography completes this IPP.

Definitions of Culture, Communication, and Communicative and Intercultural Communicative Competence

As an ESL educator in the U.S., many students have asked me to explain what went wrong in their interactions with Americans and where the misunderstanding between them lies. They have been confused by what seem to be conflicting messages that largely arise out of cultural differences and perspectives. Why is it that when an American says "Let's have lunch some time," it doesn't necessarily mean they want to have lunch at all? Why are Americans so eager to help someone settle into a new home but later seem to ignore the newcomer? What does it really mean when a complete stranger on the bus compliments you? It is here that students can begin to see that communication and culture are connected, and they are often surprised at first how deep the connection can be. Insights derived from the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis tell us that, to some extent, "language, as a code, reflects cultural preoccupations and constrains the way people think" (Kramsch 1998, 13). Kramsch also notes the importance of context in complimenting the meanings encoded in the language, illustrating that culture can be expressed through the actual use of language (1998).

One of the goals of the advanced Communication/Culture course is to address the cultural nuances of North American English and the meanings and behaviors behind the words. Students come into the course with a high level of fluency and accuracy but generally lack the communicative competence required for more productive and meaningful interactions with native and non-native English speakers around them. The underlying message here is that it's one thing to learn, practice, and productively use English in a classroom. It's quite another to be expected to connect with those from the second language culture.

The class highlights the basic principles that guide students to greater communicative competence in the target culture while at the same time gaining an understanding, appreciation, and awareness of the target culture. And since we know that various cultures are represented within North American community, including the students' own classroom, emphasis is also given to understanding and appreciating other non-native English-speaking cultures using English as a common language. Teaching language and culture from an English as an International Language perspective will be discussed here, as well as the interconnected key principles behind the Communication/Culture course: culture, communication, intercultural communication, and communicative competence.

Culture

Anyone who has explored the study of culture and culture learning can tell you the definitions of culture are numerous and complex. Moran cites a few prevailing perspectives on culture: culture viewed as civilization, as communication/intercultural communication, as an arena where groups or communities interact, as a dynamic construction between and among people, and in terms of biology or evolutionary psychology (2001). Martin and Nakayama (1997) also present many views of culture – views that include the more traditional idea of "high and low culture." There are definitions of culture borrowed from ethnography. There are anthropological, psychological/social-psychological definitions of culture, including Geert Hofstede's definition of culture as a "programming of the mind" and as the "interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a human group's response to its environment"

(1984, 21). In *The Silent Language*, Edward T. Hall says, "Culture is a way of organizing life, of thinking and of conceiving the underlying assumptions about the family and the state, the economic system and even man himself" (1959, 46). Culture can be even be viewed as a "contested zone" which is a "crucial arena for understanding the struggles of various groups…as they attempt to negotiate their relationships and well-being within society" (Martin and Nakayama 1997, 49).

While all these views and definitions help us understand the nature of culture, "these definitions remain abstract, disconnected from the people who live in that culture and, more importantly, from the experience of participating in that culture" (Moran 2001, 13). Hall himself writes there is no way to *teach* culture in the same way that language is taught. It is something that must be experienced before we can begin to understand what we really communicate to people of a different culture (Hall 1959).

Generally, a researcher, or teacher in this case, will construct a framework from the vast number of approaches that attempt to define culture. I have done the same to create a framework appropriate for the Communication/Culture class. I find the definition of culture proposed by Lustig and Koester to be most applicable to the Communication/Culture curriculum. Culture is "a learned set of shared perceptions about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect behaviors of a relatively large group of people" (1993, 41). This definition is based on the assumption that "culture is learned, culture is perceptual and guides behavior, and culture emerges from the interpretations of shared symbol systems" (1993, 40).

In explaining their definition, Lustig and Koester point out that culture is learned from people with whom one interacts as he or she is socialized. And when people of the

same culture group share perceptions, an important link between culture and communication is established. “Cultures exist in the minds of people. The meanings of symbols are in the minds of the individual communicators; when those symbolic ideas are shared with others, the basis for culture exists” (1993, 42).

Let’s look now at definitions of communication, intercultural communication, and communicative competence, and their connection with culture.

Communication

What is communication? Martin and Nakayama note four characteristics that define communication.

1. Communication is a process, not a product.
2. Communication is a set of constructed meanings.
3. Communication involves the use of shared symbols.
4. Communication is both verbal and non-verbal (1997, 51-52)

Lustig and Koester offer a similar list and add two more characteristics: communication is contextual and transactional. There exists in human interactions a context or "settings" in which communication takes place. The physical context takes into account interactions that take place indoors or outdoors, in crowded or quiet settings, in public or private locations, in situations where the interactants are physically close together or far apart, in warm or cold, bright or dark settings. There are also social contexts to consider. Are people communicating in a very formal, businesslike setting or at a neighborhood block party?

The transactional characteristic of communication recognizes that the goal of communication may not only be to influence and persuade, but also to improve one's knowledge, to seek understanding, to develop agreements, and to negotiate shared meanings (Lustig and Koester 1993). Individual interactants' communicative goals may also vary. For example, one speaker's goal in an interaction may be to express an opinion while the other's goal is to use small talk to become acquainted with that person. In other words, participants in a communicative situation may have similar or very different goals, and these goals will vary depending on context and nature of the interaction.

The transactional model also recognizes that at any given moment, no one is just sending or receiving messages, and therefore there are no such entities as pure senders and pure receivers (Lustig and Koester 1993). Multiple messages are simultaneously being interpreted by all participants at all moments. "These messages include not only the meaning of the words that are said but also the meaning conveyed by the tone of voice, the types of gestures, the frequency of body movements, the motion of the eyes, the distances between people, the formality of the language, the seating arrangements, the clothing worn, the length of pauses, the words unsaid, and much more" (p. 31; taken from Everett M. Rogers and D. Lawrence Kincaid, *Communication Networks: Toward a New Paradigm for Research*, New York: Free Press, 1981). Perhaps this transactional characteristic is what Hall eludes to in *The Silent Language* (1959, 123): "Once we have begun to really understand another people by mastering their language, we will still find hidden barriers which separate one people from another."

Intercultural Communication

Communication, therefore, can be considered interpretive where one person in a communication interaction may not interpret the messages in exactly the same way as others do. "Indeed, during episodes involving intercultural communication the likelihood is high that people will not interpret the meaning of messages in a similar fashion" (Lustig and Koester 1993, 28). As people of non-native English speaking cultures come to rely more on English as a common means of communication, this notion of intercultural communication should be addressed. It's important for students in the Communication/Culture course to understand that "Intercultural communication is the process whereby one's culture affects interaction with a person from another culture…. When interacting with people from different cultures, one's tendency is to judge them according to one's own values, a tendency which often interferes with successful cultural adjustment and intercultural communication" (Levine and Adelman 1982).

Students can learn to identify the ways that culture influences a person's values, assumptions, and beliefs, and how they play out in communicating not only with native English speakers, but non-native speakers as well. Students in my class are reminded that although they are now living in the United States, the assumption cannot be made that everyone in the community is a native English speaker. Also, they are encouraged to take advantage of learning opportunities within their school community where English is used as a common language among students from as many as 30 countries. Also, students in an EFL setting can be made aware of the potential for communicating in English with business associates and other professionals, and tourists and other visitors to their home countries. Like students in an ESL setting, EFL learners may find themselves

interacting with native- and non-native speakers from many different backgrounds and cultures. The view that English is a language spoken in many cultures, sometimes as a native language, other times as an official language, or as a means of communication between people of non-native English speaking cultures, is the foundation of the English as an International Language (EIL) perspective. I'll address EIL and the approaches to viewing language and culture teaching and learning in a moment.

Communicative and Intercultural Communicative Competence

As one outcome for any course, competence may be broken down into various linguistic/cultural models. Moran outlines existing models and notes that models of competence are still evolving (2001, 111). Some emphasize language-and-culture learning, others more strongly emphasize language proficiency and communicative competence. Still others focus on the intercultural aspects of communicative and cultural competence. One of the most recent models is one posed by Byram who focuses on developing intercultural communicative competence (1997). His model differs from past competency models in that cultural understanding rather than behavioral adaptation may be a goal in language and culture learning and in interactions with native and non-native speakers in any cultural context. This course uses elements of several competency models, including Byram's. Throughout this IPP, I refer to this combination of elements simply as communicative competence where intercultural aspects are implied.

To communicate effectively with native and non-native English speakers, students need to develop some level of communicative competence. At my ESL institution, the use of the Communicative Approach in the classroom allows students to apply their

knowledge of target language forms, meanings, and linguistic functions in negotiating meaning. Since the goal of this approach is to bring students closer to becoming communicatively competent in the target language and culture, class activities are designed to show students how to use the language appropriate to a given social context. And since adapting behaviors may not be the ultimate goal from Byram's intercultural communicative competence perspective, students should at least be given opportunities to develop an understanding of communicative/cultural behaviors. Larsen-Freeman (1986, 131) notes that students "need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a (linguistic/grammatical) function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. They must be able to choose from among these the most appropriate form, given the social context and the roles of the interlocutors. They must also be able to manage the process of negotiating meaning with their interlocutors."

Second language research theory makes a clear distinction between linguistic competence and communicative competence, the first involving rules of a language and the latter involving the *how, when* and *where* in using those rules. We can refer to Lustig and Koester's contextual and transactional characteristics of communication as a basis for this distinction. While much of the focus is put on linguistic competence in the ESL/EFL classroom, researchers suggest that both competencies operate in every communication exchange. For purposes of this Communication/Culture course, this means students need to practice their communication skills in real-world situations and develop strategies to make themselves understood and functional in the English language environment.

English as an International Language

But as mentioned earlier, living in the U.S. for example doesn't necessarily mean that students will always find themselves in interactions with native English speakers or that the people they encounter were born or raised in the U.S. And it is hoped that students will develop communicative and cultural competence that will serve them after they return to their home countries or wherever they find themselves in interactions where English is spoken. The view of English as an International Language attempts to de-nationalize the language and raises the question "What language should we teach?" or perhaps "What English should we teach?" And since the connection between language and culture has been made, we could as easily ask "What culture should we teach?" As such, culture need not always be taught or presented from a Western perspective.

I also maintain there should be a balance of cultural activities that do not present only one version of culture. In other words, western and American cultures are not the only ones in which English is considered a native language. If we are to consider English a target language and to focus on a target culture, we might well consider Englishes and cultures outside, or inside the U.S., for that matter. Culture in India where English is considered a native language is vastly different in many respects from culture in Australia. Likewise, culture in the U.S.'s southern states varies greatly from culture in the northeast. Differences in accents and dialects of English are worth pointing out as well.

Students are encouraged to share and compare aspects of their languages and cultures with each other. They, as well as the teacher, serve as cultural informants. As long as there is a balance and sensitivity to diversity within English language and culture

learning, I believe we can "de-nationalize" the language and enable learners to communicate to others their own ideas and culture (McKay 2000).

McKay (2000, 8) makes the following suggestion: "If an international language, by definition, means that such a language belongs to no single culture, then it would seem that it is not necessary for language learners to acquire knowledge about the culture of those who speak it as a native language." Still, many argue, myself included, that language cannot be taught without some knowledge of the target culture. It depends on what the teacher considers the role of culture teaching to be. I take into consideration my students' goals and plans for staying in the U.S., and also their language and culture learning goals. This is why I ask students at the beginning of every session what culture topics they would like to address. I've found that generally students want to learn ways to get along better with and understand homestay families, native-English speaking conversation partners, professors, and American friends.

There are implications of teaching with an EIL focus, primarily the idea that those who learn an international language do not have to accept the norms of native English-speaking countries, therefore "the focus of language teaching needs to be on giving students knowledge about, rather than suggesting they accept, particular cultural values and beliefs" (McKay 2000, 8). McKay continues that for the ESL teacher, this calls for the recognition that there are students who would prefer to become bilingual but not necessarily bicultural even if they plan on living for an extended time in the target culture. Biculturalism here is defined as the assumption that a learner identifies with and accepts the beliefs, values, and practices of a particular culture (Byram 1998). This contrasts with interculturalism, which Byram defines as a knowledge of rather than

acceptance of another culture. Interculturalism is what I strive for in this course. As we will see later, there are a variety of activities that address this emphasis on interculturalism, while also serving those students who are interested in achieving a sort of biculturalism.

Another element of teaching EIL is the acknowledgment of the value of the learners' own cultures. "This emphasis on cultural content provides students with the opportunity to learn more about their own culture and to acquire the English to explain their own culture to others" (McKay 2000, 10). We do this largely through class discussion and culture journals.

Description of the Communication and Culture Course: Teaching Context, Goals and Guidelines

The lessons, in-class activities, and real-world activities are designed for adult ESL students living in a second-language culture. Clearly, they are at a tremendous advantage when it comes to second language acquisition and increasing their communicative competence. They're surrounded by native speakers and the target language culture. Note that the target language culture is complemented by other cultures that are as varied as the individuals who live and function in their community.

The EFL instructor, therefore, may need to adapt the materials presented here to their environment and their typically homogeneous student population. Teachers of elementary or secondary level ESL students may also wish to modify activities. Materials here may be well-suited for teachers in workplace ESL or for those teaching immigrant/refugee populations in the target culture.

The materials here have been designed and implemented for adult learners of ESL studying in an Intensive English Program. Classes are two days per week during a seven-week session. Each class is 100 minutes. The maximum number of students per class is 12.

The majority of students enrolled in the course have plans to study at a university in the U.S. Others study for professional reasons, where English proficiency and/or cross-cultural training is required for work in their home countries. Still others enroll during vacations to spend time studying English for personal reasons. Students study in the Intensive English Program from two to eight months, depending on their goals. By the time they reach the advanced level and the Communication/Culture course, most students are preparing to transfer to a U.S. university where they'll study a four-year undergraduate or 2-year graduate program.

It is clear from this there is an emphasis on teaching North American English and as well as cultural, communicative, and other issues as they pertain to American culture. I also take advantage of every opportunity to examine these in a multi-cultural/cross-cultural context by facilitating activities in which students discuss and share their cultures to promote awareness, understanding, and an appreciation for each other. And in an attempt to de-nationalize the language, I also make efforts to recognize variations among other world Englishes and note to students that they may use the language to communicate with native speakers from Indian, Australian, British, and South African cultures, for example.

The Communicative Approach is the dominant approach employed at the school. Teachers act largely as facilitators providing students with opportunities to learn to

communicate by communicating. There's much discussion in class, and students manage their own learning through challenging, doable tasks in a combination of pair, small group, and whole group activities. Activities, which include role plays, information gap, problem solving, choice, and feedback, use authentic materials, as do homework activities. Generally the focus is on fluency; issues of accuracy are addressed when students make repeated mistakes or when portions of the lesson dictate teacher or student correction.

Too often, students come to the ESL classroom expecting that all their language and cultural learning will come from the teacher and the in-class work itself. Some students come unaware of the resources that exist outside the classroom, and that language and culture learning can be done on one's own long after the class is finished. It's the teacher's job to make them aware of these resources and to enable them to become their own teachers of communication/communicative competence and culture.

Students come from a variety of cultures to study English in an ESL environment. They come into contact with homestay families, conversation partners, dormitory roommates, church groups, volunteer organizations, and friends. They have easy access to media, theater, movies, and music. They have ample opportunity to practice listening, speaking, and communication skills in English. They can observe, research, and participate in the culture. They have exposure to Western and some non-Western communication styles and often find themselves in social situations and interactions that require some basic knowledge of appropriate behaviors, norms and vocabulary in terms of register. Access to the target language and culture is at the crux of the course

curriculum, which means the TEFL teacher will have to adapt the goals, guidelines, and curriculum to their environment.

The Course: Overview and Goals

The advanced Communication/Culture class was created as a non-academic alternative to classes focusing on university preparation while at the same time adding a culture course to the curriculum. My goal was to broaden the scope of our previous American culture courses into a multi-cultural/cross-cultural one that also centers on the cultures of the students in the classroom.

In addition, we wanted to meet students' requests for an "American Culture" class, which had not been offered for a few years. Previous culture classes had sole emphasis on U.S. culture and English used by native-born speakers. I wanted to design a course that acknowledges the diversity within U.S. culture and considers the notion of English as an International Language.

The first step in designing any course is to come up with goals and guidelines. The goals for this class are:

- to improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to develop strategies for listening and speaking that help students become resources for themselves
- to become familiar with forms of non-verbal communication

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes
- to understand where stereotypes come from and how they affect perceptions of culture and language
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

As the course name and goals suggest, the focus is on two areas: communication and conversation practice with an emphasis on communicative competence, and cross-cultural exchange. Students learn about American culture as well as each other's cultures through in-class communication activities and through interviews, conversations, and interactions and experiences outside the classroom. It's assumed that students coming into the class are ready to communicate extensively with native and non-native English speakers and each other at a more sophisticated level, so greater emphasis is put on fine-tuning conversation skills and developing strategies for listening, speaking, and interaction. Students are introduced to the skill of observation, the idea being that once the class is over they will be their own teachers of communication and culture.

I make a point of explaining to students that language and culture are connected, and without understanding some aspects of culture, it's difficult to understand nuances of the language and how people use language within their culture. I also emphasize the importance of participating in the culture/community outside the school environment. Students will get more out of the course if they are given tasks that put them in social

situations and cross-cultural interactions where the target language is used and where they can participate and make observations.

Again, students are made aware that this class doesn't focus only on American culture. However, there are lessons and activities based on learning more about American culture and how it fits into the students' experiences of living in the U.S. Since students see the culture in which they live through the eyes of their own culture, relating American culture to the students' cultures is critical. Here is where self-awareness activities in the form of culture journals come in. Students use their journaling to relate their language and culture learning experiences to their own language and culture. Often they are asked to use their journal entries as the basis for pair or small group discussion.

Class activities hinge mainly on discussion in pairs and small groups, and the teacher acts mainly as a facilitator. There is no book for the class, so the teacher can choose topics for discussion or the students can give input into the curriculum at the beginning of every session. I've generally asked students to come up with a list of cultural themes or topics they want to address during the session (Example lists are on pages 146-148 in the appendix). This makes the class slightly different every session, providing variety for the teacher and students who may decide to take the course again.

As mentioned earlier, this course was designed as a non-academic alternative to intensive university preparation classes. Prior to offering the Communication/Culture course, our school had few elective-type offerings that enabled students to balance their overall workload. In other words, we wanted to provide a course for students who a) were university bound but needed a less intensive course to balance out their rigorous university-prep work, and b) had finished the university-prep courses in the school

curriculum and needed to study at our school until they gained admission into a U.S. university. Also, we have a fair number of students who are not university bound. This course is one more option open to these non-academic track students. While not considered a university prep course in an "academic" sense, the Communication/Culture class is one that involves teaching methods, techniques, and goals that distinguish it as a non-academic course at our school. Still, students are expected to participate in this course as rigorously as they would a traditional university preparation course.

No tests are required for this class, although this is up to the teacher. Assessment is based on class participation, thoughtful and thorough completion of homework, and progress toward meeting the goals above. Students are expected to fully participate in class discussions and pair/group work. This includes asking questions that go beyond what's on paper or what the teacher contributes. Attendance is critical in that students who are absent often clearly can not participate as required. Students may be advised the first day of a teacher-created attendance policy if one is not already in place at the school.

CHAPTER II

IN THE CLASSROOM

The Students, Their Backgrounds, and Student/Teacher Expectations

Adult students participating in this course come from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures. Wherever possible, I give students opportunities to draw from these during in-class and real-world activities. Some students are surprised to find out how much they already know about cultural and communicative characteristics or differences that exist within their own cultures. I ask students early in the course to think about their preconceptions of and experiences with the U.S. and the English language before coming to our school to study. My goal in doing this is to dispel the notion that the teacher is the sole informant about culture and communication issues. Students need to see they are key informants too and that everyone in class (and beyond the class once the session is over) can become resources for themselves and each other. Therefore, students need to understand the course focuses not only on U.S. or native-English speaking cultures, but those of all participants in class. Also emphasized early in the course are the connections between communication and culture. Again, many students come to class unaware that culture colors what we say, or don't say in the case of non-verbal communication; so learning English (or any other language for that matter) involves more than just acquiring vocabulary and grammatical proficiency. It involves competence, and Moran notes there are varying degrees or levels of competence that "emphasize learners' development of appropriate cultural behaviors – verbal and nonverbal means of expression and communication" (2001, 110). He states that

development of communicative competencies assumes the learners' involvement and interaction with members of the target culture. "To be competent, learners need to be able to interact and communicate both effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures" (2001, 110-111).

For students to discuss cultural and communicative topics in some depth, it's expected by this level they have the ability to carry on simple conversations and lead discussions. Students are strongly encouraged to listen and respond appropriately to each other during pair/small group/whole group work. Students at this level should go beyond the "I ask/you answer" line of questioning. The teacher may need to model what it means to ask deeper questions. For example, it's not enough for a student to ask their classmate, "How do people greet each other in your country?" without also asking questions like, "Why can't you shake a woman's hand in your culture? What's the difference between greeting an old friend and greeting someone you meet for the first time?" In cases where students do not meet these expectations, the teacher may have to provide activities that improve students' basic communication and discussion skills, including asking and answering probing questions and building conversations around such questions.

Student-Guided Curriculum: Choosing Culture and Communication Topics

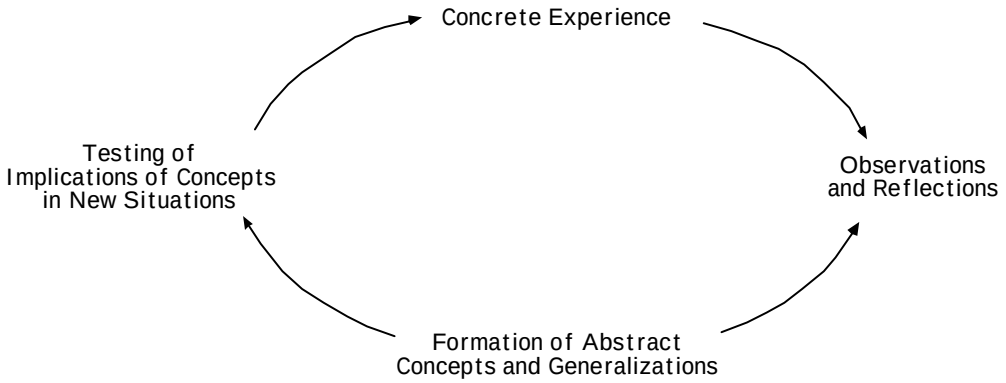
Since a goal of the course is to encourage students to become their own best resources, I ask them to choose cultural themes they want to explore during the session. During the second or third class, each student compiles a list of topics. Then I narrow their lists to one that can reasonably be covered during a 7-week session. I also incorporate communicative topics I feel are important to fulfilling course goals. Giving

students this type of input into the curriculum creates a sense of ownership in the class, making students feel personally invested in the course. This generally means more work for the teacher who must create new lessons from session to session to accommodate student topic requests. The pay-off is that it keeps teachers fresh in developing new, creative lessons and activities, and students can repeat the class with the knowledge that at least some of the material will be new the next time around. Example topic lists are in the appendix.

