introduction

On the first day of class, the lecturer, who was new to the job, walked into the lecture theatre, looked up at the class that was like a “mini United Nations” of first- and second-year undergraduates, took a deep breath to calm the butterflies in her stomach and said, “Good morning class! Welcome to the class on intercultural communication! It’s wonderful to see so many of you from diverse nations and cultures. I am sure we will have a great time sharing our experiences of intercultural communication and learning from each other. By the way, you may call me anything you are most comfortable with — Ms. Megan, Dr. Megan, Dr. Tan, Prof., Ma’am, or just Megan.”

Megan Tan was off to a great start! She understood the importance of being audience centered, especially when the audience is drawn from diverse nationalities, as her class was. She had been extremely nervous the night before her class, but she had prepared well. She had studied the student profiles on the class website, had carefully selected topics that would be appropriate for the audience and had chosen examples with an eye on keeping them inclusive. She structured her delivery in a way that balanced textual content with visual material and deliberately used language that was non-judgmental. The students were delighted that they could address her according to the norms of their own cultures.

We inhabit a universe that is characterized by diversity.  
~ Desmond Tutu

chapter objectives:

After studying this module, you should be able to:

1. Identify four reasons for learning to speak to global audiences.
2. Explain three barriers to speaking effectively to diverse audiences.
3. Utilize the concepts of high- and low-context cultures and monochronic and polychronic time to tailor your speech to diverse audiences.
4. Explain how Hofstede’s cultural dimensions can influence the preparation of speeches for diverse audiences.
5. Elaborate on ways to make supporting materials culturally appropriate.
6. Compare and contrast linear and holistic patterns of organizing speeches.
7. Describe three holistic patterns of speech organization.
8. Discuss how verbal expression can influence audiences.
9. Explain how a speaker’s nonverbal behavior can impact audiences.
10. Discuss how visual aids can be culturally appropriate.

Public speaking has often been rated the number number-one stress inducer in people. When a diverse, global audience is added, public speaking can become a minefield that has to be navigated with care and sensitivity.
Speaking effectively to a global audience requires both knowledge of speaking principles and an awareness of intercultural differences. To this end, this chapter will begin by examining the need to speak to a global audience and then the strategies that can be used to manage the process effectively. In addition to stressing the need for sensitivity and respect that underlies the basic principles of speaking to global audiences, the chapter will offer specific strategies that can be employed at each stage of the speech process, from speech planning, preparation and organization, to delivery.

**reasons to adopt a global perspective**

Martin and Nakayama (2010) argued that