In-Class Activities and the Experiential Learning Cycle

In this course, in-class activities act as a springboard for real-world interactions and observations so that students can use them to learn more about language and culture. My rationale is based on the experiential learning cycle, which David Kolb describes as a four-step process (1984). Learners may enter the cycle at any point, but the process could begin where immediate concrete experience is the basis for observation and reflection. These observations are assimilated into a 'theory' or generalizations from which learners experiment with new ideas in new situations. These new implications or hypotheses then serve as guides in acting to create new experiences (Kolb 1984). So, for learners of culture and communication, for example, this might mean introducing students to the topic of "small talk", and practicing and discussing it in the classroom. Students may then be asked to use small talk in the real world. After each small talk encounter, students write observations and reactions to their experiences with English speakers and share them with their classmates. This helps them make generalizations about the use of language and the cultural aspects of small talk. From here, students are

encouraged to continue to use and experiment with small talk as a way to start conversations with English speakers. This provides a foundation for students to experience small talk in new situations and continue through the experiential learning process, making new observations and generalizations, and experimenting with language and culture.



*Kolb 1984.

Activities Addressing Culture and Cultural Themes

Generally, I've selected cultural themes from student-generated lists and introduced each theme through pair/small group discussions, class surveys, short quizzes that assess students' prior knowledge of a cultural topic, and other interactive tasks. For the topic of entertainment and leisure, students may discuss the following questions:

*What do you consider to be leisure time: any time you are not working, weekends only, vacation time, holidays?

*Who do you generally spend your leisure time with in your country? In the U.S.?

*Do you prefer indoor or outdoor activities? Explain.

*What are some typical leisure time activities for: teenagers, people ages 20-30, elderly people in your country?

*What do you think are some typical leisure time activities for: teenagers, people ages 20-30, elderly people in the U.S.? What makes you say this?

After discussion, the teacher can bring in materials of cultural interest related to the topic. These might include movie/video clips, clips of TV programs (i.e. news program, talk show, sitcom), newspaper/magazine articles, photographs, realia, or any other materials that provide a cultural framework around the topic. In the case of leisure time, students and I set up a tent in the classroom and conducted discussions inside the tent. We talked about camping as a popular activity, examined camping equipment, and ate s'mores, a popular snack eaten by U.S. campers.

For other topics, it's a good idea to bring in speakers or take students outside of the classroom to experience and observe aspects of culture, whether in an ESL or EFL setting. Some possibilities are eating at a cafeteria or restaurant, taking a tour of a school, business, or museum exhibit, and attending community events. One of my classes attended a volunteer fair where students were asked to talk with representatives of two to three volunteer agencies of their choice. Their goal was to use their English communication skills to collect information about the agencies and learn more about the spirit of volunteerism in the community. A secondary goal was to perhaps find a volunteer position with one of the agencies or at least stimulate interest in doing so. By venturing out into the community (or by bringing the community into the classroom via guest speakers), students are encouraged to make their own observations and draw their own conclusions about culture rather than be told, "This is how Americans do things.

This is what American culture is." Students may be asked to make observations and draw conclusions about a cultural topic in pair and small group discussions or in their culture journals, which are explained below.

After completing a real-world task, such as interviewing English speakers about leisure time, students share information they gathered or observed with classmates in pairs or small groups, then report to the whole group about their discussions. As a group, then, we can make generalizations that lead to further experimentation and inquiry in the real world.

Communication Practice and Skills/Building Communicative Competence

The greater focus on the communication component of the course comes in through discussion of cultural themes, fine-tuning communication skills, and practicing these skills while completing homework assignments. Having done some kind of real-world activity, students come to class for pair, small group, and whole group discussions. Building communicative competence is also a focus as the class explores verbal and nonverbal cultural behaviors and skills.

Discussion of cultural themes

As mentioned earlier, students are expected to converse with each other, assuming roles as active listeners and asking probing questions that encourage further exploration into cultural topics. In one lesson, students examine the characteristics of effective active listeners who do the following: show understanding, show support or empathy, give an emotional response, elaborate on what the speaker says, and request information

or clarification from the speaker (Anderson and Gallow 2001). The idea is to support the speaker as s/he relates cultural experiences, makes observations about them, expresses feelings or opinions, and formulates new questions. Listeners are playing a crucial role in the speaker's movement through the experiential learning cycle. At the same time, students are engaging in activities that lead to what Moran calls culture-specific and culture-general understanding outcomes. Such outcomes "engender and guide cultural content and learning activities," and in discussing cultural themes, students not only acquire information about the target culture and their classmates' cultures, but "also develop the ability to make valid cultural explanations based on this information" (Moran 2001, 109). Where primary learning activities here consist of simulations, real-world experiences or interactions, and awareness inventories, "learners end up identifying perspectives from their own cultures, which they contrast with those of other cultures" (2001, 110).

Fine-tuning communication skills

Students may give input into the kinds of communication skills they want to practice most. Past classes have chosen to focus on developing skills for starting a conversation while others have asked for practice sustaining a conversation. Communication skill-building might begin with an explanation of the parts of a conversation. I follow a model that presents a conversation as having five parts: a greeting, starting a conversation, sustaining a conversation, closing a conversation, and saying goodbye (Barber 2001).

Once students identify areas they want to practice, the teacher can design simulations or role plays that give students in-class practice. Generally, I've designed activities that address all five steps of a conversation, noting to students that not all conversations follow these steps or follow them in sequence. A discussion of non-verbal communication is critical since it plays a large role in the way native- and non-native English speakers communicate. For example, some Americans hug when they greet each other. And when they close a conversation, they slowly move away from the person they're speaking with to show they have to go and can't continue to talk. It's important once again for students to note the differences in communication styles of native/non-native English speakers and students' own communication styles. By observing differences, students come to a greater understanding of the messages they are sending (or receiving) when communicating in English and how they can improve their communicative competence within the English-speaking community.

Practicing communication in homework assignments

To complete real-world tasks, students are expected to communicate with native- or non-native English speakers or to interact in some way within the community. These tasks call upon students to use their English speaking and listening skills and/or make observations about the non-verbal and cultural characteristics of language. More about real-world tasks follows in the next chapter.

Building Communicative/Intercultural Communicative Competence

This particular course began as one focusing on general communicative competence, in which students work toward language skills for effective and appropriate communication within cultural contexts of the target language and culture (Moran 2001). But it has since evolved into one with a more intercultural bent. While the ESL environment presents opportunities to explore American culture and practice American English, it is also understood that students may interact with people from other cultures and native languages. Anywhere English is used as a common language, students will benefit from having developed intercultural communicative competence, an outcome that includes cultural understanding and identity (Byram 1998).

In class, we focus on behaviors as well as developing cultural understanding. In a lesson on greetings, students demonstrate and explain casual and formal greetings to their classmates, discussing both verbal and nonverbal elements of such interactions. They then practice greetings more typical of those used by Americans. It is hoped that by understanding the message communicated by a firm handshake and practicing appropriate behaviors for meeting a professor or business associate, for example, students' interactions will be more effective and successful. We also discuss the issue of hugging when greeting friends or family in more casual contexts in order to better understand how Americans express themselves in close relationships. More classroom activities pertaining to communicative or intercultural communicative competence appear in Chapter 4.

Learning to Observe: Observation vs. Judgment

As mentioned above, students are encouraged to learn through participation and observation within the ESL community. Kolb states that learners, if they are to be effective, need four different kinds of abilities representing each stage of the experiential learning cycle: concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities, and active experimentation abilities (1984). Having participated fully, openly, and without biases in new experiences, learners "must be able to reflect on and observe their experiences from many perspectives" (1984, 30). Assignments that call on them to make reflective observations not only provide opportunities to participate in the real world, but also encourage students to take charge of their learning through first-hand observation. Through this, students become their own resources for culture and communication learning long after the course is over.

Some time is spent early in the course discussing what it means to observe and how it differs from making judgments. In one of the first in-class activities, students examine the values, assumptions, and beliefs characteristic of their cultures. As explained later in the lessons section of this IPP, students understand that they view the U.S. and other cultures through the "glasses" of their own. These glasses can lead to judgments which then lead to stereotypes, biases, or other false assumptions. Students participate in several class activities that show the difference between observation and judgment and discover how useful observation skills are to facilitate learning. Students are also encouraged to make statements that are non-judgmental, enabling them to make observations about American and other cultures in a fair, positive, and productive

manner. And in following the principles of the experiential learning cycle, students will enhance their ability to participate in the real world without bias in their new experiences.

Self Awareness and Awareness of Others, Cultivating an Atmosphere of Respect, and Learning in Community

The emphasis on active listening, on making non-judgmental statements, and on using observations rather than judgments and stereotypes to learn culture and language contributes to greater self awareness and awareness of others. This awareness, I believe, encourages valuable lifelong learning in any culture and can foster an atmosphere of respect in and out of the classroom. Hall refers to this type of awareness as a means of gaining cultural knowledge. "Culture hides much more than it reveals, and strangely enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its own participants. The real job is not to understand foreign culture but to understand our own. The ultimate reason for such study is to learn more about how one's own system works" (Hall 1959, 30). According to Byram (1998), a major element of effective intercultural communicative competence are attitudes toward people perceived as different in terms of the cultural meanings, beliefs, and behaviors they exhibit. These attitudes "need to be attitudes of curiosity and openness, of readiness to suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to others' meanings, beliefs, and behaviours. There also needs to be a willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviours, and to analyse them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (1997, 34).

Often overlooked is knowledge of one's own cultural system, say Lustig and Koester (1993, 71), "Yet the ability to attain intercultural competence may be very closely linked to this kind of knowledge. Knowledge about your own culture will help

you to understand another culture." They add, "…if people are able to understand how and why they interpret events, it is more likely that they would be able to select alternative interpretations and behaviors that will be more appropriate and effective when interacting in another culture" (71).

Class activities, therefore, often pose questions to students about their cultures and the beliefs, values, and behaviors that characterize them. While answers to such questions lead to much comparison of one culture to the other, the true purpose is to heighten students' awareness of who they are and what their cultural glasses allow them to see. Through reflective journaling and other in-class and homework tasks, students may expand the depth of their cultural and communicative vision.

All this lends itself well to establish a sense of community that nurtures individual needs, and in this case, language and culture learning. In describing the characteristics of the learning community among teachers examining their practice, Claryce Evans in Harvard Educators' Forum Handbook says, the role of a group is to help each person define a question and carry out an investigation which will help him/her learn more about his/her teaching (1991, 11). I believe this same philosophy can be applied to any learning situation, and for students in the Communication/Culture course, the process of examining culture and language in a nurturing community of peers aids the student in becoming more aware of his/her goals, purposes, knowledge, thinking, feelings, confusions, questions, and assumptions.

CHAPTER III

IN THE REAL WORLD

The Student's Environment/Student Needs and Goals for Cultural Learning and Communicative Competence in the Real World

Students in an ESL environment must function and participate to some extent in their community. Adult learners at my school live with homestay families, in dormitories with U.S. university students, and in apartments. To establish a home, no matter how temporary, students find themselves in a variety of communicative situations from setting up telephone service in their dorm room to interacting daily with their homestay families to negotiating subleases with apartment managers. Their relationships also extend to conversation partners - who are most often native English speakers - church groups, tutors, classmates and other people they meet. Students learn the city bus system, use the post office, shop in department stores and supermarkets, socialize in bars, and watch American films in local theaters. They are immersed in the target language and culture and, therefore, should start developing a certain degree of communicative competence once they reach an advanced level of language proficiency.

While one could argue it's not necessary to develop communicative competence to get by in the target culture, Ned Seeyle (1975, 21) points out, "In the final analysis, no matter how technically dexterous a student's training in the foreign language, if he avoids contact with native speakers of that language and if he lacks respect for their world view, of what value is his training? Where can he put it to use? What educational breadth has it inspired?" He suggests the teacher act as a bridge from one cognitive system to

another, making students aware of the elements that make up communicative competence like proxemics, eye contact, humor, appropriate topics and staying or straying from them.

Byram supports this view stating students are not expected to “become” Americans and deny their individuality and own culture to use English and to participate in and learn culture (1997). Therefore, "The basic aim of a language class is to have the student learn to communicate in the foreign language. ...Much misunderstanding in the profession concerning the degree of effort to get the student to act like natives is the result of confusing the ability to communicate accurately and the attitudes dictated by the foreign mores. There should be no controversy about the aim of accurate communication, and this includes understanding the culturally based mores of the target people, but does not necessarily include professing or internalizing them" (Seeyle 1975, 21).

Most often, students come to class expecting to improve their communication skills. They also expect to learn something about the culture in which they’re living and to better understand their interactions with both native- and non-native English speakers. For example, the majority of students planning to study in U.S. colleges and universities realize the importance of being able to communicate effectively with their American and international peers. They are curious about how the U.S. education system and class dynamics work. Fortunately, I’ve found most students motivated to learn language and use it in their interactions outside the classroom. This motivation, which includes emotions and intentions, is one of the ingredients for achieving intercultural competence, according to Lustig and Koester (1993). They say intentions are the goals, plans, objectives, and desires that focus and direct behavior, and these intentions are often

affected by stereotypes, which reduce the number of choices and interpretations a person is willing to consider. Intentions must be positive and accurate to enhance intercultural competence.

Knowledge and actions are two other necessary ingredients for effective intercultural competence, according to the authors. Knowledge is the information you need to have about the people, the context, and the norms of appropriateness that operate in a specific culture. Actions refer to "the actual performance of those behaviors that are regarded as appropriate and effective. Thus, you can have the necessary information, be motivated by the appropriate feelings and intentions, and still lack the behavioral skills necessary to achieve competence" (Lustig and Koester 1993, 72). For purposes of this course, the teacher and students can provide and exchange cultural knowledge and make each other aware of appropriate actions in given contexts. Ultimately, learners decide to what extent they will adopt such actions or behaviors.

The Real World as a Resource: In-class Activities Applied in Communicative, Observation, and Reflection Tasks/The Communication and Culture Connection

In addition to improving communication skills and providing cultural knowledge, in-class activities are intended as springboards to real-world interactions with native and non-native speakers and to provide opportunities for observation and reflection. Homework may consist of interviews, short readings, observations, and written responses in the form of a culture journal. Interviews about topics related to class are encouraged, especially since not all members of the ESL community have the same perception of culture as the teacher. The teacher may provide a list of interview questions, or students can brainstorm questions together. From a lesson regarding cultural and language

differences within the U.S., students were asked to interview a number of Wisconsinites about commonly held stereotypes and impressions of people from other areas of the country. From a lesson on race in the U.S., students interviewed conversation partners, dormmates, and other Americans on their ideas about the state of race relations today. And from a class activity discussing ways to carry on and extend a conversation, students asked English speakers what strategies they use to continue conversations with people they know well and people they have just met.

Observation tasks might require students to listen to and observe Americans in specific contexts (i.e. at the bus stop, at the restaurant, greeting each other on the street). Again, students may begin such a task with a list of questions to answer in writing, or they may be asked to take notes on what they see and hear and then use these notes to write a culture journal entry. Having already discussed popular culture in the U.S. and abroad during in-class activities, students were asked to make observations of what people wear in various social settings. A lesson in Chapter 4 shows in more detail the types of observations they made and how they were to reflect on those observations. Another observation/communication task addresses the skill of closing a conversation. Students were asked to listen to and observe conversations around them and note how speakers wind up a conversation and take leave. Then, they practice leave-taking themselves with others in the English-speaking community. Later, in their culture journals, students commented on their experiences with this type of interaction. In addition to these real-world activities, students may also be asked to read some short texts related to cultural or communication topics. Students may respond in writing to the reading homework and/or discuss the content of the text in class the next day.

A guiding force behind real-world activities is the idea that we all bring our own personal characteristics and identities to interactions with others. Byram also adds knowledge of self and other, skills of interpreting and relating, political and critical cultural awareness, and skills of discovery and/or interacting to those things that contribute to intercultural communicative competence (1998). Of the skills required to build knowledge and understanding of culture, "The skill of discovery is the ability to recognize significant phenomena in a foreign environment and to elicit their meanings and connotations, and their relationship to other phenomena" (Byram 1998, 38). Since this skill is especially useful for learners who have direct contact with people of another country or culture, real-world activities enable students to make their own discoveries, leading to independent learning during and after the course. Such social interaction involves the ability to manage constraints of perceptions and attitudes of participants in interactions. The learner needs to draw on "existing knowledge, have sensitivity to others with sometimes radically different origins and identities, and operate the skills of discovery and interpretation" (Byram 1998, 38). Real world activities provide students with new experiences and knowledge, and with opportunities to test theories and make generalizations about culture and language. Reflection in culture journals allows students to process all this and share their findings and ideas with others.

The emphasis on using culture journals and follow-up in class discussions is a critical element of the course since a major goal is to get students involved in the experiential learning process. Kolb points out that experience doesn't necessarily lead to learning unless it is related to reflection and analysis (1984). I make this objective clear to students at the beginning of the course and point out that reflective journaling and

discussion not only contribute to a greater learning experience during the course, but also give them the tools to be life-long, independent learners of culture and language.

Of course, the process of acquiring knowledge of another culture, especially when one participates in that culture, requires a certain amount of language competence. Byram (1998, 71) notes that someone with intercultural communicative competence is one who "is able to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language…. Their knowledge of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately – sociolinguistic and discourse competence – and their awareness of the specific meanings, values and connotations of the language." From in-class activities, for example those centered on the steps of a conversation, students at this advanced level use and practice language appropriate to given social contexts. A lesson on closing a conversation asks students to listen to and observe English speakers winding down conversations. Students take notes and answer a short list of questions about verbal and nonverbal characteristics. They then examine how they bring their own conversations to a close in different social contexts with classmates, homestay family members, friends, and acquaintances. Again, they take notes and complete a journal entry about their experiences with this aspect of communication.

In terms of participating in and observing culture in the ESL environment, learners should be equipped with "the means of accessing and analyzing any cultural practices and meanings they encounter" (Byram 1998, 19). Students should be made aware of the existence of a dominant culture and of the many social groups present in their environment. During a visit to a museum featuring an exhibit on Wisconsin culture, students were introduced to historical events and cultural symbols that have long

characterized the state. But students were also asked to observe which social groups were not represented in the exhibit and how cultural symbols have evolved during the state's history. Students noted in their culture journals and later discussed how Native Americans and recent immigrants were not featured, or featured positively, in the exhibit. An in-class follow up activity asked students to consider how social groups in their cultures may be marginalized, and in doing so, students examine their attitudes about such groups. Some students find they want to reassess they way they look at various culture groups in their home countries as well as culture groups in the ESL community.

CHAPTER IV

LESSONS FOR IN-CLASS AND REAL-WORLD ACTIVITIES

Overview

This chapter provides lessons for in-class and real-world activities for students in the advanced Communication/Culture course. Each lesson contains a brief description of in-class and real-world activities related to a cultural and/or communicative theme. Principal objectives taken from the course goals outlined in Chapter 1 are indicated and followed by a more detailed explanation of class and real-world activities. Handouts and other supplementary materials required for each lesson can be found in the appendix. Two video tapes also accompany the IPP. One contains clips from movies and TV programs; the other is "American Tongues," a program that explores regional language and culture in the U.S.

Lessons contained here are designed for classes that meet for 100 minutes twice a week over a seven-week session. I have not used all the lessons during the seven-week program since students have some input on what cultural or communicative topics they want to discuss during the course. However, I typically use the first four lessons to start every session because they lay the groundwork to meet course goals. Although lessons that appear afterward can be used in any sequence depending on student/teacher preferences, there are some instances where it's more effective to use one lesson before another. I indicate where these occur in the lesson descriptions. For example, the Steps of a Conversation should be taught in sequence, yet lessons focusing more on cultural themes can be interspersed among the "Steps" lessons.

While the lessons outline themes, objectives, in-class activities, and real-world activities, it is up to the ESL/EFL teacher to adapt them to their teaching context. The lessons here are meant to serve as a guide to developing and teaching a course focused on improving communicative competence, namely intercultural communicative competence, and greater understanding of self and other cultures through observation, reflection, and participation in the real world.

Lessons

Lessons for the Advanced Communication/Culture course follow from pages 44-145. Handouts for in-class and real-world activities can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 146.

Lesson: Day 1

Description: Students introduce themselves and receive an introduction of the course and its goals. A ice-breaker interview is used at the beginning of class. Later, the teacher guides students into a discussion about culture. Students explore their own cultures by creating poster lists.

Principal Objectives:

- to develop strategies for listening and speaking that help students become resources for themselves
- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes

In-Class Activities

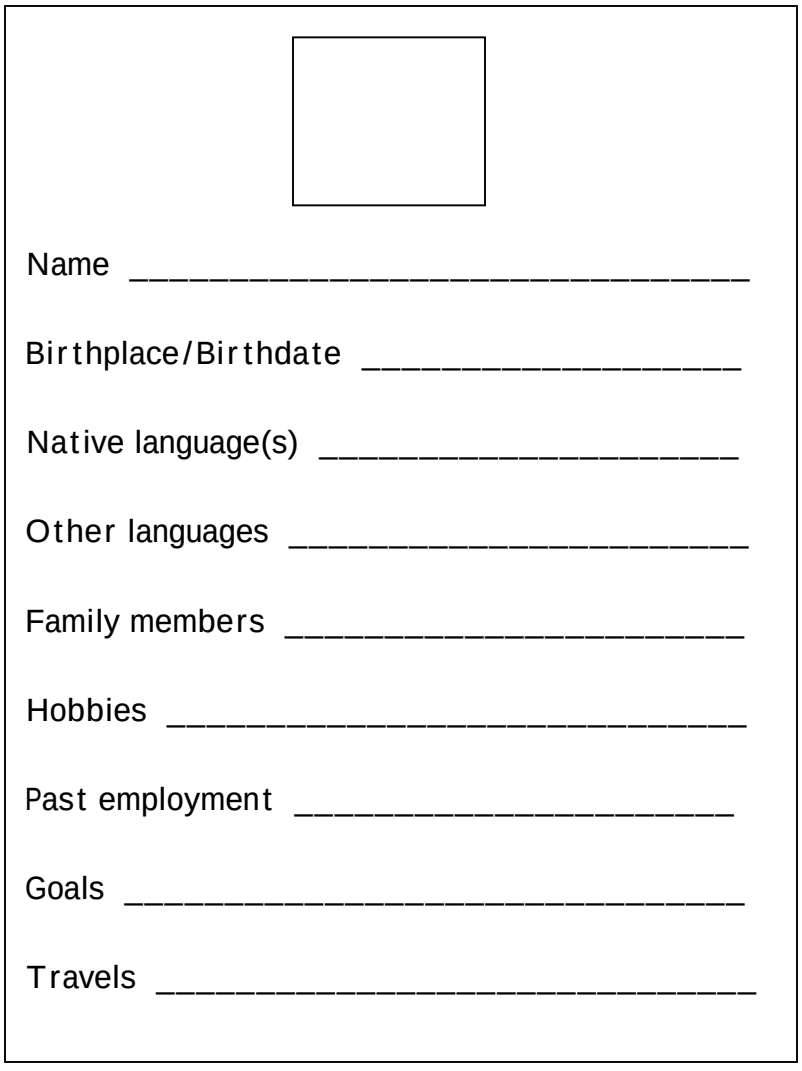
1) Introductions

Students introduce themselves to the class including name, country, and one thing they believe is important to know about their culture. Students write their names on the blackboard in English and their native language. Make world maps available so students can locate classmates' home countries.

2) Syllabus

Provide a syllabus or course description for students. A sample syllabus is on page 149 of the appendix.

3) In pairs or small groups, students interview each other, filling in the following form, which also appears in the appendix on page 150. Ask students to bring a photo of themselves to class to attach to the top of the form. Display forms in the classroom throughout the session.



4) What is culture?

Discuss this question as a whole group. Students try to define culture and answer the following questions:

What levels of culture exist within the same country, region, institution, etc.?

How are language and culture connected?

What are characteristics of your culture and native language?

Record students' responses on the blackboard and guide them into an examination of their cultures.

5) Culture brainstorm

Students brainstorm words, phrases, or ideas that characterize their cultures and languages. When possible, group students by country of origin. Provide a model list of characteristics of his/her culture. If you and students share the same culture, provide just a few examples to get students going. Characteristics of American culture and language might include: cowboys; rock and roll music; designer names: Hilfiger, Nike, Levis; fatty, fast foods; healthy, organic foods; American football; diverse religious backgrounds; informality; independence; direct communication style; Disney World. Students write their ideas on poster paper which should be displayed in the classroom throughout the session. Each student or group presents their poster to the class. Classmates are free to ask questions.

An alternative to student/small group presentations is to collect all posters prior to displaying them. Follow up with in-class activity #1, Day 2.

Real World Activities

None

Lesson: Day 2

Description: Students follow up their lists of cultural characteristics and poster presentations by focusing on core values of their cultures. Students present and discuss these values. These plus cultural information on posters form the "cultural glasses" through which students see other cultures. Students then complete a word association activity to see how American English is influenced by culture. Students are assigned their first culture journal.

Principal Objectives:

- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to develop strategies for listening and speaking that help students become resources for themselves

In-Class Activities

1) If students have not presented and displayed posters completed Day 1, do the following: Give each student a slip of paper with the name of a home country of one of their classmates. Students have 5-10 minutes to write everything they know about their classmate's country. Make it clear that students do not have to share or publicize their notes.

Then, individual students or small groups formed the previous day present their posters. The posters are displayed, and students ask questions of the presenters. Students compare the notes they wrote about their classmates' countries to the information provided on the posters and during the presentation. Students often find they have stereotypes or incorrect information about their classmates' cultures. Encourage students to set goals to understand where stereotypes come from and to acquire cultural information in a non-judgmental way. (This activity adapted from Gaston, 1984)

2) Next, examine cultural values. Again, put students in like-culture groups if possible, or ask them to work individually to create a list of values characteristic of their cultures. Give students a few example values or a model list to get them started. For example, American values might include: independence, opportunity, individuality, self-expression/free speech, directness, family, education, religious freedom, hard work, self-sufficiency. When students finish, put them in small groups where at least two cultures are represented. Students briefly present all values listed, but explain one value in greater depth. In large group, ask students to report what they learned from their classmates.

At this point, explain that culture, language, and values make up the "cultural glasses" that affect how we see others. We use these to try to make sense of things and to find our place in the world, a new environment, or in interactions with others. But they can also lead to stereotypes and cultural misunderstandings. Emphasize that one of the goals of the course is for students to learn about their own cultures as well as those of their classmates and the one in which they currently live (if students are in an ESL

environment). To better understand one's culture encourages greater learning and appreciation of other cultures and languages. Values lists may be attached to the posters created the previous day so they may be referred to later in the course.

3) To illustrate how language and culture are tied together, distribute the Word Association handout that appears on page 151 in the appendix (The answers appear on page 152.). Explain that language reveals something about a culture. The word clusters on the handout reflect cultural characteristics of the U.S.

Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to read each word cluster and write in the blank what the words have in common. Once students have finished, check answers as a whole group while also clarifying or explaining new vocabulary. It's useful to bring in pictures of the following: U-Haul, Mount Rushmore, the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial**,** a Holiday Inn hotel, a Winnebago, some lottery tickets or scratch-off cards, and a U.S. map. Many of these can be downloaded from the Internet.

Explain to students that although all words in the clusters are English, they hold special meanings for members of U.S. culture. There are also words that characterize particular regions of the country. For example, those from warmer U.S. climates may know what a "snow bird" is, but the average Minnesotan may not.

Real World Activities

Culture journal writing – Explain to students this is the first in a series of journals to be completed during the session. The purpose of culture journals is to allow them to make observations and participate in the culture(s) around them. Writing to respond to given questions, to make observations, and to reflect on experiences is important to language and culture learning, not just during the course, but also after.

Culture journals will be used in subsequent classes to generate discussion, promote sharing of ideas, and encourage further reflection. The teacher should collect and read all journals which may be used as a form of dialogue between teacher and student. Generally, I have posed questions at the end of journal entries that help students look at culture in a different way or reflect more deeply on an experience or observation. Unless written grammar or spelling interfere greatly with meaning, I don't heavily indicate errors in journals. However, I mark journals where mistakes in content lead to cultural misunderstanding. I also find it useful to correct errors in vocabulary usage, especially where idiomatic expressions and slang are used.

Assign one of the following culture journal topics. You may give students the option to choose between them.

Cultural Journal 1
<u>The First Days</u>

Think back to your first week living in the U.S. Write a two-page, single-spaced culture journal that respond to all of the following questions.

What situations do you especially remember?

Who were the people who had a strong effect on you? What effect did they have?

What feelings and thoughts did you have the first week you were in the U.S.?

Did you do anything that helped you feel more comfortable and relaxed? What did you do?

Cultural Journal 1
<u>Arrival: A shock to the senses</u>

Read the following story about a man's arrival to Ivory Coast. He writes about the sensory experiences he had coming to this African country for the first time. Write about the sensory experiences you had coming to the United States for the first time. Tell what was different, or maybe similar, in terms of *seeing, smells, feeling (touch), tastes, sounds.* Try to write something about each sense. You may refer to the story in your culture journal.

Stepping off the airplane into the equatorial climate, I breathed my very first impression of Cote d'Ivoire. When I inhaled, the air smelled different, thicker, more pungent, somehow more fertile, aromatic. From the airport to the hotel, a spellbinding display of things assailed my senses. The form and sensation of the seats in the bus, the sweltering heat, the stampede of odors, the cacophony of sounds, the blur of sights rushed by as the bus bounced and swerved toward the hotel. Even though much of it was similar to my own culture, everything seemed new, different. All the people, with very few exceptions, were black. Many were wearing western clothes that I instantly recognized, while others wore garments that I had never seen before: flowing robes, headscarves, small pillbox hats, skullcaps. I saw vegetation unknown to me, houses with thatched roofs, French automobiles. The roadway, instead of being reserved for cars and trucks, was filled with people engaged in all sorts of activity alongside the road – walking, stopped in groups at roadside stands, buying, selling, talking, and I noticed right away, carrying things on their heads, things I could never have imagined. A man dressed in dark shorts and a sweat-stained khaki shirt stepped quickly along the shoulder of the road, carrying a bicycle perched sideways on his head, one arm swinging in rhythm with his gait, the other lightly touching the bicycle frame. As the bus pulled up to the hotel, I noticed the way the natural vegetation had been landscaped around the small hotel, how the grass was a species I had never seen before. The hotel room seemed similar, but the bed, the

bureau, the closets, the electrical outlets were designed differently. I walked into the bathroom and lifted the seat on the toilet. Suddenly, a lizard as long as my foot lunged out of the bowl, landed on the floor, scuttled up the wall, over to the open window, and leapt outside into the green trees and bushes that brushed against the building.

*Moran 2001, 48.

Additional homework

Students must write a list of culture and communication topics they'd like to discuss during the course. Give students examples of possible topics that go beyond the typical "holidays, food, music" topics: family relationships, touching/displays of affection, dealing with conflict, language for specific social purposes, punctuality, alternative lifestyles, geographic and cultural features of regions of the U.S.

Lesson: Day 3

Description: Students bring their culture journals and topic lists to class for pair and whole group discussion. They also begin to examine how people of various cultures communicate and the steps of a conversation. The first step – greetings – is demonstrated and practiced.

Principal Objectives:

- to improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

In-Class Activities

1) Warm-up discussion

Divide the class in half. Ask half of the students to stand in a circle facing outward. Ask the remaining half to form an outer circle by standing in front of a classmate. Students discuss the following questions about their use of English, involvement in the culture,

and cultural observations during the weekend. A handout with these questions appears on page 153 in the appendix.

Talk to your classmates about your weekend.

Did you.....

1. ..... talk to any Americans/native English speakers? (This includes small talk or longer conversations.) If you talked to Americans/native English speakers, who were they and what did you talk about?

Did you talk to any non-native English speakers? Who were they and what did you talk about?

If you didn't speak English with anybody, go to the next question.

2. ..... observe anything interesting about American culture? If so, what did you observe and where did you observe it? What did it make you think about your own culture?

If you didn't make any observations about American culture, go to the next question.

3. ..... watch any American TV programs or movies? If so, what did you watch? What does the program or movie tell you about American culture?

If you didn't watch TV or see a movie, go to the next question.

4. ..... do anything with people from your own culture? If so, who were they and what did you do? If you had been in your country, would you have done the same activity in the same way?

Students discuss these questions with their partner while standing in their circle. After about 5 minutes, warn students they will switch partners. Ask students in the center circle to remain where they are; ask students in the outer circle to move two places to the left. When students have new partners, ask them to discuss the same questions.

After about 5 minutes, ask students to take their seats. Ask each student to report to the whole group about a classmate's weekend activities. Use this opportunity to explain to students they have a wealth of language and cultural resources at their disposal and should use them whenever possible to enhance their language and culture learning. This activity promotes student awareness of the power they have to become resources for themselves and emphasizes the importance of becoming involved in the ESL environment.

2) Introduction to communication styles and their connection to culture

Put students in pairs or small groups. In an ESL setting, if possible, form pairs or groups so that different cultures are represented. This allows students to compare communication styles between their cultures. Distribute handout on pages 154 and 155.

Read the directions aloud and ask students to complete the yes/no survey. Where more than one culture is represented in a pair or small group, students may create additional yes/no columns on the handout. Also give students the option to answer "it depends" on the survey. They can explain their "depends" answers in more depth during whole group discussion.

After students have completed the survey, ask students to tell the class what surprised them about communication styles. Were they surprised about differences? Similarities? Ask students to pose any questions to their classmates about communication styles. Where necessary, the teacher can pose questions to students. At this point, it may interest students to know that, in general, Americans would answer "yes" to all statements on the survey.

This communicative activity shows students there is a cultural connection to language and how it is used. Note to students that the statements on the survey reflect many American's expectations in communicative interactions. Students may want to develop their communicative skills to meet some of these expectations, or at the very least, develop a better understanding of how English-speaking Americans communicate.

3) Steps of a conversation

Put students in pairs and distribute the handout on page 156 (The answers appear on page 157.). By breaking down conversational English into five steps, students can be introduced to strategies around each part of a conversation. While this breakdown may

vary among native English-speaking cultures, they serve as a general guide for language learners. Encourage students to find patterns in conversations through observation and participation in the target language.

Ask students to work with their partner to fill in the names of the steps and descriptions that are missing. After filling in the missing pieces, students can share and revise their answers with other pairs. Whole group discussion follows with the following questions:

- Compare these steps to the steps of conversation in your native language. What's similar/different?
- Think about the conversations you've had in English. What step is most difficult for you? Why? What can you do to improve at this level?
- What step is most difficult for you in your native language? Why? How do you cope with this difficulty? How can you improve at this level?
- What strategies do you use at each step when using English to communicate with others?
- Which steps do you want to practice most during this course?

4) Greetings

Put students into small groups of 4 or 5. Ask two students to stand up and formally introduce themselves by shaking hands and using the dialogue below or similar language used in greetings typical in U.S. culture.

"Hello, my name is _____."

"Nice to meet you. I'm _____."

The remaining students act as observers and should answer the following questions about the introduction.

1. Did the two people smile at each other?
2. Did the handshake last too long, not long enough?
3. Did either person bow?
4. Where did each person look when speaking?
5. How far apart did each person stand?

The two students who introduced themselves should answer these questions:

1. What was the handshake like? Strong? Limp? Too hard? Too weak? Cold? Warm?
2. Were you comfortable shaking hands?
3. Were you comfortable introducing yourself?
4. Where did you look during your introduction?
5. Did you feel like you were standing too far or too close to the person?

Within their groups, students should share answers to these questions. Ask each group to report their observations to the class. Explain to students that introducing yourself in social situations in the U.S. is fairly common and sometimes necessary since you can't always rely on someone to introduce you to others. Non-verbal forms of communication like eye contact, smiling, handshakes, distance, and posture should be noted here. It's also useful to demonstrate handshakes. Students may not know how long a handshake should last, for example, or how firm a handshake should be.

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987

5) Greetings and introductions in other cultures

Having discussed greetings typical in U.S. culture, invite students to demonstrate formal and informal greetings used in their cultures. Pair off students based on culture – two Japanese students may demonstrate a formal greeting, for example. You may need to give students a role for each type of greeting.

Informal – Demonstrate a greeting with a friend you meet on the street. Or, demonstrate a greeting with a classmate at school in your home country. Also demonstrate a greeting with a friend at WESLI.

Formal - Demonstrate a greeting between to business associates. (If necessary, give students mock business cards to exchange.) Demonstrate a greeting between an elder family member and a younger. Demonstrate an introduction between two people at a party.

Follow up demonstrations with whole group discussion and observation. Make connections between these greetings/introductions and U.S.-style greetings and introductions. This helps students identify why they behave or react a certain way when confronted with greetings in the U.S.

6) Assign homework below

7) Culture journal share

Put students in pairs or small groups for discussion of the journal assignment related to students' arrival to the U.S. Students may read directly from their journals, paraphrase journal entries, or use journals only as a reference. After about 10-15 minutes, ask each pair or group to report on their discussion.

8) Compile topic lists

Students have written lists of topics they want to discuss during the course. Ask students to call out their topics as you write them on the blackboard. (An alternative is to collect them and compile the list yourself.) Explain it might not possible to address all suggested topics within the timeframe of a seven-week course, but those topics for which there is common interest and that fit into a cultural theme will be addressed.

Copy the topic list from the blackboard and create a class list to distribute in the next class.

Real World Activities

1) Observation and culture journal writing – Ask students to observe greetings or introductions in public places – a coffee shop, the student union, the student lounge, the bus, the street. If they have the opportunity, they may observe these within their homestay families, a party, or some other social function. Students should watch for the five elements of greetings outlined in activity #4 above and take notes during their

observations or immediately afterward. They must share their observations in the next class and use them to complete a culture journal entry.

Culture Journal 2
Greetings and Introductions

Use the following questions and notes from your observations of greetings and introductions to write a journal entry of at least two single-spaced pages.

Describe the first time you met or were introduced to someone in this (U.S.) culture. Did the person shake hands with you? Did the person hug or touch you in any way? What was your reaction? Did you touch the person in any way? Did you bow, hug, or kiss?

Describe the different ways you greet people now compared to how you greeted people in the past in your culture.
What are some questions you have about greetings or introductions with Americans or people from other cultures?

2) Interview

Interview two or three people about their experiences with the five steps of a conversation. Ask them the following questions. Take notes during your interview. You will share your notes in the next class.

1) Greetings

2) Starting a conversation
3) Body of a conversation
4) Closing a conversation
5) Saying goodbye

What step is most difficult for you in your interactions with others? Why?

What strategies do you use at each step when communicating with others?

Have you ever studied or communicated in another language? Which steps are/were most difficult for you?

What are some non-verbal ways English speakers communicate in each step?

Lesson: Day 4

Description: Students share observations of greetings and introductions and culture journals. Starting a conversation and small talk is introduced and practiced through dialogues and role plays. A class topic list is distributed, and discussion begins on one cultural topic.

Principal Objectives:

- to improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to become familiar with forms of non-verbal communication
- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates

In-Class Activities

1) Observation and culture journal share

Put students in pairs or small groups to discuss their observations of greetings and introductions. Then, ask them to share information collected from interviews and culture journals. After about 15-20 minutes, ask each pair or group to report first on their observations and then on their interview results. Whole group discussion involves asking and answering questions, with the teacher and possibly students acting as U.S. culture informants.

2) Introduction to starting a conversation - small talk

Start by writing “small talk” on the blackboard and asking students what they think small talk is, how it’s used, why people use it, and with whom and when they use it. Point out that small talk is usually based on a topic of general or common interest. Two people standing at a bus stop share the experience of waiting for the bus, therefore, small talk may center on the bus schedule. Two people in a bar waiting for a blues concert to begin may make small talk about the band, the music, the acoustics of the bar, the bar itself. In these situations, small talk may occur between strangers. Further conversation may or may not evolve. Appropriate “stranger” topics include weather, time, schedules, news, sports (See Steps of a Conversation page 157.).

It’s also common to use small talk when starting a conversation with a friend, acquaintance, or someone you’ve just been introduced to. Again, the topic of a small talk interaction will generally center on a common or shared experience or situation. “Friend/acquaintance” topics might include past/future events; personal background information like country/city of origin, career, goals; gossip; or office talk.

Distribute “Conversation Topics” the handout on pages 158 and 159. Students may read silently to themselves or the teacher may quickly read them aloud.

3) Pairs/small group discussion

Students discuss the following questions:

1. Is small talk common among strangers in your culture? Among friends or acquaintances? In what situations do you make small talk?

2. Since you've been in the U.S., has a stranger made small talk with you? If so, in what situation did it happen? What did the stranger say to you? How did you respond? Did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? If not, how do you think you would react? Would you respond to the person?

3. Do you remember any small talk interactions you've had with your homestay family, conversation partner, teachers, classmates, or other people outside the classroom? What were the topics of some of these interactions? Did they generally lead to a longer conversation or not?

After 10 to 15 minutes, ask students to share their discussions with the whole group.

4) Small talk dialogues

Put students in pairs and distribute "Small Talk Interaction #1" on page 160. Set up the dialogue by reading the situation aloud. Students then read the dialogues with their partners. Ask for two volunteers to read the dialogue aloud to the whole class. Before the students read, ask them to stand as they might in the given situation. Ask the whole

group to decide how far apart the two students might stand and how they might use (or not use) eye contact and other forms of non-verbal communication. The volunteers then read the dialogue aloud.

Ask the whole group the following questions:

1. Was this a successful interaction? Why or why not?
2. Do you think these two people will talk together again? Why or why not?
3. How do you show a person you don't want to talk? Consider the following: short vs. long answers to questions, eye contact vs. lack of eye contact, body language such as fumbling in a bag or looking at a watch, proximity

It is also useful to note that Student 2 in the dialogue is from another culture and may not be comfortable making small talk with a stranger. Still, such an interaction in this situation is very typical in the U.S. Another point to make is Student 1 asked questions that required only one-word responses. Introduce the concept of open-ended questions. For example, Student 1 could have asked a question like "So, what do you think of the engineering program at this school?" to elicit a more extensive response from Student 2.

Next, distribute "Small Talk Interaction #2" page 161. Follow the directions from the previous dialogue and ask the whole group the three questions above. Also ask students how the conversation might have continued if class wasn't about to begin. What other

topics might the two students have moved to? Point out that although the students in dialogue 2 did not learn each others' names, their conversation was a successful one in this context. Also, neither student in dialogue 2 asked open-ended questions, although responses went beyond just one word.

Revisit the survey from lesson 3 (pages 154 and 155). Identify behaviors characteristic of meeting and getting to know others and ask students to show how these might apply in the two dialogues.

5) Role plays with small talk

Pair up students and give each pair a situation card (Role play cards appear on the handout on pages 162 and 163.). Students role play a small talk interaction. Explain the interaction does not have to lead to a larger conversation. It can last as little as a few seconds to as much as a few minutes – it's up to the interactants. Also, one of the students will be the initiator of small talk. Point out that some role plays involve strangers while others involve friends or acquaintances. Encourage students to use open-ended questions if they want extend their small talk interactions into larger conversations.

When students have finished, ask each pair to explain their small talk situation and interaction. Did the interaction lead to a larger conversation? Did the interaction end quickly? What made the interactions relatively easy or difficult? Discuss appropriate small talk topics, non-verbals, and vocabulary for each situation.

6) Assign the homework below. Students will share their small talk experiences in pair or small group discussion in the next class. They may also share their culture journal entries in pairs or small groups by reading them aloud, paraphrasing them, or simply referring to them in discussion.

7) Introduce a cultural topic

From this point in the course, it's up to the teacher and, perhaps, the students who selected cultural topics to decide in what order these are explored. Cultural topics are presented in thematic lessons that follow. The steps of a conversation, however, follow a sequence. Lessons for each step also appear in this section.

Real World Activities

1) Students will participate in small talk interactions. Give the instructions below. Students will share their experiences in the next class. Stress that students should be aware of their limitations when making small talk with strangers. If they sense a situation may not be safe, they should not attempt small talk just to complete the assignment. Suggest they try making small talk in a location where they don't feel their personal safety is threatened.

> **Small Talk**
>
> Your assignment is to make small talk with at least four people between today and the next class. Two people will be people you already know,

and two will be people you've never met. You can make small talk with people at WESLI or outside WESLI.

Remember, small talk usually doesn't last a long time, especially when two people don't know each other. Answer the following questions as soon as possible after your small talk conversation.

1. Where did you make small talk?
2. Who spoke first? You or the other person?
3. What topic was discussed?
4. Did the topic change during the conversation? If so, what other topics were discussed?
5. Did you learn the person's name? If yes, what is his/her name?
6. Did you feel comfortable making small talk with this person? Why or why not?

2) Students write the culture journal assignment below.

Culture Journal 3
Starting out with small talk

In addition to answering the questions about your small talk conversations, write a culture journal about the following questions:

1. Explain how people make small talk in your culture. Who speaks to whom, and what do they talk about? What are acceptable/unacceptable topics?

If small talk is not common in your culture, write about your feelings about how Americans use small talk. Be sure to use your own experiences to explain.

2. Do you think small talk can help you improve your communication skills? If yes, please explain how. If no, explain why not.

In the next class, students discuss the following:

1. How many people did you talk to? If you didn't talk to four people, why didn't you?
2. What are some cultural or personality issues that made this assignment easy or difficult?
3. How can you improve your use of small talk as a conversation starter?
4. Share your notes from your small talk interactions.

Lesson: The body of a conversation/sustaining a conversation

Description: Having already discussed small talk, students move to the body of a conversation. Students look at dialogues using open-ended questions and expanded responses, ways to get to the point of a conversation, and small talk leading to longer conversations. They then practice starting or joining a conversation and switching topics. A discussion of active listening comes next, followed by more conversations and a video clip of a TV talk show.

Principal Objectives:

- to improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to develop strategies for listening and speaking that help students become resources for themselves
- to become familiar with forms of non-verbal communication
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

In-Class Activities

1) Introduction to the body of a conversation

Referring to the Steps of a Conversation on page 157 of the appendix, remind students that in the body of a conversation speakers may go deeper into one topic and/or move

from topic to topic. They may exchange information and use open-ended questions and expanded responses to sustain a conversation. At this point listening and response is very important, as well as body language. Small talk is one way to begin or enter a conversation, and it may take some time before speakers get to the heart of a conversation.

Distribute handout page 164. Read the two short dialogues between Jim and Aki and compare them. Ask students which dialogue would lead to a longer conversation and why. Discuss the effects of using open-ended questions and giving extended responses.

2) Question and answer practice

Put students in pairs and ask them to practice asking and answering the following questions. Give them 10-15 minutes to speak. Tell students they must respond with more than just short answers. They need to expand on their answers to encourage longer conversations with their partner. When answering, it's possible, and desirable, to ask additional, related questions to the listener to sustain a conversation. Tell them to avoid simply answering the question and followed by "How about you?" Avoid the I ask/you answer, you answer/I ask line of questioning. Tell students it's possible they will not get past the first question if they can manage to keep a conversation moving from topic to topic.

1. How are your classes going?
2. What do you think about Madison?
3. How was your weekend?

4. What are your plans for the next six months?
5. Where's your favorite place to eat in Madison?

In whole group, discuss how students' conversations went. How long did they spend talking on each question? How did the conversation move and what were some of the topics discussed? What kinds of questions were asked to sustain the conversation? How did they show their interest in the speaker? What non-verbals were used during the conversations?

3) Question brainstorming

As a whole group, brainstorm some open-ended questions students might ask other WESLI students or people outside the school. Write these questions on the blackboard.

4) Getting to the heart of a conversation/sustaining the conversation

See the handout distributed during Activity 1. Put students in pairs and ask them to read the dialogue between Michael and Diane together. As a whole group, answer the two questions following the dialogue. Point out that it can take time before speakers find a topic they can settle into for a while.

Next, read through the conversation between George and Wan (page 165) as a whole class. Indicate what is happening with each question and response. Note the use of small talk, open-ended questions, and expanded responses, and how the topic shifts.

Distribute handout from pages 166 and 167. Review as a whole class these tips related to entering a conversation in progress and changing the topic.

5) Role plays - Starting, entering, and sustaining a conversation

Cut pages 168 and 169 into strips and distribute them. Give students time to read the strips and ask questions about their roles. Tell students to imagine they are at a party with friends, acquaintances, and people they don't know. Students stand or sit while you act as host and set them up with their partners. Partners are indicated on the role play strips as Student A1 and Student A2, C1 and C2, D1 and D2, E1 and E2. Only Student B does not have a partner. Choose a student who is more outgoing to play this role.

During the "party", walk around the room, listen, and help students when necessary. Indicate points in their conversation where topics can shift and provide needed language to move to the next topic.

After a while, tell students to wind up their conversations. Tell students a common way to close a conversation is to say "Well,….." at a slightly higher pitch followed by a short pause and "…. it was nice talking to you." Other possible phrases to use depending on the context include "Good luck with….", "Enjoy the party", "See you later", "Take care". If they are at a party, they may use some excuse "I'm going to get something to drink" or "I'm going to say hello to…." to close the conversation.

6) Role play follow up

Put students in small groups and ask them to discuss the following questions.

1. Did you use small talk to begin your conversations? Did small talk last for a long time? How long did it take you to get the heart of your conversations?

2. How did your conversations move? Did you stick with the same topic for the entire conversation, or did you switch topics? How did you introduce a new topic? How did you keep your conversations moving? Did you use open-ended questions and extended answers?

3. How did you show interest in the speaker? What did you say or do while the other person was talking? What kind of body language do you remember using? What do you remember about the distance between you and the other speaker?

Ask Student B to discuss how he/she felt when trying to enter a conversation. Discuss the following as a whole class: What strategies did he/she use? Did he/she play an active role in the conversation? What was the reaction of the other two speakers? What kind of body language was used or could be used to enter a conversation or to welcome a person into a conversation?

7) Active listening

Distribute handout on page 170. Give students 5-10 minutes to read. As a whole class, review each point and give examples of situations or contexts when these active listening strategies and related language might be used. Ask students if they have already used some of these strategies and identify which they used during Activity 5. Explain to students they will watch a conversation between two talk-show hosts. Their job is to observe some of these active listening strategies.

8) Video clip from "Live with Regis and Kelly"

Distribute handout on page 171. Explain the program and tell students what to expect from the video. Watch once just to listen. Take notes. Watch again, take more notes and answer the questions.

9) Students should switch role play strips from Activity 5 and assume new identities. Repeat this activity but tell students to keep in mind the characteristics of active listening and sustained conversation.

Real World Activities

1) Strike up a conversation with one native speaker and one non-native speaker. During the conversation, use open-ended questions, extended responses, and active listening skills. Try to sustain the conversation. It may be necessary to use small talk until you get

to the heart of your conversation. As soon as possible after your conversation, answer the questions below.

1. Did you use small talk to begin your conversations? Did small talk last for a long time? How long did it take you to get the heart of your conversations?

2. How did your conversations move? Did you stick with the same topic for the entire conversation, or did you switch topics? How did you introduce a new topic? How did you keep your conversations moving? Did you use open-ended questions and extended answers?

3. How did you show interest in the speaker? What did you say or do while the other person was talking? What kind of body language do you remember using? What do you remember about the distance between you and the other speaker?

2) Culture journal writing

Give the following instructions.

Culture Journal
Steps of a conversation

Write a two-page, single-spaced culture journal about the conversations

you had with a native and non-native speaker. Use these questions to help you.

*What part of the conversation was easiest for you on that day?

*What part of the conversation was most difficult for you on that day?

*How did this conversation compare to conversations you've had outside WESLI?

*In general what is the most challenging part of a conversation for you in your native language?

*What differences did you notice between your conversation with the native speaker and the non-native speaker? Consider things like discussion topics, the flow of the conversations, the situation or context of your conversations, the pace of speaking, and your comfort level.

3) Watch a TV talk show

Watch a TV talk show and observe how conversations are sustained and how they move. Also try to observe some of the characteristics of active listening. Keep in mind that on most TV talk shows there is an interviewer who often asks pre-planned questions of the interviewee. Also, the job of both speakers on these programs is to entertain and audience with their conversation. Although these are not typical conversations, the speakers will use some of the conversation skills we discussed in class.

Possible shows to watch are:

Oprah, CBS, Channel 3, Cable Channel ***, 4:00 – 5:00 p.m. M-F

Phil Donahue, MSNBC, Cable Channel ***, 7:00-8:00 p.m. M-F

Larry King Live, CNN, Cable Channel ***, 8:00-9:00 p.m. M-F

The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, NBC, Channel 15, Cable Channel ***, 10:35-11:35 p.m. M-F

The Late Show with David Letterman, CBS, Channel 3, Cable Channel ***, 10:35-11:35 p.m. M-F

Take notes on the following questions:

1. Observe the non-verbal forms of communication. What non-verbals help them sustain the conversation? What active listening characteristics do you observe?

2. What made it difficult or easy to follow their conversation?

3. Try to catch the flow of the conversation. Do they make small talk to start? How does the conversation move and what topics do they discuss? What was the heart of the conversation?

4. How did their conversation compare with the conversations you've had?

Lesson: Closing a conversation and saying goodbye

Description: This lesson may be integrated with the previous one titled "The body of a conversation/sustaining a conversation". It would be best to complete this lesson before Activity 5 in the previous one. Having already discussed starting and sustaining a conversation, students look at how to bring a conversation to a close. Students read dialogues that show how one can close conversations in various social contexts. The class discusses each dialogue. Homework includes observing and listening to conversations around them, interviewing native speakers about closing conversations, and writing a culture journal.

Principal Objectives:

- To improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- To recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- To become familiar with forms of non-verbal communication

In-Class Activities

1) Pair up students and give each pair a dialogue to read aloud together. These dialogues on pages 172-176 contain the students' names. When they finish, ask each pair to discuss the questions that follow. Note that for Role Play 2, students will discuss only question 2. Questions 1 and 3 are addressed when all role plays and questions are discussed in large group.

2) In whole group, ask each pair, starting with role play 1, to read their dialogue aloud. Depending on the social context in each dialogue, students may stand or sit. When possible, students should demonstrate any nonverbal cues that might be significant in the role play interactions. Each pair then presents their discussion questions to the group for further analysis.

Points to touch on include: word choice, relationship between the interactants, purpose of the conversation, context of the conversation, nonverbal cues, reasons for leave taking, and leave taking across cultures.

Explain to students a common way to close a conversation is to say "Well,….." at a slightly higher pitch followed by a short pause and "…. it was nice talking to you." Other possible phrases to use depending on the context include "Good luck with….", "Enjoy the party", "See you later", "Take care". If they are at a party, they may use some excuse "I'm going to get something to drink" or "I'm going to say hello to…." to close the conversation. Still more phrases are "I have to get going…." "I have a lot to do today…." "I have to meet someone…." and "I'm sorry, I'm really late for….."

Americans often physically move away from each other to indicate they have to go or want to end the conversation. They might slowly back away from each other in this instance. A more obvious approach is for someone to look at their watch, divert their eye

contact away from the speaker for long periods of time, to dig around in their bag or backpack, or to appear distracted and, therefore, disinterested.

Where two people interact in a more businesslike context, as in the dialogue with the caller to the Salvation Army, closings are more abrupt. Once necessary information has been exchanged, both speakers understand the conversation is basically over. Therefore, they're less likely to feel the need to excuse themselves as they might in more social situations.

Distribute appendix handout on page 177. You may read these points to remember with the students or simply ask them to keep it for their reference.

3) Saying goodbye

In addition to some of the phrases discussed earlier, you can review the following phrases and cues appropriate for leave-taking. Of course, much of this depends on the context. Ask students to brainstorm more phrases and nonverbal cues associated with leave-taking. Have a whole group discussion or a demonstration of how students say goodbye in various contexts in their cultures.

	Informal contexts	Formal contexts
Common phrases	“Take care.”	“Nice to meet you.”
	“(See you) later.”	“Pleasure (to meet you).”
	“(Good)bye.”	“Thanks for everything.”
	“Bye bye.”	
Nonverbal cues	handshake	handshake
	hug	wave
	pat on the back	
	wave	

Real World Activities

1) Observation

Listen to and observe speakers' conversations in various settings, for example at a coffee shop, on the bus, in the student lounge, in the dorm, or in your homestay. What do you notice about the way these people end their conversations? What verbal or nonverbal cues do they use to say goodbye? Is there any touching, for example handshakes or hugging? How does the situation affect the way these people close their conversations and say goodbye? Take notes if you need to so you can answer these questions.

2) Interview

Give students the following instructions.

> Interview an American to find out what he or she would do in the following situations. Be prepared to present the information to the class and to discuss differences between American customs and customs of your own country.
>
> 1. You are at a party talking to an acquaintance. Your conversation is closing down and you can't think of anything else to talk about. What would you say to end the conversation?
> 2. You are having lunch alone in the cafeteria and a friend joins you at your table. After you've talked for a while, you need to go somewhere, but your friend is still eating. Is it necessary for you to wait for your friend to finish eating? If not, what would you say to excuse yourself?

3. Your next door neighbor is visiting you, and a friend calls you on the telephone and wants to talk. What would you do in this situation?

4. You have friends over for the evening. It's getting late and you have to get up early. What nonverbal cues would you give your guests to indicate they should go home? What verbal cues could you give without directly asking your friends to leave?

*From Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

3) Culture journal writing

Students write a two-page, single-spaced journal about one of the following.

Culture journal
<u>Closing a conversation and saying goodbye</u>

1. Think about a conversation you've had with a native speaker. What was the context of your conversation – formal or informal? Were you confused about how to close a conversation? Who closed the conversation – you or the other speaker? What nonverbal forms of communication do you remember using or observing?

2. Write about closing conversations in your native language. How do you close a conversation in different social contexts? For example, how do you close a conversation in a businesslike situation vs. closing a conversation with a friend or family member? What nonverbal ways do you bring a conversation to an end?

3. Now that you've discussed and practiced all five steps of a conversation, which steps do you feel most comfortable with? Which are still challenging for you? For which steps do you still need practice? Where and with whom can you get this practice?

Lesson: Observations vs. Judgments

Description: Students establish the difference between observations and judgments by writing sentences about things they've observed or experienced while living and studying in the U.S. Students change judgmental statements into non-judgmental ones and complete an exercise that looks at interpretations of verbal and non-verbal messages. You may want to consider doing this lesson early in the course since communicative and cultural topics depend on some observation skills.

Principal Objectives:

- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures
- to understand where stereotypes come from and how they affect perceptions of culture and language
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes

In-Class Activities

1) Listing observations

In pairs, students list observations they've made while living and studying in the U.S. Give students example topics like food, relationships, dress, and non-verbal communication. Students must write complete sentences for each observation.

2) Define observation and judgment

Ask students to put their list of statements aside and lead them in a discussion defining the difference between observation and judgment. Write the words "observation" and "judgment" on the blackboard. Ask students to give a definition and example for both. Or give an example of each and explain the difference between the two statements. An example might be:

American food is terrible. (judgment)

Americans generally don't use many spices in their cooking. (observation)

People in the U.S. are unfriendly. (judgment)

People in the U.S. often say "Hi!" and continue walking. (observation)

Point out that observations are things we see, hear, and know to be true. They do not reflect opinions, reactions, or personal feelings. Judgments, on the other hand, are based on reactions and feelings about what we observe. They may not always reflect the truth and often lead to misunderstandings.

The following questions are used in pair/small group or whole group discussion:

1. Why is it important to know the difference between observation and judgment?
2. How can you improve your observation skills?
3. How can this help you learn language and culture more effectively?

3) Identifying observations and judgments

Distribute pages 178 and 179 . In pairs, students read each statement and identify whether they represent observation or judgment. When finished, compare answers in a whole group discussion. In at least a few cases (#2, 10, and 13), it's possible to answer observation OR judgment, but students should explain why they chose their answer.

4) Rewriting

In their original pairs or small groups, ask students to identify those statements that are observations and judgments. Students must rewrite any judgmental statements into non-judgmental ones. Ask each pair/group to share their original and revised statements with the class.

*Activities 1-4 from Gaston 1984.

5) Prepare observation homework

Reiterate the goals of the lesson and provide students with some guidance for their observation/culture journal assignment. Provide the following information on the blackboard, on poster paper, or in handout form:

> Be non-judgmental. Try not to see things as good or bad, right or wrong.
>
> Try to report just what you see and hear. Remember these four points:
>
> 1. Recognizing/learning about a different culture helps you to understand your own.

2. Learn to look at things as part of a whole and not make judgments about them.

3. Develop an ability to empathize. Try to see yourself in another person's position within their culture.

4. Value your culture and others at the same time. You are able to respect different cultures but still disagree with them.

Real World Activities

Culture journal writing

Culture Journal
Making Observations

For this journal, you have some choices for observation.

1. Watch a short piece of one American TV program or movie and observe how the people interact. Listen to what they say and how they say it. Notice non-verbal cues like proximity (How far apart are they standing or sitting?), gestures, and other body language. Also notice style of dress. What do all these things tell you about the situation, about how Americans communicate, and about American culture? Be sure to make observations, not judgments.

2. Go to a public place like a coffee shop or a mall or the Memorial Union and observe people talking together. Listen to what they say and how they say it. Notice non-verbal cues like proximity (How far apart are they standing or sitting?), gestures, and other body language. Also notice style

of dress. What do all these things tell you about the situation, about how Americans communicate, and about American culture? Be sure to make observations, not judgments.

3. Go to the mall or State Street and check out the fashions. Decide what type of people would buy these clothes: teens, adults, professionals, elderly people, anyone. What do the clothes tell you about American culture and how Americans can communicate through the clothes they wear? Be sure to make observations, not judgments.

4. This option is similar to #3 above, but instead of going to the mall or State Street, go to a public place and observe the kinds of clothes people are wearing. What do the clothes tell you about the situation the people are in at the moment? What do the clothes tell you about American culture and how Americans can communicate through their styles? Be sure to make observations, not judgments.

Students will share their observations in the next class using language that appears in page 180 in the appendix. Review the handout with students before putting them in pairs or small groups to discuss their observations.

Lesson: Volunteerism

Description: This particular lesson hinges on a volunteer fair held twice a year in our community. Students begin by talking about past experiences they've had as volunteers and about volunteerism in their countries. The class prepares to attend the fair where they speak with representatives of community organizations. While students do not have to commit to volunteering, the fair and class activities provide information useful for them to do so.

Although your community may not host a volunteer fair that students can attend, consider inviting a volunteer coordinator from a local agency to talk to the class about opportunities and the spirit of volunteerism in the community. Some of the preview and follow up activities here may be appropriate for your class.

Depending on timing of the event or guest speaker, it is best if students have already discussed the major parts of a conversation: making small talk, asking questions to extend a conversation or gain more information, asking questions to clarify answers.

Principal Objectives:

- to improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning

In-Class Activities

1) Intro to volunteerism

Share the following information with students.

> Did you know.....?
>
> 48% of adult Americans do some kind of volunteer work,
> according to a Gallup Organization national survey in 1994.

Put students in pairs or small groups to discuss the questions on page 181 in the appendix. Give them 10-15 minutes to talk before coming to whole group. Ask students to report on their discussions.

2) A look at volunteerism in the community

Before class, collect local newspapers, brochures, and other literature containing information about volunteering. This information makes students aware of the range of volunteer opportunities in the community. Point out various types of agencies and organizations, types of volunteer tasks, and the level of commitment each requires.

3) Volunteer/Organization matchup

Cut pages 182 and 183 into strips and distribute one strip per student. Tell students that half of them assume the role of a community agency or organization, and the other half

play the role of volunteers. Give students a few minutes to read their strips; answer any questions they may have. Be sure students know what role they are playing.

Then, ask a student playing the role of an agency to read their strip aloud. Students playing the roles of volunteers must listen to the agency description to see if it matches their interests. Volunteers must raise their hand and then read their strip aloud to the class.

4) Volunteer fair preparation

This preparation activity can be done in class or as a homework assignment. Distribute the handout on page 184 in the appendix. Explain when and where the volunteer fair will be held and tell students what they can expect to find there. Students may discuss the questions on the handout and, if possible and appropriate for your class, go to the computer lab to look up more information on the volunteer fair website.

5) At the fair

Distribute handouts on pages 185 and 186 in the appendix. Read through the entire handout with students before attending the fair. At our fair, students had one hour to complete their task. Remind students to take notes during and after their conversation with the agency representative. They must share their results in the next class.

6) Volunteer fair recap

In the next class, ask students to share their volunteer fair experience with a partner. Next, copy and distribute page 187 and ask students to discuss the questions. Summarize the volunteer fair experience in whole group discussion.

Real World Activities

1) Culture journal writing

Give the following assignment.

Culture Journal
Volunteer Fair

Write a one-page culture journal describing your conversation with the program representative at the volunteer fair. You may write about any of the following questions:

Was it easy to understand this person's speaking? Did you ask the person to repeat or clarify if you didn't understand? How do you feel about your speaking? Did the representative ask you to repeat or clarify?

Were you able to keep the conversation going? If so, how did you do it? If not, what prevented you and the representative from speaking for an extended time?

Was there anything noticeable about the representative's "dialect" or sound? Did the person use a lot of body language? How would you

describe the person's manner: formal or informal?

Write something positive about your listening and speaking at the volunteer fair.

2) Researching volunteer organizations on the Internet

Give students the following instructions.

Check out the website of one of the following national programs that rely on volunteers. Research the history and function of the organization. Find the answers to the questions on the handout you completed from the volunteer fair: What do volunteers do? What kind of time commitment must volunteers make? Do volunteers need training? Find out if there is a local chapter of the organization in the Madison community. Report this information to the class next time.

Habitat for Humanity International – www.habitat.org

United Way of America – www.unitedway.org

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America – www.bbbsa.org

The Humane Society of the United States – www.hsus.org

American Red Cross – www.redcross.org

AmeriCorps – www.americorps.org

3) Interview

Give students the following instructions.

> Interview someone outside of WESLI who is a native or non-native English speaker about their volunteer experiences. Ask the questions below in addition to other questions of your choice.
>
> 1. What kind of volunteer work have you done? What's the name of the agency or organization you served?
> 2. Why did you choose to volunteer for this particular agency/organization?
> 3. What kind of time commitment is/was involved? Did you volunteer once a week, twice a week, etc.? How many hours per week or month?
> 4. How do/did you feel about your contribution as a volunteer? What do/did you gain from volunteering?
> 5. What advice do you have for someone who wants to volunteer?

Lesson: Regional culture and language

Description: Students examine how culture and language differs from region to region within the same country. The lesson begins by looking at stereotypes and characteristics of Wisconsin life. Next, students discuss regional cultural and linguistic differences of their countries and the U.S. Video clips from "American Tongues" discuss dialects and accents and the stereotypes that are often associated with them. Students follow up with a discussion of standard vs. non-standard language.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes
- to understand where stereotypes come from and how they affect perceptions of culture and language
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

In-Class Activities

1) You Know You're in Wisconsin When….

Distribute handout on page 188 in the appendix. Give students a few minutes to read through the 10 statements about Wisconsin. Help students with unfamiliar vocabulary,

including: heat, A/C, install security lights, jumper cables, potholes, lingerie, tube socks, flannel pajamas, jersey

Ask students if they can identify themes or characteristics of Wisconsin culture. If not, explain that Wisconsinites associate long, cold winters, hunting and fishing, small-town relationships and trust, and American football's Green Bay Packers as characteristic of the state culture. Stress that all states and regions of the U.S. have their own cultures and, therefore, their own vocabulary and linguistic features. Use a U.S. map to help students identify regions like Northeast, Northwest, South, Southwest, the Plains, and Midwest.

2) Discussion of regional differences at home and in the U.S.

Put students into pairs or small groups to discuss the following questions. Give students 15-20 minutes to discuss. In whole group, ask each pair or group to comment on one thing they learned or found surprising.

Regional Differences at Home and in the U.S.

1. Talk about how your country is divided geographically. What regions, or how many regions, does your country have? What region do you live in?

2. What are the cultural and linguistic characteristics of each region? What is each region popular for? Do people in each region have a different way of speaking or pronunciation?

3. What are some of the stereotypes you have of people from each region? For example, people who live in Midwestern United States tend to stereotype East Coast people as self-absorbed and always in a hurry. The stereotype of Southerners is that they are slow, lazy, and not very smart.

3) Preview activity for "American Tongues"

In the same pairs or small groups students discuss the following questions for 10-15 minutes. It may be necessary to explain the difference between a dialect and an accent. A dialect is a regional language that has vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional languages and together they make up a single language. An accent is related to pronunciation, intonation and stress; accents may differ from region to region.

<u>The Way We Speak</u>

1. Have you noticed any differences in American dialects? If so, explain.
2. What about the "Wisconsin" dialect? Have you heard anything different in the way Midwesterners or Wisconsinites talk?
3. What stereotypes are associated with dialects or accents?
4. Do you think standard English is the only "correct" English?
5. Talk about some dialects or accents in your country. Give some specific examples of vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation that are different from region to region.

At this point, it's useful for you to give some specific examples from question #5 above as it pertains to regions of the U.S. If possible, invite an acquaintance or friend from another region of the country to class to help illustrate some language differences. For example, a coworker who was raised in New York City's upper west side visited my class, and together we demonstrated how various words are pronounced differently among Wisconsinites and New Yorkers.

4) Video clips from "American Tongues"

Explain to students that the clips are about regional differences in language throughout the U.S. Copy and distribute pages 189 and 190. Prior to showing each clip, read through the questions on the handout. While students watch, tell them to pay attention for possible answers to the questions. They may take notes while watching. Stop the video after each clip and give students time to jot down answers in pairs or individually. Show the clip again if necessary.

For Clip #1, explain that the woman in the video has been told that her English is "Dutchified." Prior to Clip #4, explain the word "ain't" and its use in every day English.

Discuss answers from one clip before moving on to the next.

5) Follow up discussion

In pairs or small groups, ask students to discuss the following questions. Give students 10-15 minutes. Come together as a whole group and ask one pair or group to comment on their discussion of one of the questions.

Follow-up questions

1. Does your country have a standard language? For example, is there a standard Korean, Portuguese, etc., language? What is most commonly spoken every day? In what situations do people speak more standard or formal language?

2. What are the political, economic, or social consequences of using a non-standard language?

3. Some say the popularity of English is contributing to the disappearance of many world languages. What do you think about this? What steps should schools or government take to preserve languages that are disappearing?

Real World Activities

1) Interview

Give the students the following information and instructions.

"English Only" laws are a topic of debate in the United States. These laws vary from state to state. Some laws declare English as an official language of a state.

Others limit or ban the government from providing information to people in another language. Still other laws restrict bilingual education programs, prohibit multilingual voting ballots, and other government documents. Some immigrants are not able to take driver's license tests because of such laws. For more information about English Only policies, go to:

www.napalc.org/programs/languagerights, and

www.us-english.org/inc/official

Ask 5 people their opinion about official language policies such as English-Only, or other laws that restrict language use.

Ask them if their country has a language policy and, if so, how do they feel about it?

Try to ask at least 2 or 3 Americans from outside WESLI. For the remaining interviews, if you decide to interview a WESLI teacher, be sure to ask if they have time or make an appointment. It's OK to talk to a WESLI student, but talk to someone who's from a culture different from yours.

When interviewing, take notes. Be prepared to present your information in class next time.

2) Interview

The following interview may also be assigned. Give students the following instructions.

Wisconsinites

Ask at least 3 people (preferably Americans in this community) the following questions. Be prepared to share your answers for the next class.

1. What are some common characteristics or symbols of Wisconsin and Wisconsin culture?
2. How are Wisconsinites and their culture different from natives of other regions of the country?
3. What is unique about the way Wisconsinites speak? Do they have an accent? What are some vocabulary words that are unique to Wisconsin?

3) Culture journal writing

Culture Journal
Regional Culture and Language

Choose one of the topics below to write a two-page, single-spaced culture journal.

1. Fewer and fewer languages spoken in the world today. Languages of Native Americans and other groups of people are dying. Why do you think this is so? Who's responsibility is it to preserve "endangered languages" like Native American languages?

2. What languages are spoken in your country? Does your country have an official language? What is it?

3. Why do you think some states feel strongly about having "English Only" laws? How do these laws affect the lives of immigrants and other non-native speakers in the U.S.? What is your opinion about such laws?

4. Do you think standard English is the only “correct” English? Explain your answer.

Lesson: Racial Issues in the U.S.

Description: Students explore race relations, hate crime and hate crime laws, biculturalism, and multiculturalism in the U.S. Students start by looking at their feelings and attitudes about people of different races, cultures, and religions. They also discuss what they already know about some key players and events in the civil rights movement; watch a portion of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech; do some reading about present-day U.S. race relations and hate crime laws; and watch a film of their choice that deals with racial issues.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes
- to understand where stereotypes come from and how they affect perceptions of culture and language

In-Class Activities

1) Feelings, attitudes, and perceptions on race, culture, religion

Distribute the handout on page 191 titled Racism and Prejudice in the appendix. Each student responds to statements by writing *yes* or *no*. Leave open the possibility to write *maybe* or *depends*. You may have to address the following vocabulary: race/racism/racial, ethnic, prejudice, discrimination, tolerance/tolerant

It may be useful for you to respond to the statements too, especially if you have lived abroad. Some responses, especially to statements 3 and 11, could be given from the perspective of someone living in another culture.

Students share their responses in small groups and further explain any statements for which they answered *maybe* or *depends*. In whole group, facilitate discussion by asking each group to report on their responses. Wait for students to comment on their responses before giving yours.

2) What do you know?

Put students in pairs or small groups. Distribute page 192 from the appendix. Students exchange any information they know about the items on the list. Give students about 10 minutes to discuss the items. In whole group discussion, students and the teacher act as informants. While items 1-4 focus mainly on African-American racial issues in the U.S., item 5 addresses racial issues confronting many groups and U.S. society as a whole.

3) Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech

Building on the previous activity, ask students what they may know about this speech: Have you ever heard or seen video of the speech? Do you know when and where Dr. King delivered this speech? Do you know what the speech was about? Do you know why the speech considered to be one of the greatest speeches in American history? How do the messages behind the speech still apply in present-day society?

Distribute a copy of the speech (pages 193-195) and the handout on pages 196 and 197 in the appendix. Tell students when and where the speech was given (1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC) and under what social context (during the height of the Civil Rights movement in the U.S.) Put students in pairs or small groups and ask them to answer #1 on the handout titled "I Have a Dream". After about 10 minutes, review answers as a whole class. You may have to act as the informant for these questions.

Next, explain to students they will watch video of a portion of the speech. Indicate to students where this portion is on the text. Read the instructions in #2 of the "I Have a Dream" handout. Students may watch a fourth time and be instructed to highlight new vocabulary in the text.

After a third viewing, put students in pairs or small groups to answer the remaining questions on the handout. Review answers to questions during whole group discussion.

4) Racial Issues in present-day U.S. society

Distribute the article titled "Racial Issues" on page 198. Assign portions of the reading to each student. One or two students read paragraphs 1 and 2; others read paragraphs 3 and 4; the remaining paragraphs 5, 6, and 7. Ask students to summarize the paragraphs they read to the whole class.

Next, have pairs or small groups of students discuss the following:

1. Look at line 9 of the reading. The author says that African Americans came to the "land of opportunity" as slaves. Why are the words "land of opportunity" in quotations?

2. In the 1960s, Rosa Parks became famous for her refusal to give up her seat on the bus. She was arrested for sitting too close to the white section of the bus. Can this happen today?

3. In many places in the U.S. there are women's-only and men's-only private clubs, organizations, and activities. Do you think this is a form of discrimination? Explain your answer.

4. The Ku Klux Klan is an organization whose members are prejudiced against African Americans, Jews, homosexuals, and other groups. Why do you think this group continues to exist? Is this group legal in the U.S.?

5) Hate crime laws in the U.S.

Write the words "hate crime" on the blackboard and ask students if they are familiar with the term. Define the term as a whole group, then distribute the newspaper article on page 199. Give students 5-10 minutes to read the article. Review the following vocabulary words and phrases: bigotry, legislation, to be bottled up, motivated by bias, sexual

orientation, state Senate, state Assembly. Ask students to discuss the following questions:

1. What does this new law do? (Use your own words.)
2. Why did it take so long for this law to be signed?
3. As of July 11, 2000, how many states had a hate crimes law?
4. Does hate crimes legislation exist in your country? If so, have they been successful in decreasing the number of hate crimes. If not, do you think these laws are needed?
5. Why do you think Americans feel it's necessary to have hate crimes laws?

Real World Activities

1) Interview

Talk to two native-born Americans about the following questions. Bring your copy of the "I Have a Dream" speech to your interviews.

Prejudice and discrimination

What racial, cultural, or religious issues are of greatest concern in the city of Madison or the state of Wisconsin?

Do you think hate crimes should carry stronger penalties than other types of crimes?

Have you ever been a victim of prejudice or discrimination?

"I Have a Dream"

Why do you think Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech is so powerful for Americans?

What messages in his speech are relevant in today's society?

2) Culture journal writing

Choose one of the following to write a two-page, single-spaced culture journal entry.

1. Write about an incident in which you were a victim of prejudice or discrimination. What happened? What was your reaction and how did you handle the situation? How has this incident affected you?

2. Think about Martin Luther King's speech. What does this speech make you think about racial, cultural, or religious groups in your country? What groups of people in your country face prejudice and discrimination?

3) Movie

Give students the option of watching one of the following movies: Fried Green Tomatoes, Guess Who's Coming to Dinner, Finding Forrester, The Long Walk Home, Lone Star, Mississippi Masala. Students can check the movies out of the public library or rent them from a video store.

Students watch their movie during the course of a week and analyze what they see about race relations. Students write answers to the following questions:

1. Who were the main characters of the movie?

2. What racial issues, forms of prejudice, or discrimination did you observe? Were any of these issues or problems resolved? If so, how and by whom?

3. Did prejudice or discrimination occur because of laws, social class differences, culture, or language? Explain.

4. Did anyone in the movie ignore differences between races? If so, how were these people perceived or treated by others of their own race? Of the other racial groups?

5. What were some stereotypes or views different racial groups had about each other? Do you think these stereotypes still exist today?

Explain to students they may have to watch their movie or portions of their movie in order to get the main ideas of the story. Make clear to students they're not expected to understand all the language or situations in the film. But they should have a clear idea what key issues are presented. To prepare themselves, students may read some background information about their movie at: www.imdb.com

In the next class, form small groups or divide the class in half and ask students to share answers to the questions above.

Lesson: Family Relationships

Description: Students discuss family roles and relationships in their cultures and examine family relationships in daily life and in the media in the U.S. Class activities involve discussion, video clips, and follow-up discussions. This lesson may precede or follow another titled "Contemporary American Society."

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to become familiar with forms of non-verbal communication

In-Class Activities

1) Discussion of family, roles and responsibilities, changes in the family unit

Put students in pairs or small groups. Distribute handout on page 200 in the appendix. Students discuss questions for 15-20 minutes. Another option is to cut the handout into strips so that each pair or group receives one or two questions to discuss. In that case, students can discuss questions for 5-10 minutes.

Ask each pair or group to report what they discussed about one of the questions in front of them. Facilitate whole group discussion about these questions.

2) Question writing

Put students in pairs or small groups. Ask them to write three questions they have about families in the U.S. Topics can range from those previously discussed in activity 1 to topics related to communication among family members, lifestyles of family members, etc.

When finished with their questions, ask students to write theirs on the blackboard for all to read. Ask students to choose four questions from the blackboard or from handout on page 200 to copy in their notebooks. They will use these questions to interview at least four Americans.

3) Family role plays/problem solving

These family role plays call for at least one group of three students and two pairs of students. See pages 201-202 in the appendix. Distribute roles numbered 1 to students in the group of three; distribute roles numbered 2 to one pair, and roles numbered 3 to the remaining pair. If you have more students, simply duplicate and distribute more role play strips. Give students time to read their roles and help with any questions. Tell them that when they finish, they must report to the whole group about their interaction. Also point out these role play situations take place in American families and students should use

whatever language they feel is appropriate given their situation. Give students 10-15 minutes to do their role plays.

Starting with group 1, ask each student to read their roles and report their discussions to the whole group. Do the same with the remaining two groups. Facilitate whole group discussion about how families might handle these situations and what possible outcomes there could be. It may be noted here that American children, regardless of age, don't always afford their parents the same kind of respect shown in other cultures. Issues of independence, direct communication styles, and casualness of speech may be topic of discussion here.

4) Video clips from the movie "Parenthood"

Distribute handout on pages 203 and 204. The situations in the movie clips students are about to watch are the same situations they've just discussed in activity 5. Students will see how the situations were resolved. Read through each situation with the class.

Watch the first clip about Larry and his father; students only watch and listen the first time. Watch the clip again, or a third time, and ask students to make observations on the following:

What deal does Larry's father make?

What is Larry's response to this father's proposal?

Where is Larry going? What will happen to "Cool"? Do you think Larry will come back?

What cultural beliefs or values are represented in this situation?

What non-verbal forms of communication do you observe? What do they tell you about the characters and their relationship?

Next, watch the clip about Julie, Gary and their mother. Since this clip is significantly longer than the first, you may want to stop at intervals to help students with comprehension. The first time, students just watch and listen. Students watch a second and third time, and consider the following:

How does Gary react to his father's answer? How does Gary's mother react?

How does Julie and her mother communicate? What do you observe about their language and the way they speak to each other?

What is the mother's reaction when she learns Julie and Todd are married?

What do you notice about the way Gary and Todd communicate after Todd moves into the house?

How do Julie and Todd communicate when he tells her he quit his painting business and has started race car driving?

What does the mother say to Julie after Todd crashes his car in the race?

How does Gary react to his mother when she tries to keep Julie and Todd together?

What cultural beliefs or values are represented in these situations?

What non-verbal forms of communication do you observe? What do they tell you about the characters and their relationship?

5) Video about alternative families

To prepare, distribute strips cut from page 205. Ask students if they're familiar with the terms on the strips. It not, they should mingle with other students to see if anyone else knows. Discuss and define each term as a whole class activity.

Further prepare video by reviewing pages 206 and 207. Define the new vocabulary and read questions 1 and 2 aloud to be sure students understand what they're watching for. Students just watch the introductory segment titled "Breaking Ground" (This segment is about 10 minutes long.) the first time. Students should take notes as they watch the segment a second or third time. After viewing, facilitate whole group discussion based on the questions on the handout.

Prepare the next segment of the video titled "Just Like Everyone Else" (This segment is about 20 minutes long. You may want to stop halfway through to check understanding and answer questions). Read background information and questions aloud before the first viewing. Again, students should take notes during the second or third viewing. Then, put students in small groups to compare and discuss their answers. Bring the class to a whole group review of the questions and elicit comments and questions from students.

Real World Activities

1) Interview about family

Students will use the four questions gathered in activity 4 to interview at least four Americans. Encourage them to interview people of various ages, if possible. An elderly person may answer questions about family very differently from a teenager. Students should take notes during their interviews, and reread and revise them after each interview. They will use these notes for discussion in the next class.

2) Students write the culture journal assignment below.

Culture Journal
The Family

Choose one of the two topics below to write a culture journal.

1. Think about the family relationships and interactions from the movie "Parenthood". Would either of these situations happen at all? Explain why or why not. How might these two situations been handled differently or similarly in your culture?

2. What do you notice about the way the children and parents communicate in the movie "Parenthood"? What do you notice about the language they use and how they speak to each other? What do you notice about the body language they use? Do you

think this type of communication is common among American parents and children? What makes you think so?

3. Write about a time when you had a conflict with your parents. How did you both communicate your opinions or ideas? How did you speak to each other? Is it common to use some kind of body language when communicating in this type of situation? How was the conflict resolved?

Lesson: Contemporary American Society

Description: This lesson is a nice follow up or precursor to the Family Relationships lesson. Students do some in-class reading, summarizing, and discussing. They complete a questionnaire based on the reading and discuss their answers. Then, they read about and discuss a problem between immigrant parents and their teenage daughter. Next they watch and analyze a video clip from The Joy Luck Club.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes

In-Class Activities

1) Silent reading and summarizing

Students work individually or with a classmate. Distribute handout on page 208. Assign one paragraph to each student or pair of students. When finished, students summarize key points of their paragraph to the class. Each student or pair of students comments on how American society described in their paragraph compares to society in their culture. In facilitating this whole group activity, students are free to ask questions to each other and the teacher.

2) Questionnaire and discussion

Distribute handout on page 209. Students individually answer the questions and then discuss them in small groups. It's interesting to note how students from the same culture answer questions. Depending on their background, region of the country, or personal experiences they may respond differently.

3) Problem solving

Distribute pages 210 and 211. Students read the situation between immigrant parents and their teenage daughter. Put students in small groups to discuss the questions that follow.

4) Video clip from The Joy Luck Club

Students watch a video clip from The Joy Luck Club about the relationship between Waverly and her mother. Distribute page 212 in the appendix. Students just watch and listen the first time. After a second or third viewing, students discuss questions on the handout.

Real World Activities

1) Interview

Give students the following instructions:

> Share the story of Jun Gueco with an American friend, homestay family, conversation partner, or WESLI teacher. Ask them the questions discussed in activity 3 above. Then do the same with a non-native resident or non-resident of the U.S.; this means another WESLI student, a university student, a friend, or acquaintance who is not originally from the U.S. Share the story with them and ask them the same questions. Take notes during your interview. Reread and add to your notes immediately after your interview. Bring your results to the next class for discussion.

2) Culture journal

Give students the following instructions:

> **Culture Journal**
> **Contemporary American Society and Adaptation**
>
> Choose from one of the topics below to write a two-page, single-spaced culture journal.
>
> 1. Choose one of the paragraphs from the reading "Contemporary American Society" and write about how you feel about this aspect of American culture. Make observations rather than judgments. How is the

situation is similar or different in your culture? Is the situation changing in your culture?

2. What are some cultural values and beliefs that were very important to you as you were growing up during your childhood and teenage years? Explain them and tell why they were important. Are they still important to you? Do you think future generations will have the same values and beliefs? What do you think influences changes in values and beliefs?

3. To what extent have you had to adapt yourself to American values, beliefs, and lifestyles? What values, beliefs, and lifestyles from your culture clash or compliment those in the U.S.? Do you think it's necessary to adapt yourself to American culture? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?

Lesson: Friendships

Description: Students explore friendships – how they begin and are maintained. Comparisons are made between friendships students have in the U.S. and those they have in their home countries. They also learn a song.

Principal Objectives:

- to improve communication/conversation skills with native and non-native English speakers
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning

In-Class Activities

1) Introductory discussion

Put students in pairs or small groups and distribute discussion questions on page 213. Give students 10-15 minutes to talk. Ask each group to report on one question. Facilitate whole group discussion by eliciting questions or comments.

2) Article skim

Individually or in pairs, students skim the article "Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends" (handout pages 214-217) and note the different types of friends mentioned

by the author. In whole group, make a list of these friendship types on the blackboard. Next, distribute the handout on page 218 to students in pairs or groups of three and ask them to indicate the type of friendship described in each scenario. Check as a whole group using the article as a reference.

Then, ask students to revisit question #2 from previous activity and discuss the various types of friends they have.

3) Cloze song

Distribute the handout on pages 219-220. Before listening to the song, read through the handout so students will know what to listen for. Rather than filling in single words, students will have to catch lines of the song. For a lower group of students, you can adapt this to single word fill-ins. Students listen to the song the first time, and follow along if they wish. After a third listening, check answers as a whole group. Note where casual or fast, reduced speech is used: helping = helpin', have to = hafta. Listen to the song a fourth time and sing together.

Real World Activities

1) Read the article "Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends" again

Ask students to answer the following questions after reading:

1. What is the value the author finds in "convenience" friends?
2. What is the value of "historical" friends?

3. How has the author's opinion of what it means to be a friend changed?

2) Students write the following culture journal assignment

Culture Journal
Friends

Read the article "Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends" Then choose **one** of the topics below to write about for your culture journal.

1. This article originally appeared in a woman's magazine, mainly for women. If it had been written for men, would the categories have been different? Which ones might be different?

2. The author says she doesn't think it's necessary for friends to always agree. What *must* you agree on if you are to be close friends (for example, politics, religious beliefs, moral values)?

3. Write your own categories of friendship. Think of a name for each category and describe the relationships people have within each category.

Lesson: Popular culture

Description: Students look at popular culture in the U.S. by discussing what they already know about television, movies, music, fashion, sports, and other areas. They also consider how popular culture differs from region to region. Students are encouraged to explore pop culture around them and gather information to be shared with the class. This lesson may be used in conjunction with the lesson on observations or regional culture/language.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to learn to make generalizations about culture and avoid making stereotypes
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

In-Class Activities

1) Pop culture discussion

Distribute the discussion questions on pages 223-224. Give students 10-15 minutes to discuss them in pairs or small groups. In whole group, facilitate discussion about these questions.

2) Students as informants

Bring in popular magazines like “People”, “Sports Illustrated”, “TV Guide”, “Rolling Stone”, and “Glamour”. Catalogues or newspaper advertising inserts featuring the latest fashions are also useful. Bring in a radio tuned to a top-40 station or a small collection of CDs by popular bands to play softly in the background. A list of bestselling books can be found in a local newspaper or on the Internet. The New York Times current bestseller list can be found at www.nyt.com.

Give students time to page through the materials to identify “what’s hot” in popular culture. Students more familiar with aspects of popular culture explain people, places, and things that are “hot” to their classmates. Students acting as informants should also explain how they’ve learned about these aspects of popular culture.

3) Looking at popular culture

It’s possible students may not know very much or anything at all about popular culture in the U.S. Discussion questions on page 225 will help students identify some aspects of popular culture while providing a basis for further discussion.

Real World Activities

1) Culture journal and observation task

Give students the following instructions. Note that this activity is similar to the real world activity assigned in the observations lesson.

Culture Journal and Observation
Popular Culture in the U.S.

Your homework is to learn more about one aspect of pop culture in the U.S. Choose any of the activities below.

1. Watch a popular TV program and answer these questions:

    a. What's the name of the program?

    b. What time and day is the program on TV?

    c. What type of program is it? a comedy? a sitcom? a drama? a game show? a talk show?

    d. Is it similar to any kind of program you have in your country? If so, how? If not, how is it different?

    e. How do people communicate on this program? Do they use a lot of body language? What other things do you notice about they way people speak?

    f. How does this program reflect other aspects of popular culture?

    g. Why do you think it's popular?

2. Read/look at a popular magazine and answer these questions:

    a. What's the name of the magazine?

    b. What type of magazine is it? What is its focus?

c. Who is the magazine's target audience? teenagers? women? men? people ages 20-35? music lovers?

d. What are some of the articles about? (this may be related to question "b")

e. What do you like or dislike about the magazine?

f. How does this magazine reflect other aspects of pop culture?

g. Why do you think it’s popular?

3. Go to a CD/record store and answer these questions:

a. How are CD/recordings arranged in the store?

b. What appear to be some of the most popular CDs available now? Who are the most popular singers/bands now?

c. How can you tell the difference between the different music styles of pop singers/bands?

d. Find a pop CD and look at the cover and song titles. What's the singer/group's name? What the name of the CD? What kinds of topics does this singer/group seem to sing about?

e. How does this CD or other CDs reflect other aspects of pop culture?

4. Go to the mall or walk up and down State Street to look at different kinds of fashions. Answer the following questions.

a. Compare the types of fashions sold in at least three different shops. Write the names of the shops and tell what type of people buy clothes at these shops. For example, young people generally shop at the Gap.

b. What are the pop, or "hot" fashions for this spring and summer?

c. Who do you think can afford these "hot" fashions?

d. How do these fashions compare with styles in your country?

e. How does fashion reflect on other aspects of culture?

2) Interview

Students should interview three or four Americans and use handouts from pages 223 and 224 from Activity 1 to fill in information they gather about television, music, movies, fashion, sports, books/literature, and other aspects of popular culture. Also add the following questions to their interview:

What things make up Wisconsin popular culture? In other words, what is unique about Wisconsin popular culture as compared with other states in the U.S.?

Suggest to students they interview people of different ages and genders to get a larger picture of the aspects of popular culture today. Students will report their findings in the next class.

Lesson: Ground Hog Day

Description: Students are introduced to the topic of Ground Hog Day, first by asking them what they already know about the holiday. Next, they look at some historical aspects of the holiday and follow up by watching a clip from the movie "Ground Hog Day". Students are asked to report whether the local celebrity ground hog saw its shadow, therefore, it may be best to present this lesson prior to Ground Hog Day.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior

In-Class Activities

1) What do you know about…?

Students are asked what they may already know about Ground Hog Day and discuss with the whole group. Prior to class, it's also possible to ask students to research Ground Hog Day for homework and then report their findings to the group. Students can use interviews with native speakers and the official Punxsutawney Phil website (www.groundhog.org) for information.

The teacher can note historical information on the blackboard as students report. It might be useful for the teacher to know what Punxsutawney Phil's prediction was last year as a precursor to the next activity.

2) Video clip from the movie "Ground Hog Day"

Preview the video clip by noting the characters, setting, and Ground Hog Day festivities typical in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. The following information should be provided:

> Bill Murray plays a big-city TV weatherman assigned to report on Ground Hog Day in Punxsutawney, a relatively small town in Pennsylvania. He doesn't want to cover this story because he thinks small town people and their Ground Hog Day celebration are stupid. He speaks with a sarcastic, cynical, and insincere tone of voice. Also pay attention to his facial expressions.
>
> Andie MacDowell plays the TV news producer who goes with the weatherman to report on Ground Hog Day. She loves the celebration and thinks small-town people are friendly. She loves the small-town life and is excited to be there, so she speaks with a tone of voice which shows her excitement.

Tell students they'll watch the video clip two times – first to see and hear what happens during this celebration every year, and second to listen for tone of voice and facial expressions. Discuss after each viewing relevant points related to the celebration and how people can communicate their feelings through tone of voice and facial expression. Watch clip again, if necessary.

Real World Activities

Students must go to www.groundhog.org and collect data from Phil's last five predictions – Did he see his shadow? What was significant on the day he saw his shadow? How many times in history has Phil seen/not seen his shadow? What is Phil's accuracy rate?

On Ground Hog Day, students must go back to the website to learn about Phil's latest prediction. My students are also asked to visit www.computingcorner.com/holidays/ghogday/grouofficial.html This website lists official groundhogs across the US, including our local groundhog, Jimmy. Students must also find out Jimmy's prediction for the coming spring.

Students who don't have access to a computer may interview a native speaker about the predictions, consult a newspaper, or watch the TV news.

Lesson: Food and Health

Description: Students discuss food from various cultures and examine lifestyles that contribute to good or bad health. The lesson begins with discussion questions and a mini-quiz about American food, eating habits, and health. The lesson also includes food/eating surveys, a video clip from The Joy Luck Club, and a class meal at a local restaurant. (An alternative is a pot luck meal at the school.) This lesson may precede or follow the lesson on Leisure Time.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to recognize different types of social situations that call for different kinds of communication styles, vocabulary, and behavior
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

In-Class Activities

1) True/false quiz

Put students in pairs and distribute the true/false quiz on pages 226 and 227. Students read the statements and indicate whether they think the statements are true or false. Students should give some explanation for why they think statements are false. Check answers as a whole group.

2) Food discussion

Put students in pairs or small groups to discuss questions on page 229. Ask each group to report on their discussions about one question.

3) Inventory of eating and health habits

Distribute to each student pages 230 and 231. Students must complete their eating and health habits inventory. When they finish, put students in pairs to discuss their inventories.

4) Prepare interview assignment

Distribute pages 232-234. Students will interview at least four people about their eating/health habits. See instructions in real-world activity #1.

5) Video clip from The Joy Luck Club

Introduce the clip by with a whole class discussion about the following:

> Have you ever been confused or unsure about what to do when sharing a meal with people from another culture? Consider things like who starts to eat, who serves the food, how much food to take, what utensils to use, whether speaking during a meal is appropriate, how and if you should excuse yourself from the table, etc.

Distribute reading “Four Directions” by Amy Tan (handout on pages 235-237). Give students an overview of characters in the story and answer the pre-view question.

> Waverly – A Chinese-American woman in her thirties. She is engaged to Rich and has brought him to her family’s home for dinner. Waverly wants Rich to make a good impression on her hard-to-please mother.
>
> Rich – Waverly’s fiancée. He is Anglo-American and a few years younger than Waverly.
>
> Lindo – Waverly’s mother. She immigrated to the U.S. from China before Waverly was born. She has high expectations from her daughter.
>
> Shoshana – Waverly’s daughter from a previous relationship.
>
> Can you predict some of the problems that might arise?

Students just watch and listen the first time. Prior to the second viewing, distribute handout on page 238, read over the questions with students, and explain they will answer the questions in pairs or small groups after watching the clip again. Share answers during a whole group discussion.

6) Class meal

Have a class meal at a local restaurant. Lunch worked well for my class since it overlapped the noon hour. An evening meal may be scheduled, however the accompanying observation activity may have to be revised to account for the difference in social context, level of formality, type of food served, etc.

Lunch at a typical American-style cafeteria or diner

Prior to class, you should go to the cafeteria/diner and ask for copies of the menu. Also assess how customers order, whether or not tips are required, if food is dine-in, take-out, or both, whether daily specials are served. You should also prepare students for the outing during a previous class. Advise them about how much money they can expect to pay (if the school is not covering expenses) and what type of restaurant they will visit. Be aware of foods students may not be able to eat due to cultural or religious practices or health restrictions.

In a previous class or on the day of the restaurant visit, distribute a menu (example on pages 239 and 240). Review potentially new vocabulary: made from scratch, homemade, club sandwich, melts, soup and sandwich, takeout/to go/grab and go, side orders/sides, daily specials.

Ask students choose an item they want to order and ask questions about menu ingredients. Give instructions for ordering, paying, tipping at this particular restaurant.

During the restaurant visit, assign observation task on page 241 in the appendix. During and after the meal, students should make observations about their surroundings and discuss their answers with each other. In the next class, discuss how their observations might differ from what they experience or observe in their cultures. A follow-up observation is outlined in Real World Activity #3 below.

Lunch at a Japanese restaurant (or any restaurant serving food of a specific culture)

Follow the instructions above to prepare for a visit to the restaurant. If possible, use Japanese students as resources for describing types of foods, ingredients, how to eat the food, and rules of etiquette at a Japanese restaurant. Also use them to help the class order food, if necessary.

When the meal is over, ask Japanese students to comment on the following questions:

How was the Japanese food served here different from the food served in Japan?

What features of this restaurant have been Americanized?

What rules of etiquette are or are not observed in this Japanese restaurant?

Complete the observation task described above and follow up with Real World Activity #3.

Real World Activities

1) Eating/health habits survey

Using the survey handout on pages 232-234 in the appendix, students will interview two other WESLI students who are not from the same culture, and Americans. Students should ask questions themselves and take notes during interviews. All notes will be used in class discussion next class.

2) Culture journal writing

Culture Journal
Food and Eating Habits

Choose one of the topics below to write a culture journal.

1. Imagine a North American friend is going to visit your country. Write a list of rules to help him/her get along well. When writing your rules, try to predict where the North American might make mistakes in your culture.

2. Write about a time when you were confused about how to eat or how to behave during a meal in your homestay, in the dorm cafeteria, or in a restaurant in the U.S. Explain what happened and why the situation was confusing for you. What did you learn from this experience?

3. Write about your observations of U.S. eating habits and health/exercise habits. Consider media and advertising messages for weight-loss plans, dieting, and fitness programs. Also consider food sold in supermarkets, restaurants (including fast food restaurants), cooperatives, and farmer's markets. How do you think lifestyle factors into eating and exercise habits?

3) Go to a different restaurant or coffee shop and do the same observation task you did during class meal. Take notes on your observations and answer the questions that appear on page 241.

Lesson: End of session wrap up

Description: Students reflect on their work in the course and on their cultural experiences both in and out of the classroom. Students discuss questions they've answered in their culture journals. Students also fill out end-of-session evaluations. A board game focusing on communication and culture wraps up the session.

Principal Objectives:

- to learn about American culture and the culture of classmates
- to become more aware of one's own culture and develop a greater understanding of how one's own culture affects language and culture learning
- to develop skills of observation that help improve understanding of English and how it's used within American and other cultures

In-Class Activities

1) End of session reflection

In a previous class, students are given handouts on pages 242 and 243 depending on whether they'll continue to stay in the U.S. or return to their home country. Students should answer the questions on their handout as part of a culture journal assignment, and then come to class prepared to share some of their reflections in pairs or small group discussion. Give students ample time to discuss their reflections in depth. Twenty to 30 minutes is optimal. To create a nice last-day-of-class atmosphere, serve snacks and drinks.

2) Course evaluation

Distribute the course evaluation on page 244. Give students at least 20 minutes to answer the questions completely. Ask students to write complete sentences in paragraph form to provide the most useful feedback. I prefer students to write their names on evaluations. At my school, evaluations must first be handed in to the director who reads them and then gives them to me. I explain this process to students before they begin their evaluations.

3) Conversation board game

Distribute the board game on page 245. Provide dice and pegs to move around the board. As students move around the board, they discuss the topics indicated on their space. Feel free to join students in playing the game.

Real World Activities

None

Session Topics

Cross-cultural themes selected by students for discussion and exploration

Topics for the Spring 2, 2002 session.....

Relationships: family relationships
friendships/interactions with friends

Verbal and non-verbal communication: American English accents
American slang
hugging
kissing
shaking hands

American/Global society: characteristics of US regions/states
laws - social, environmental
traditional/pop music in US/other countries
ceremonies in the US/other countries
culture shock/cultural differences

American lifestyles: food
religion
reality TV shows

Session Topics

Cross-cultural themes selected by students for discussion and exploration

Stereotypes of Americans: They are rude.
They are selfish.

American communication styles: directness
volume – “Americans speak loudly.”
the use of eye contact
making yourself clear - “They don't always understand my English.”
the use of "Excuse me" and "I’m sorry."

Concepts of time: punctuality/schedules
open/close time of shops, restaurants, bars, etc.

Body language/contact: physical contact - hugging, kissing, shaking hands
eye contact
body language and communication

American food/habits: preparing your own food
tipping in restaurants
availability of foods from other countries

TV/popular culture: commercials
talk shows

Other topics: law enforcement (police)
taxes
health/medical care

Session Topics

Cross-cultural themes selected by students for discussion and exploration

Leisure time/free time: camping
party culture
American football/sports

American society: Native American culture
ideas about Asians, African Americans, "others"

Relationships: ideas about marriage
gay/lesbian/alternative lifestyles
dating
parent/child relationships

Communication: accents
verbal/non-verbal ways to show love, respect, and trust
discussing problems/arguments/debate

American food/habits: customs around meals
items on the menu
tastes in food

Popular culture: movies
famous or infamous Americans in history

Other topics: rural living
historical time periods/holidays
American geography/what places are famous for
immigrant life

700 Communication/Culture

Teacher: Brenda Ferreira, Room 205

Class goals: You will learn about American culture, your own culture and the cultures of your classmates through communicative activities. You'll learn active listening skills in this class as you discuss cultural topics. Also, we'll talk about skills you can use to initiate and/or participate in conversations with native or non-native English speakers. One big component of the class is learning how to be your own teacher. Activities in the class and homework assignments are designed to help you learn language and culture outside the WESLI classroom.

Materials: There is no required book for this class. I may give you supplementary readings.

Tests: We won't have tests in this class.

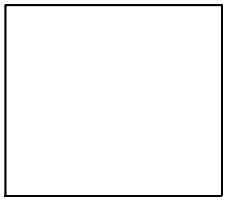
Homework: You must complete all homework. This includes weekly, two-page culture journals, observations, and interviews with native and non-native English speakers outside WESLI.

Attendance: Come to all classes. Your grade is based largely on class participation. If you are late 3 times, you will be considered absent for one day. If you have more than 4 absences, you cannot pass the class.

Grades: Your final grade will be determined largely by your participation in class and completion of homework assignments. This means you must attend class and participate in all activities and discussions to the best of your ability. I will also consider your performance on the goals above as well as your ability and willingness to communicate verbally and in writing, and your understanding of some class readings.

Questions? If you have questions, problems, or suggestions, see me in Room 205, or send me an email at: XXXXXX

Day 1 – Interview activity



Name _____

Birthplace/Birthdate _____

Native language(s) _____

Other languages _____

Family members _____

Hobbies _____

Past employment _____

Goals _____

Travels _____

Word association

*Poster Education 1997.

Word Associations - Answers

1. soap opera, HBO, prime time, sweeps week, the "remote"
They are all expressions that relate to TV. TV is a big part of U.S. culture.
Is this true of other cultures?
What TV words has your culture invented?

2. granola, tree hugger, Earth nugget, vegan
All are slang nicknames for people concerned with the environment.
Nicknames are sometimes a term of endearment: U.S. culture recognizes that these people have some merit. Sometimes the names make fun of them or are critical: U.S. culture does not take them too seriously. This is not true of all cultures. Some countries have very few environmentalists.

3. U-Haul, Allied Van Lines, the Sunbelt, snow birds
They are all related to moving. The U.S. is a nation on the move; it is common for a family or individuals to move frequently. Every year, one out of every five families moves to a new home. In some cultures, a family lives in one home for generations.

4. Tommy Hilfiger, Nautica, Polo, Adidas, Nike
The are all name-brand clothes. In U.S. culture, wearing name-brand clothes can be a sign of status.

5. the jock, the brain, the cheerleader, the geek, the burnout/the druggie
These are nicknames for people considered "different." Often, high school students will single out and publicly label people. Other cultures may consider this very rude.

6. Mount Rushmore, Washington Monument, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial
They are all monuments to Presidents of the United States. Former presidents are generally respected in the U.S. In some cultures, leaders may be thought of as tyrants or dictators.

7. Holiday Inn, a Winnebago, theme park, a day off, a three-day weekend
They are all related to vacations. In the U.S., the average family goes on vacation, most often in the summer months. However, in poorer countries, families may never go on vacation.

8. bingo, Atlantic City, Reno, Caesar's Palace, the lottery, cards, scratch-off cards, Powerball!
They are all related to gambling. Many forms of gambling are accepted in the U.S., but in other cultures it may be considered taboo.

*Poster Education 1997.

Talk to your classmates about your weekend.

Did you.....

1. ..... talk to any Americans/native English speakers? (This includes small talk or longer conversations.) If you talked to Americans/native English speakers, who were they and what did you talk about?

Did you talk to any non-native English speakers? Who were they and what did you talk about?

If you didn't speak English with anybody, go to the next question.

2. ..... observe anything interesting about American culture? If so, what did you observe and where did you observe it? What did it make you think about your own culture?

If you didn't make any observations about American culture, go to the next question.

3. ..... watch any American TV programs or movies? If so, what did you watch? What does the program or movie tell you about American culture?

If you didn't watch TV or see a movie, go to the next question.

4. ..... do anything with people from your own culture? If so, who were they and what did you do? If you had been in your country, would you have done the same activity in the same way?

Read the following information and indicate whether the behavior would be common and acceptable in your culture. Notice that many of the suggestions have to do with making the first move. Discuss your answers.

Meeting and Getting to Know Others	*Common in my culture? Yes/No*
1. Don't wait for the other person to say "Hello" first.	_____
2. Introduce yourself to others; don't wait for another person to introduce you.	_____
3. Reintroduce yourself to someone who has forgotten your name.	_____
4. Look people in the eye and smile when you first meet them.	_____
5. Start conversations with people.	_____
6. Use the person's name at the beginning and end of the conversation.	_____
7. Don't give only short answers or say only "Yes" or "No" to questions. Give more information in your answers.	_____
8. Express your opinions and feelings so that people will know how you think and feel.	_____
9. Ask for other people's opinions and accept differences in their thinking.	_____
10. Try not to talk too much in conversations but don't be silent either. Participate in conversations.	_____

11. Compliment others on what they do and what they say. _____

12. Always give feedback on what people say. That is, show that you are listening; react and respond to their words. _____

13. Tell people that you are interested in getting together with them. _____

14. Once you've met someone with whom you would like to be friends, invite him or her to an activity, a meal, or to your home. _____

15. Take the time to be friendly with your co-workers and neighbors. _____

*Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Steps of a conversation

1. _____ - "Hello"
   "Good morning/afternoon/evening."
   "What's up?"
   "How are you?"
   formal introductions

2. starting a conversation - using small talk about a shared experience
   "stranger" topics: weather, time, schedules, news, sports
   "friend/acquaintance" topics: past/future events, gossip, office talk

3. sustaining a conversation - _____

   _____

4. _____ - short period of silence followed by "Well….";
   packing up; slowly moving back or away from speaker; checking watch

5. _____- _____

*Barber 2001.

Answers:

Steps of a conversation

1. greeting/introductions - "Hello"
   "Good morning/afternoon/evening."
   "What's up?"
   "How are you?"
   formal introductions

2. starting a conversation - using small talk about a shared experience
   "stranger" topics: weather, time, schedules, news, sports
   "friend/acquaintance" topics: past/future events, gossip, office talk

3. sustaining a conversation - involves discussion of topics that may not be shared; exchange of information and discussing topics at a deeper level; listening and response is important; body language, including eye contact, may be used; speakers move from topic to topic; open-ended questions are used to continue conversation

4. closing a conversation - short period of silence followed by "Well….";
   packing up a bag; slowly moving back or away from speaker; checking watch

5. saying goodbye - "Goodbye"; "Bye"
   "See you later"; "Later"
   "It was nice to meet you."

*Barber 2001.

Conversation Topics

Some good things to talk about with new friends or acquaintances include the following:

1. The country you or the other person is from (What is it like? How does it compare to the United States?)

2. What the other person is studying or has studied in school (What are you studying in school? What is your favorite class? What do you want to do after you graduate?)

3. The work that the other person does (What kind of work do you do? Do you like it? What do you enjoy about it? How did you decide to go into teaching, programming, engineering, electronics, painting, etc.?)

4. The U.S. (What do you like about the U.S.? What interesting things have happened to you since you came here? What places do you recommend visiting?)

5. Your family

6. Current events

7. The weather

Topics may vary according to the situation, the people you are with and the type of function you are attending. There are, however, some subjects that you should not talk about, especially with someone you don't know well. These include the following:

1. How much money you have or make

2. How much someone paid for something

3. Sexual subjects

4. Class, status, or racial issues

5. A person's age

6. A person's weight

These are very sensitive subjects because North Americans take them very personally. Even though you do not mean to offend them, they may be upset if you ask questions about these subjects.

*Genzel, Graves Genzel, and Genzel 1994.

Small Talk Interaction #1

Situation: Two students are standing near the classroom door. It's almost time for class to start.

Student 1: Hi, are you in this class?

Student 2: Yes.

Student 1: My name is Lily (female); Louis (male). You are…?

Student 2: Mara (female); Sy (male)

Student 1: Where are you from?

Student 2: India.

Student 1: Did you come to this country to study?

Student 2: Yes.

Student 1: What are you studying?

Student 2: Engineering.

Student 1: How long do you plan to stay in the U.S.?

Student 2: I'm not sure.

Student 1: When did you come here?

Student 2: Three months ago.

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Small Talk Interaction #2

Situation: Two students are standing near a classroom door. Class will begin soon.

Student 1: Hi. Aren't you in this class with me?

Student 2: Yes, I thought I'd seen you here before.

Student 1: Did you finish the essay?

Student 2: No, I'm having trouble organizing my thoughts.

Student 1: So am I. I think I'll try to map out my ideas first.

Student 2: Yeah, that's a good idea. I hope it helps.

Student 1: Yeah, me too. (Class is starting and the students walk into the classroom.) Well, good luck on your paper.

Student 2: You too.

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Small talk role play cards

You walk into a coffee shop and see your classmate doing homework. Go to your friend's table and make small talk.	You are in a coffee shop and doing your homework. One of your classmates sees you and starts to make small talk.
You are waiting for your bus at a stop outside the school. After waiting a few minutes, it begins to rain. You and the other people waiting for the bus are getting wet. The person next to you begins to make small talk.	You have rushed to the bus stop after leaving the office late. You are waiting at the bus stop with other people. You're getting wet because it has begun to rain. Make small talk with the person standing next to you.
You arrive home after a long day at school. Your roommate has been home for a while and has made dinner for the two of you. He/she begins to make small talk with you.	Your roommate has just come home. You've been home from school for a while and have already cooked dinner for the two of you. Start small talk with your roommate.

Small talk role play cards (continued)

You're standing in a long line at a food cart. You're waiting to order lunch when the person behind you starts to make small talk.	You're waiting in a long line at a food cart on your lunch break. You begin to make small talk with the person in front of you.
You arrive in your Communication/Culture class 10 minutes early. As you sit down, one of your classmates walks into the room. Begin small talk with your classmate.	You arrive at your Communication/Culture class 10 minutes early. One of your classmates is already there. He/she begins a small talk conversation with you.
You are having a cup of tea in the student lounge during your 10-minute class break. Your grammar teacher stops to make small talk.	You are a grammar teacher who is taking a 10-minute class break. You go to the student lounge to get a cup of tea. You see your student in the lounge and begin to make small talk.

Here are examples of two very different interactions.

1) Jim: "How do you like American food?"

Aki: "I like it."

2) Jim: "How do you like American food?"

Aki: "It's OK. It's a little too fatty for me. I'm used to a lot of fresh vegetables and rice. Is there a restaurant around here that serves healthier food?"

****

Michael: "Hi, Diane. How are your classes going?"

Diane: "Not too bad, but I have a lot of work. I'm getting pretty tired of writing papers."

Michael: "It sounds like you're ready for the winter break."

Diane: "I sure am."

Michael: "What are you planning to do?"

Diane: "I'm not sure yet. I'm still making up my mind. How about you?"

Michael: "I'm going to Lake Tahoe with friends."

Diane: "Are you planning to ski?"

Michael: "That's why I'm going. Do you ski?"

Diane: "Yeah, I do, and I've been to Lake Tahoe quite a few times. Will this be your first time there?"

Michael: "No, I've been there a few times. I like it, but it's always so crowded."

Diane: "I know what you mean." (They continue to talk about skiing.)

Questions:

1) How many questions were asked until the speakers found a topic to discuss?

2) How many questions were asked throughout the dialogue?

* Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Dialogue – George and Wan

* Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

The Body of a Conversation/Sustaining a Conversation - Tips

Expressions for interrupting and getting yourself into the conversation

You may find yourself at a party, a friend's house, or in other social situations where there are many people you don't know. It's awkward to walk up to two people and say, "Hi, I'm …." if they are in the middle of a conversation. Here are some strategies for getting yourself into a conversation and sustaining the conversation.

1. First observe the speakers. Are they standing or sitting? Do they look relaxed or tense? Are they eating? Drinking? Are they keeping eye contact with each other or are their eyes drifting?

2. Try to eavesdrop unobtrusively to hear what they are talking about. If it seems they are talking about something that sounds very personal or are upset, it's best not to interrupt. But if they're talking about some general topic, think about what you could add to the conversation. Then, you can say something like:

> "Excuse me. I couldn't help but overhear you talking about....."
> "Excuse me. Were you just talking about.....?"
> "Excuse me. I just heard you talking about..... " and then follow up with a question

3. You can also eavesdrop to listen for breaks in the conversation. If you hear that two people have finished talking about a topic, you may want to jump in before they start talking about a new subject. At this point you could introduce yourself, "Hi, I'm …. This is a great party."

4. Be aware if someone looks at you briefly and smiles, thus inviting you into the conversation.

Changing the subject

When you want to change the subject because you don't know very much about it, you can stay within the same general topic but move the discussion in a different direction by using transition phrases like:

> "I don't know very much about....., but I'm really interested in....."
> "I haven't had much experience with....."
> "We don't have..... in my country, so I don't know very much about that. But we do have....."

You may also find yourself in a situation where there's nothing more to say about a topic. To the change the topic completely many native speakers often pause briefly then use words like "so", "well", and "say" (you can sometimes use "hey" in very informal conversations in which you know the speaker well) at the beginning of an open-ended question or statement that introduces another subject and invites you to say more. These words are often spoken with higher intonation. This indicates a change of subject or the end of a conversation.

Instead of asking:	Say this:
"So, do you like.....?"	"So, what (food, sports, movies, etc.) do you like?"
"Do you like Madison?"	"Well, what do you think about Madison?"
"Do you like your classes?"	"So, how are your classes going?"
"Do you know about my country?"	"Say, have you ever been to my country?"
"Is the Super Bowl a very popular event?"	"Hey, why is the Super Bowl so popular?"

Student A1
You are talking with your friend about the latest movie you saw. As you talk, your conversation can move to a discussion about favorite movies and movie stars. You are standing casually and you are focused on your conversation.

Student A2
You are talking with your friend about the latest movie you saw. As you talk, your conversation can move to a discussion about favorite movies and movie stars. You are standing casually and you are focused on your conversation.

Student B
You join the party late. You should try to introduce yourself and talk to someone. Hang around for a few minutes and eavesdrop on the conversations around you. When you hear someone talk about something you can talk about, interrupt and introduce yourself by saying, "Excuse me. I couldn't help but overhear you talking about....." Then introduce yourself and add something to that conversation.

Student C1
You are sitting and talking with a friend about the upcoming Super Bowl game on Sunday, but you don't know very much about the Super Bowl or American football. Try to change the subject of conversation from the Super Bowl to some other sports-related subject. You can say something like, "I'm not a big fan of American football, but I really enjoy....."

Student C2
You are sitting and start a conversation with a friend about the upcoming Super Bowl game this Sunday. Start the conversation by saying, "So, are you going to watch the big game on Sunday?"

Student D1
A neighbor who was invited to the party has just met you and asks you all kinds of questions about your country. You are both standing when you have a conversation about your country, but then there's nothing left to say. Keep her attention by starting up a different topic for discussion.

Student D2
You are the neighbor of the host of the party. You meet an international student and have a conversation about his/her country, but you run out of things to say. It's time to move on to a new topic.

Student E1
You are a WESLI student planning to study university in the U.S. You meet someone who is a first-year graduate student at UW-Madison. Ask this person questions about his/her classes and university experience. Both you and the student are standing.

Student E2
You are first-year graduate student at UW-Madison. A WESLI student asks you lots of questions about your experience at the UW. After a while, change the topic. Use the word "So, ….." followed by a brief pause to show you're changing the subject. Using an open-ended question to change the subject is a good idea.

Characteristics of Active Listening

Active listeners do these things....

1. ... show understanding - Listeners show they understand the speaker by saying things like, "Oh, I see." "OK, right." "Yeah, I got it." "Uh-huh." They may also repeat or restate (paraphrase) what the speaker said. Nodding your head is another way to show the speaker you understand.

2. ... show support and empathy for the speaker - Listeners respond by showing positive support or agreement with the speaker. The listener might say things like, "Oh, I know what you mean." "I hear you." "I've been there before." "That's good." "That's too bad." "Are you serious?"

3. ... give an emotional response - Listeners respond to what the speaker is saying. The emotional response is not given to the speaker, but to the topic. You might say something like, "Wow!" "Oh no!" "No way!" "I don't believe it." "Oh my god!"

4. ... elaborate on what the speaker says - Listeners add information to what the speaker is saying to help the speaker keep his or her conversation going.

5. ... request information - Listeners ask questions or ask for clarification.

*Adapted from Anderson and Gallow 2001.

The body of a conversation/sustaining a conversation – Video clip from "Live with Regis and Kelly"

Watch the conversation between show hosts Regis Philbin and Kelly Ripa. Think about how they sustain a conversation and answer the questions below. Understand that their main purpose is to entertain an audience, so this is not a truly authentic conversation. Some of the topics they discuss were planned in advance to fit with the day's program. Still, Regis and Kelly use some qualities of active listening.

1. Review the characteristics of active listening. Which do you see or hear that demonstrate:

show understanding –

show support and empathy for the speaker –

give an emotional response –

elaborate on what the speaker says –

request information -

2. Observe the non-verbal forms of communication. What non-verbals help them sustain the conversation?

3. What made it difficult or easy to follow their conversation?

4. How did their conversation compare with the conversations you've had with Americans?

Role play 1: Offering furniture to a friend

Situation: Jennifer calls Shu, a friend, to offer him some used furniture for his new apartment.

Jennifer: Hi, Shu. This is Jennifer.

Shu: Hi, Jennifer. How are you?

Jennifer: Fine. How do you like you new apartment?

Shu: Oh, it's great! It's so much bigger than my old apartment.

Jennifer: Yes, it's nice to have more space. (Brief pause) The reason I'm calling is that I have some furniture I'm not using and thought you might want it.

Shu: Oh, that would be great! Can I stop by and see it?

Jennifer: Sure. How about this evening?

Shu: This evening's fine.

Jennifer: Good. Have you finished unpacking yet?

Shu: Another day or two and I should be done.

Jennifer: Well, don't work too hard.

Shu: OK. See you tonight.

Jennifer: OK. Bye.

****

Questions for discussion

1. What's the point of this conversation?

2. Does Jennifer bring up the topic first?

3. How quickly does Jennifer get to the point of the conversation?

4. Is any other topic discussed?

5. Does Shu ask any questions about the furniture? What do you think he will do if he doesn't like it?

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Role play 2: Offering furniture to the Salvation Army

Situation: Yuru calls the Salvation Army to see if they would like some furniture she no longer wants.

Salvation Army clerk: Hello. Can I help you?
Yuru: Yes, I have some used furniture I'd like to give away. Would your organization be interested?
Clerk: Is it in good shape?
Yuru: Yes. It's old but nothing is broken.
Clerk: Then we could definitely use it. Would you like us to pick it up?
Yuru: Yes. Can you come and get it Saturday morning?
Clerk: Saturday's fine. What's your address?
Yuru: 110 Elm.
Clerk: OK. We'll be there Saturday.
Yuru: Thanks a lot.

****

Questions for discussion
1. How does Yuru get to the point differently than Jennifer in the first dialogue?

2. Is the clerk's question "Is it in good shape?" appropriate? Would it have been appropriate in the first dialogue?

3. How does the closing in this dialogue differ from the closing in the first?

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Role play 3: Two neighbors go shopping

Situation: Camila and Light are neighbors. They usually go to the supermarket together to save gas. After shopping this week, Camila invites Light to her apartment for tea. They've just finished a cup of tea.

Light: Well, Camila. Thanks for the ride and the tea. I'd better put my food in the refrigerator.
Camila: You sure you wouldn't like some more tea?
Light: I really would, but I've got a lot of things to do today.
Camila: OK. See you later.
Light: Thanks again. Bye

****

Questions for discussion

1. At what point does Light decide to leave? Is this a natural break in the conversation?

2. How does Camila let Light know he is welcome to stay?

3. What excuses does Light offer? Were they appropriate? Why or why not?

4. If Camila had been ready to end the conversation (instead of Light), what do you think she could have said to let Light know?

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Role play 4: Old acquaintances meet at a party

Situation: Toshi and Lim used to work together at a computer firm. Six months ago Toshi started a new job at another firm. They meet at a party.

Toshi: Lim. How's it going?
Lim: Fine. How's the new job?
Toshi: Oh, I think it's working out really well. How's the old place?
Lim: Oh, the same. They hired a few new people that seem to know what they're doing.
Toshi: That's good. How's the boss?
Lim: Did you hear that she's getting married next month to John Garner?
Toshi: You're kidding! Is she here?
Lim: Yeah, over there by the stairs.
Toshi: I think I'll go over and congratulate her.
Lim: OK. See you later.

****

Questions for discussion

1. What topics do Lim and Toshi discuss? What does this show about their relationship?

2. How does Toshi end the conversation? Given their relationship, is this closing appropriate?

3. Do you think Toshi and Lim will have another conversation during the party?

4. Who do you think Toshi feels closer to -- Lim or his old boss?

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Closing a Conversation – Points to Remember

1. In conversations where there is a specific point to be discussed, Americans generally get to the point quickly. In a business conversation with someone you don't know, the point is generally started immediately. In a conversation with a person you know, it is more likely that a few social questions will be asked before and after the point of the conversation.

2. A conversation with a specific point begins to close down when the point has been discussed. In a social conversation, it begins to close down when the topics the speakers have in common have been discussed.

3. An excuse is often used to end a conversation. In a business conversation with someone you don't know, however, an excuse is not necessary.

4. It is more appropriate to end a conversation at a natural break in the conversation, such as at the end of a story or topic, after having finished a cup of coffee or when someone else joins the conversation.

5. A speaker who wants to wind down a conversation will give verbal and/or nonverbal cues to the other speaker. Nonverbal cues may include a change in body position, looking at your watch, or gathering your things together. A speaker in a telephone conversation can only use verbal cues to show that he or she wants to close the conversation. This may involve summing up, giving such cues as "OK", "Well," and/or making arrangements to speak to the person at a later time.

*From Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Observations or judgments?

Review the definitions below.
Observations: Things we see, hear, and know to be true. They are not opinions, reactions, or personal feelings.
Judgments: Reactions and feelings about what we observe. They may not always reflect the truth.

Read the sentences below and decide whether they are observations (O) or judgments (J).

1. _____ "She has no sense of humor. She doesn't laugh at things that are funny."

2. _____ "He sighed and looked tired."

3. _____ "They are not very polite."

4. _____ "That woman is very aggressive because she always stands very close to men when she is talking to them."

5. _____ "The two men hugged each other when they met at the airport."

6. _____ "She didn't like my cooking. She didn't ask for a second serving of anything."

7. _____ "I didn't receive a thank-you note."

8. _____ "She is angry because she is talking very loudly."

9. _____ "He smiled."

10. _____ "He doesn't want to be friends with me."

11. _____ "She is very superficial. She smiles too much."

12. _____ "The two women walked arm and arm down the street."

13. _____ "They don't know how to behave at a wedding!"

*Adapted from Levine, Baxter, and McNulty 1987.

Observation/culture journal - discussion

Talking about observations

When people talk about their observations, they can use the following non-judgmental phrases to discuss the topic.

I found it interesting that....
I found it interesting to hear/see....
It was interesting that....
It was interesting to hear/see....
It's really unusual for me to hear/see....
It surprised/didn't surprise me that....
It surprised/didn't surprise me to hear/see....

When making a statement with one of these phrases, you should then explain why you feel the way you do. If you say, "It surprised me to see children staying up as late as 2 o'clock in the morning", you should then explain why it surprised you. Explaining your answer will give you and the people you're talking to a better understanding of cultural and personal differences. It also guides you to make observations rather than judgments.

Volunteerism – Introduction

1. Have you volunteered in your country? If so, what did you do?

If not, what kinds of volunteer opportunities are in your country? What are some common or popular volunteer organizations/programs?

2. Below is a list of common areas in which Americans volunteer their time and energy.

animal care	hunger and homelessness
arts	literacy
children	nature and the environment
churches	politics and government
crisis centers	prisons
drugs and alcohol	schools
diseases and disabilities	social service organizations
hospitals	sports organizations
youth programs	retirement homes/the elderly

If you were to volunteer in the United States, which organizations or programs would you choose? Why?

*Adapted from Stafford-Yilmaz 1998.

Volunteerism – Volunteer/Organization matchup

I work for the Dane County Humane Society. This is an organization that takes in stray cats and dogs and other animals that are surrendered by their owners. Volunteers provide health care and grooming to animals, as well as feedings. They also assist with adoptions.

I work for the Madison Senior Center. The Senior Center provides activities for active, elderly people from ages 55 and up. The elderly play games and enjoy other organized activities at the center located on Mifflin Street near Capitol Centre Foods and Apartments.

I work for Olbrich Botanical Gardens on Madison's east side. Olbrich is home to an indoor collection of tropical plants, trees, flowers and fruit. Outside, the extensive gardens feature roses, prairie grasses, herb gardens, and indigenous plants to Wisconsin.

I work at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum. The arboretum is a research forest on Madison's west side near the Vilas Zoo and Vilas Park. University students study different plant and animal species, however, the arboretum is open to the public. There are hiking trails, cross-country ski trails, and other hiking areas for everyone to enjoy. However, we need people to help maintain the trails and plant and animal habitats.

I work for the Madison Children's Museum. The children's museum features all kinds of educational exhibits. Children get hands-on experience in the sciences, and there are play areas that teach them about plants, dairy cows, and pioneer life. Exhibits often change as do the various programs the museum sponsors. The Children's Museum is on the 100 block of State Street.

I work at the YWCA. The YWCA provides shelter for homeless mothers and their children. It offers child care and child education programs as well as job training to mothers who want to find good jobs. The YWCA is on the Capitol Square at the corner of Pinckney and Mifflin Streets.

I can help you. I love working with animals. I have experience with pets because I have two dogs at home.

I want to volunteer and learn something about Madison's history at the same time. I would like to talk to a person who has lived in the Madison area for many years.

I can help you. I'm a gardener who needs something to do during the long, cold winter.

I can help you. I've always been concerned about the condition of our natural environment. I'm looking for ways to get involved in environmental preservation.

I can help you. I'd like to be a teacher someday, and I thinking volunteering would be a good way to gain teaching experience.

I can help you. I'm a business person who works for a very successful company. I know a lot about business management and computers. I would like to help people with job skills.

Volunteer Fair
Great Hall, Memorial Union

On Thursday we'll go to the Volunteer Fair together. This is a good opportunity for you to see the spirit of volunteerism in action. More than 100 local organizations and agencies will distribute information to people interested in giving their time and energy to the community. There will be information about programs involving youth programs, environmental issues, child care, tutoring, health care, and elder care.

Your job will be to walk around and identify an organization that's interesting for you. When you do, go to the organization information booth and ask the representatives some questions. Please note that you do not have to volunteer. You are only there to ask questions.

To prepare, think of some questions you will ask about volunteering with an organization. What do you want to know about volunteering with them? For example, What are the requirements for volunteering? Is an interview required? Is a minimum time commitment required?

The goal of this activity is for you to practice your speaking and listening skills with native speakers and learn something about American volunteerism.

The volunteer fair is sponsored by the Morgridge Center for Public Service, a Madison organization, and the Wisconsin Union Directorate of the UW-Madison. You can get more information about volunteer opportunities on the Morgridge website: www.morgridge.wisc.edu

Volunteerism - At the Volunteer Fair

Your job will be to walk around and identify an organization that's interesting for you. When you do, go to the organization information booth and ask the representatives some questions. Please note that you do not have to volunteer. You are only there to ask questions.

The goal of this activity is for you to practice your speaking and listening skills with native speakers and learn something about American volunteerism. Remember the strategies we talked about before: making small talk, asking questions to extend conversation, asking questions to clarify an answer

Before you begin your conversation with a program representative, you should tell them that you are an international student who is studying American culture and volunteerism. Tell them you are interested in learning about their program and about volunteerism for a class report.

The representative may give you brochures and other printed information, but remember you need to have a short conversation with this person. Don't rely only on the materials to answer the questions below.

Please answer the following questions before you leave the Memorial Union.

1. What's the name of the organization/program you learned about?

Is it a national, state, or local organization/program?

2. Where is the organization/program located?

Where do the volunteers work?

3. What do the volunteers do in this organization/program? (What types of positions are available?)

4. Is there a time commitment that volunteers must make? For example, what is the minimum amount of time volunteers must work? (Two hours per week for 6 months? One day per week for 2 months? Any time you are free?)

Also, what is a minimum length of commitment to volunteer? Some organizations want a six-month commitment, for example.

5. Do volunteers have to be trained before they can begin working?

6. What types of people usually volunteer for this organization/program? (university students, business people, parents, etc.?)

7. Write the answers to any other questions you asked. Be prepared to present information about this organization/program in the next class.

Volunteerism – Volunteer Fair Recap

1. What are some of your impressions about volunteerism in the U.S.?

2. Has your view of volunteering changed since you went to the volunteer fair?

3. Look again at the list of common areas in which Americans volunteer their time and energy.

animal care	hunger and homelessness
arts	literacy
children	nature and the environment
churches	politics and government
crisis centers	prisons
drugs and alcohol	schools
diseases and disabilities	social service organizations
hospitals	sports organizations
youth programs	retirement homes/the elderly

If you were to volunteer in the United States, which types of organizations or programs would you choose? Why?

You know you are in Wisconsin when....

1. ...your idea of a traffic jam is ten cars waiting to pass a tractor on the highway.

2. ...you often switch from "heat" to "A/C" in the same day - and back again!

3. ...you see people wearing hunting clothes at social events.

4. ...you install security lights on your house and garage and leave both unlocked.

5. ...you think of the major food groups as deer meat, beer, fish, and berries.

6. ...you carry jumper cables in your car and your girlfriend knows how to use them.

7. ...you design your kid's Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit.

8. ...driving is better in the winter because the potholes are filled with snow.

9. ...you think sexy lingerie is tube socks and flannel pajamas.

10. ...you know all 4 seasons: almost winter, winter, still winter and road construction.

11. ...it takes you 3 hours to go to the store for one item because you have to stop and talk to everyone in town.

12. ...you know the Green Bay Packers are playing when everyone wears their green and gold jerseys to church on Sunday.

Regional Culture and Language – Video clips from "American Tongues"

Clip #1
"Dutchified"

1. In the opening of the video, several Americans are asked, "Who do you think has a funny accent?" What are some examples these people give?

2. How does an accent or a dialect affect your impression of a person?

Clip #2

1. What are some examples of words that are different from dialect to dialect?

2. How do children learn accents or dialects?

Clip #3
1. What role do accents or dialects play in terms of regional prejudice?

2. What does the Southern woman say about Southerners and Northerners?

3. A man with a Southern accent talks about how he is misunderstood at a wedding. What word did he say that was difficult for people to understand?

Clip #4
ain't

1. A woman from Brooklyn, New York talks about how people's response to her accent has made her feel frustrated. Why would she or anyone else want to take voice lessons to help them speak standard English?

2. What are the stereotypes of people who speak standard English? of people who don't?

3. What challenges do people with non-standard English have in terms of social status?

Clip #5
1. What role do accents or dialects play in terms of racial prejudice?

2. A man talking to his friends on the street asks, "Whose language is it?" What does he mean by this?

Racism and Prejudice

After reading the following statements, respond to each one by writing *yes* or *no*.

1. I feel comfortable being with people of all religions and ethnic groups. _____

2. I prefer to spend time with people who are like me in terms of religions and culture. _____

3. The kind of social life I have in the United States is different from my social life in my country. _____

4. My parents would be displeased if I dated someone whose religion was different from mine. _____

5. My parents would be displeased if I dated someone whose ethnic background was different from mine. _____

6. Minority groups in my country face prejudice and discrimination. _____

7. There is very little racism in my country. _____

8. I consider myself an open-minded, tolerant person who treats all people equally. _____

9. In the United States, there is a great deal of prejudice against minorities and foreigners. _____

10. The laws in the United States protect people against racial discrimination. _____

11. I have not been the victim of prejudice or discrimination. _____

*Shulman 1998.

What do you know about.....

1. ..... slavery in United States history?

2. ..... the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s?

3. ..... Rosa Parks?

4. ..... Martin Luther King Jr.?

5. ..... present-day race relations in the United States?

“I Have a Dream” - speech text

*In Kennedy and Kennedy 1982.

“I Have a Dream” - speech text

*In Kennedy and Kennedy 1982.

“I Have a Dream” - speech text

*In Kennedy and Kennedy 1982.

I Have a Dream

Martin Luther King Jr.'s Address at the Lincoln Memorial, 1963

1. Look at the introduction.

Who is the "great American" that Dr. King is talking about?

The Emancipation Proclamation is a law established a long time ago. What does this law say? Who wrote this law?

What does the word "Negro" mean?

"We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal." Where does this popular quote come from?

2. Just watch and listen to the speech the first time. During the second viewing, follow along on the paper. A few words and phrases you will hear are different from what Dr. King actually says. When you listen, you don't have to worry about understanding everything. Think about Dr. King's message and how it makes you feel. What does it make you think about in terms of your own country and personal experience?

Before watching and listening a third time, read the questions below.

Follow-up

1. According to the speech, where has racism been felt the most strongly? Why do you think this is true?

2. Dr. King quotes a popular American song.

> My country, 'tis of thee,
> Sweet land of liberty
> Of thee I sing:

Land where my fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrims' pride,
From every mountainside,
Let freedom ring.

"Thee" is an old English word. What do you think it means?
Who are the Pilgrims?

3. Why do you think this speech is so powerful for Americans?
What does this speech make you think about your country or your personal experience?

“Racial Issues” article

*Abraham and Mackey 1997.

“Gov signs hate crimes law” news article

Family, roles and responsibilities, changes in the family unit

For you, what defines a family? Who is in your family? What are your obligations to family members?

Did your parents have a great deal of authority over you when you were younger? How old were you when you were allowed to make your own decisions? What types of decisions could you make? Do you think American children generally have more or less freedom than children in your culture?

In your culture, whose responsibility is it to take care of an elderly person who becomes very sick? What expectations does society have about care for the elderly?

What kinds of activities does your family do together for fun? Are these kinds of activities done with the nuclear family or with the extended family and friends?

How would children be rewarded or punished within the typical family?

Is the family unit changing in any way in your culture (for example, number of children, education level of family members, etc.)?

*Levine and Adelman 1982

Family role plays/problem-solving

1. You have a gambling problem. You are 27 years old and you have never had a job. You try to earn money by gambling and by investing in "get rich quick" schemes. Recently, you lost $26,000 betting on a basketball game. Some bookies are going to kill you if you don't pay. Think of a way to ask your parents for help.

1. You and your spouse have four grown children. One of your sons is 27 years old, and he has a gambling problem. He has never had a job, so he tries to earn money by gambling and investing in get-rich-quick schemes. Recently, he lost $26,000 betting on a basketball game. He asks you for help. You have the money, but you're planning to use it for your retirement (You're in your 60s.). What will you do?

2. You are a divorced woman with two kids at home. You learn that your 17-year-old daughter has been having a serious relationship with 20 year-old man, and you don't approve of it. Your daughter is still in high school, and her boyfriend doesn't have a good job. One day you decide to talk to your daughter about him. What will you say?

2. You are an 17-year-old girl who lives with her divorced mother and younger brother. You're in love with a man who's about 20 years old, and the two of you are having a serious affair. Your mom doesn't approve of your relationship. One day your mother confronts you about your boyfriend. What do you say to her?

3. You are a 20-year-old man who recently got married. You promised your wife you would start your own house-painting business, but you would rather be a race car driver. Your wife disapproves because she thinks it's dangerous to race cars and it's not a respectable job. She confronts you. What do you say?

3. You are a 17-year-old woman who recently got married. Your husband promised you he would start his own business painting houses. But you found a race car helmet inside his truck. He has been racing cars behind your back. You are really angry and you confront him about it. What will you say?

Video clips from the movie “Parenthood”

Story 1

The characters:

Mother - divorced; ex-husband not interested in her or the children; She is a compassionate mother who has lots of trouble raising her children.

Gary - son; 13 or 14 years old; quiet, lonely, confused

Julie - daughter; 17 or 18 years old; still in high school; in love with Todd

Todd - Julie's boyfriend of about 20 years old; has no good job, but promises Julie he will start his own business

The situation:

In this story, the mother tries to keep her family together. Her son Gary is lonely and withdrawn. He's confused about why his father left the family. He asks his father if he can live with him for a while, but his father says "no".

Julie is a high school student who's in love with Todd. She rebels against her mother and doesn't listen to her. She leaves the house after an argument to move in with Todd. While she's away, she and Todd secretly get married.

Todd and Julie move in with their mother. The mother sees that Todd can be a good role model for Gary. Todd and Gary develop a good relationship. Gary's spirit improves.

Although Julie and Todd's marriage will probably fail, the mother tries to keep them together despite their disagreements.

Story 2

The characters:

Father - 61 years old; has four grown children who have children of their own; planning to retire soon

Larry - 27 years old; one of four adult children; has a 4- or 5-year-old son named “Cool” from a love affair he had in Las Vegas; has a gambling problem

The situation:

Larry has never had a job. He has always tried to make money through gambling and by investing in "get rich quick" schemes. He returns to his elderly parents' home after being gone for several years. While he was gone, he had a son with a woman in Las Vegas who left the boy with him. Larry's parents are surprised when they see Cool.

Larry says he's come home to visit for a while, but he's really come home because he's in trouble with bookies who are going to kill him over a $26,000 gambling debt. He asks his father for help.

The father offers to help Larry under several conditions.

non-traditional

blended

2 income/no kids

alternative

traditional

“Alternative Families” Video

Vocabulary

gay
straight

Segment 1

Introduction - "Breaking Ground"

1. You will hear from three people at the beginning of this segment. The first man is married to a woman; they have no children. The second man is gay. The woman is single.

What do they say about their choice of family?

Man #1

Man #2

Woman

2. The announcer says, "In principle Americans take pride in their diversity, but in practice, anyone who has not been wed soon enough to satisfy relatives and friends knows the pressure of our traditional notion of 'Married with Children.'"
What are the expectations of American society?

Do you think a non-traditional family can be considered a family?

Segment 2
"Just Like Everyone Else"

In this segment you'll meet a lesbian couple who live in Madison. The women are Martha Popp and Alix Olson. Martha apparently had two children with a man at some time in the past. The children are Tim, who is 17 years old, and Emily, who is 9 1/2 years old. The children live with their mother and Alix, who is their step mother. Martha works as a speech therapist at a high school, and Alix is a detective with the Madison Police Department.

1. How does this couple feel about their family?
What has their daughter Emily said about the family?

2. How does society react to this family?

3. How do Martha, Alix, and their children cope with the difficulties of society?

4. The city of Madison is one of a few cities in the U.S. that offer a Domestic Partnership Certificate. What rights or benefits does this certificate provide for heterosexual and homosexual couples?
What rights or benefits does it NOT provide?

5. Considering their day-to-day schedule and habits, does this look like an average family? Remember to answer this non-judgmentally.

“Contemporary American Society” article

*Abraham and Mackey 1997.

Follow up questions to “Contemporary American Society”

*Adapted from Abraham and Mackey 1997.

Contemporary American Society – Problem Solving

Read the following story and discuss the questions with your classmates.

> My name is Jun Gueco. My wife and I have two kids. We're having a real problem with our daughter Maria. She used to be wonderful, but now she's impossible! At age 13, she has a boyfriend, and she wants to go out along with him to movies and to parties. We want her to wait until she's 16 to go out on dates. What's the hurry? She's much too young to have a boyfriend. We also don't want her to go to parties unless we know the family. We take her and pick her up, but we don't want her to go around alone with a boy. What will everyone think of her if she goes around with a boy? She doesn't seem to care about her reputation, but we know how important it is to be a good girl, especially when she's ready to get married. No one will want to marry a girl with a bad reputation.
>
> Of course our daughter thinks *we're* impossible. She says we're completely out of touch and want everything to be the way it was in the Philippines when we were growing up. I ask her, "What wrong with that?" Why does she have to be so American? There's nothing wrong with our values just because they're different from the way her American friends live. I think children in the United States have too much freedom. In the Philippines, children spend more time with their family, and they obey their parents. That's the way I want my children to behave, too.
>
> *Abraham and Mackey 1997.

Discuss these questions:

1. What values or beliefs do the parents have about dating? What values and beliefs do their daughter have about dating?

2. What is the parents' main problem with their daughter Maria?

3. Besides dating, in what other areas do you think they differ? Consider lifestyle, future goals, language, and family traditions.

4. To what extent should immigrant families adapt themselves to American values, beliefs, and lifestyles, especially if their children have been born in the U.S.?

Video clip from “The Joy Luck Club”

This clip shows the relationship between Waverly, a Chinese-American woman in her thirties, and her mother, Lindo, who immigrated to the United States before Waverly was born. Both have a difficult time relating to each other. Watch the video clip and discuss possible reasons why they don’t understand each other.

1. At the beginning of the clip, what verbal and non-verbal cues show you Waverly and her mother do not get along? What do you observe about how they communicate?

2. Waverly’s mother, Lindo, remembers her relationship with her own mother. She tells a story about when she was young. What was their relationship like? How did Lindo feel about her mother? How did her mother treat her?
How does this affect the way Lindo feels about and treats Waverly?

3. How does Waverly feel about the way her mother treats her? Why do you think she feels this way?

4. At the end of the clip, Waverly and Lindo laugh together. Why are they laughing? What do you think this means for the future of the relationship? What are some ways the two women can learn to understand and respect each other better?

Friendships – Introductory discussion

Talk about the following questions with your classmates.

1. What is a friend? How do you define a friend?

2. Do you have different types of friends? If so, who are these people?

3. What American friends or acquaintances do you have? What is your relationship like? Is it close? Distant?
What are some experiences you've had in your relationships that were confusing or frustrating?

4. How do you typically meet and make new friends? Through other people? By yourself? Where do you like to meet new people?

“Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends” article

*Viorst 1977.

“Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends” article

*Viorst 1977.

“Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends” article

*Viorst 1977.

“Friends, Good Friends – and Such Good Friends” article

*Viorst 1977.

Categorize the following friends based on the article, *Friends, Good Friends -- and Such Good Friends* , by Judith Viorst.

1. Ann is a friend with whom I play tennis. We meet every Tuesday and Thursday at 10 a.m. for a game which usually lasts 1 1/2 - 2 hours. We usually practice a different aspect of the game each week. We are not real competitive; we just really enjoy the game.
Kind of friend: _____

2. Martha and I met in Colorado at a time when both of us were just newly divorced. We were learning how to be single again. We shared our feelings about our failed marriages and grew quite close.
Kind of friend: _____

3. Sara and I are good friends. We sometimes get together and talk about when we were in high school, the prom, our work at the drug store, the boys in our junior high choir class and other memorable events.
Kind of friend: _____

4. Joan is great! She is always there when I have questions about my garden, or if I need to borrow a cup of sugar or if I need a babysitter at the last minute. I can always count of her to help me out.
Kind of friend: _____

5. I enjoy Carol's friendship. While John and Sam discuss sports, we chat about our careers, our children, our in-laws and our gardens. We always have lots to talk about when we get together.
Kind of friend: _____

6. I have learned a lot from Evelyn. When we are together she'll often talk about how things were when she was growing up - the struggles she endured as a woman. She has seen a lot of changes in her lifetime.
Kind of friend: _____

You've Got a Friend

Written by Carole King
Sung by James Taylor

When you're down and troubled
And you need a _____ hand
And nothin', oh nothin' is goin' right
Close your eyes and _____ (3 words)
And soon I will be there
To brighten up even your darkest _____

You just call out my name
_____ (6 words)
I'll come running, oh yeah baby, to see you again
_____ (5 words)
_____ (7 words)
And I'll be there, yeah, yeah, yeah
You've got a friend

If the sky above you should turn dark
And full of _____
And that old north wind should begin _____ (2 words)
Keep your head together and call my name out loud, now
Soon I'll be knockin' upon your door

You just call out my name
_____ (6 words)
I'll come running, oh yes I will, to see you again
_____ (5 words)
_____ (7 words)
And I'll be there, yeah, yeah, yeah

Hey ain't it good to know you've got a friend
People can be so _____
They'll hurt you and desert you
Well, they'll take your _____ if you let them
Oh yeah, but don't you let them

You just call out my name
_____ (6 words)
I'll come running to see you again
Oh baby, don't you know about _____ (5 words)

Hey now _____ (7 words)
Lord I'll be there, yes I will
You've got a friend
You've got a friend, yeah
Ain't it good to know you've got a friend
Ain't it good to know you've got a friend, oh yeah, yeah, yeah
You've got a friend

You've Got a Friend

Written by Carole King
Sung by James Taylor

When you're down and troubled
And you need a helpin' hand
And nothin', oh nothin' is goin' right
Close your eyes and think of me
And soon I will be there
To brighten up even your darkest night

You just call out my name
And you know wherever I am
I'll come running, oh yeah baby, to see you again
Winter, spring, summer, or fall
All you got to do is call
And I'll be there, yeah, yeah, yeah
You've got a friend

If the sky above you should turn dark
And full of clouds
And that old north wind should begin to blow
Keep your head together and call my name out loud, now
Soon I'll be knockin' upon your door

You just call out my name
And you know wherever I am
I'll come running, oh yes I will, to see you again
Winter, spring, summer, or fall
All you got to do is call
And I'll be there, yeah, yeah, yeah

Hey ain't it good to know you've got a friend
People can be so cold
They'll hurt you and desert you
Well, they'll take your soul if you let them
Oh yeah, but don't you let them

You just call out my name
And you know wherever I am
I'll come running to see you again
Oh baby, don't you know about winter, spring, summer, or fall
Hey now all you got to do is call

Lord I'll be there, yes I will
You've got a friend
You've got a friend, yeah
Ain't it good to know you've got a friend
Ain't it good to know you've got a friend, oh yeah, yeah, yeah
You've got a friend

Popular Culture in the U.S. Discussion

Discuss the following questions with your classmate(s).

1. What is popular culture?
What kinds of topics make up popular culture?

2. “The buzz” refers to aspects of popular culture that people are talking about now. What do you think people in the U.S. are talking about in the following areas? In other words, what is considered “hot” these days? Write down names of popular TV programs, songs and singers, movies, fashions, sports, books/literature, and other areas.

Television

Music

Movies

Fashion

Sports

Books/literature

Other

3. Besides using magazines, newspapers, TV, and other mass media, what are some other sources you can use to find out "what's hot and what's not?"

4. How might popular culture differ according to region of the country?

5. What things make up Wisconsin popular culture?

Looking at Popular Culture

1. What names of celebrities do you see most often? What American celebrities are popular with people from your country? Why are they so popular?

2. What movies are discussed or reviewed in your magazine? What are the names of American films you've seen in your country? What American films have been most popular with moviegoers in your country?

3. What books are discussed or reviewed? Have you read any books written by American authors? What popular books have been translated from English into your language? What popular books have been translated from your language into English?

4. What are names of sports figures that seem to be most popular now? What sports seem to be most popular at this time of year? What sports are most popular in general in the U.S.? How does this differ from popular sports in your culture?

5. What fashions seem to be most popular these days? Do you think these styles would be popular in your country? Why or why not? Would you wear any of the fashions you see in the magazines or catalogues? What name-brand fashion designers are popular in your country? Is it possible in the U.S. to buy fashions by designers from your country?

6. What are names of singers or bands that are popular now? What are the names of their songs or CDs? What American singers or bands are popular in your country? Why do people like them so much? Do radio stations in your country play music performed in English? If yes, were does most of this music come from?

7. What television programs are featured in your magazine? Do you watch TV? If so, what types of TV programs do you watch? What American TV programs are shown in your country? What surprises or interests you about American TV programs?

True/false quiz – American food, eating habits, and health

1. Americans are eating less than they did 25 years ago.

2. All food products in the United States must have a nutrition label on the package.

3. Almost 25% of Americans are considered obese.

4. Most Americans take vitamins and mineral supplements.

5. 75% of Americans eat snacks at some point during the day.

6. Only 10% of snacks that Americans eat are healthy.

7. Every day, Americans eat enough pizza to cover one football field.

8. The hamburger originated in Europe.

9. Vanilla and chocolate are real American foods. (This one is a little tricky!)

10. The most popular exercises in the U.S. include walking, gardening, and house cleaning.

11. The muscles connected to the mouth are the strongest muscles in the human body.

Answers:

1. False. Americans are eating more, mainly due to larger portion sizes. Use McDonald's Super Size as an example.

2. True. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires nutrition labels on all food products sold in the U.S. This includes imported foods.

3. True. According to the U.S. Department of Health, 25 percent of adults are obese, and 60 percent are considered overweight. The obesity rate of children is also 25 percent, causing a dramatic increase in childhood onset diabetes. This is attributed to large portion sizes, high-fat and fast foods, and sedentary lifestyles in children.

4. False. Only 40 percent of Americans take vitamin and mineral supplements.

5. True.

6. False. About 69 percent of snacks eaten by Americans are healthy. They include mainly fruit, pre-packaged fruit snacks, and crackers.

7. False. Americans eat enough pizza every day to cover 60 football fields.

8. False. While its origin is disputed among at least three U.S. cities, it's generally believed the hamburger originated at the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri in the late 1800s. It was named after the German city Hamburg.

9. True. Vanilla and chocolate come from plants indigenous to South America.

10. False. According to a survey, swimming, cycling, and walking are the three most popular forms of exercise. However, the same survey showed gardening and house cleaning to be among the top 20 forms of exercise Americans do on a regular basis.

11. False. The heart is the strongest muscle.

*From health, cooking, and fitness magazines 2000-2001.

Food – Discussion questions

1. What kind of food do you think is "typically" American?

2. Do you think Americans eat well? Why or why not?

3. What kinds of American food do you enjoy?

4. Which foods from your culture are found in the American diet?

5. If you had to eat the same meals three times a day for the rest of your life, what would they be?

6. Read the following, then answer the question that follows.

Worldly Nutrition

The federal Dietary Guidelines for Healthy Americans are pretty straightforward: Eat plenty of grains, fruits, and vegetables; go light on fat, sugar, sodium, and alcohol; keep weight under control. Simple, to the point – and boring, especially when compared to the government guidelines of other countries, which in some cases, sound poetic.

Here are some examples;

Germany: Eat not too much and not too little.
Japan: Sit down and eat together and talk.
Korea: Keep harmony between diet and daily life.
Thailand: A happy family is one that eats together, enjoys treasured family tastes, and good home cooking.
United Kingdom: Enjoy your food.

If you are from any of the countries above, do you recognize these government guidelines for healthy eating?

Inventory Your Eating and Health Habits in the U.S.

Americans' attitudes toward food are different from many other cultures'. Have you changed your eating habits in the U.S.? Put a check next to the following statements that are true for you. Don't check any statements for which your habits haven't changed. Share your ideas with a classmate.

In the United States, I eat….

____ more food	____ less food
____ more meat	____ less meat
____ more junk food	____ less junk food
____ more fresh food	____ less fresh food
____ more frozen food	____ less frozen food
____ more sweets	____ fewer sweets
____ more canned food	____ less canned food
____ more at breakfast	____ less at breakfast
____ more at lunch	____ less at lunch
____ more at dinner	____ less at dinner
____ a faster breakfast	____ a later breakfast
____ in restaurants more often	____ a later dinner
____ more often	____ less often

Other changes in eating habits _____

_____

In the United States, I ate some foods for the first time.

I really like _____

I really hate _____

*Abraham and Mackey 1997.

Now, think about things you do to maintain your health. Put a check next to the statements that are true for you and discuss the questions or statements that follow with a classmate.

In the U.S., I….

1. _____ exercise more _____ exercise less

If you exercise now, what types of exercise do you do?

2. _____ get more sleep _____ get less sleep

Explain how and why your sleeping habits have changed.

3. _____ take more time to enjoy a hobby, meditate, relax, or do some other activity to maintain your mental health

_____ take less time to enjoy a hobby, meditate, relax, or do some other activity to maintain your mental health

Explain what you do to keep your spirits up and maintain good mental health.

Food – eating and health habit survey

Food – eating and health habit survey

Food – eating and health habit survey

“Four Directions,” Joy Luck Club excerpt

*Tan 1989.

“Four Directions,” Joy Luck Club excerpt

*Tan 1989.

“Four Directions,” Joy Luck Club excerpt

*Tan 1989.

Food - Video clip from “The Joy Luck Club”

Discuss the following questions with your classmates.

1. Which of your predictions came true?

2. What advice could Waverly have given Rich before the dinner?

3. Do Rich and Waverly have the same view of what happened at dinner?

4. What do you think Waverly and Rich said to each other afterward?

5. Why was the meeting unsuccessful?

6. Who, if anyone, was responsible for the failure?

Menu

Menu

Restaurant Observations

Look around you and answer the following questions as best as you can.

1. What kinds of people are eating here?

2. Does anyone seem like they are in a hurry? If so, who? Why do you think they are in a hurry?

3. Do you see anyone eating alone? If so, are they doing anything besides eating?

4. Are people communicating with one another while they are eating?

If so, how are they communicating? Are they using eye contact, body language, touching, etc.?

5. Look at the menu. What is strange or unusual for you to see on the menu?

6. What do you notice about the way the waitstaff and the customers interact?

End of session reflection – For students remaining in the U.S.

What is the biggest adjustment you have had to make living in the U.S.?

What are the most valuable aspects of your own culture?

What aspects of U.S. life are you interested in adopting?

What aspects of American culture have you found the hardest to live with?

What aspects of American culture have you enjoyed?

What are the most important things you've learned about your culture since coming to the U.S.?

If your friend were moving to the U.S., what would you tell them about this culture that might help them with their adjustment?

*Gaston 1984.

End of session reflection – For students returning home

What is the biggest adjustment you have had to make during your stay in the U.S.?

What are the most valuable aspects of your culture that you would be unwilling to give up?

What aspects of American life would you be willing to adopt if you were staying in the U.S. now instead of returning home?

What aspects of American culture have you found hardest to live with?

What aspects of American culture have you most enjoyed?

Do you think you will take anything of the U.S. culture with you? What? Why?

What have been the two most important things you have learned about your culture?

What will be difficult about your return home?

What do you think you will remember most about your experience in the U.S.?

*Gaston 1984.

700 Communication/Culture Evaluation

Please give your opinions about the 700 Communication/Culture class. Your input is very important for the future success of 700CC. Please answer the questions below as completely as possible.

1. What did you gain most out of this class in terms of information about American culture or your classmates' cultures?

2. What did you gain most in out of this class in terms of communication skills?

3. What activities were most interesting for you? Why?

4. What activities were least interesting for you? Why?

5. Did you feel comfortable making decisions about the topics we studied in this class? Why or why not?

6. Please evaluate your participation in this class. Do you feel you participated as much as you could? Why or why not?

Board game

*Adapted from Klippel 1984.

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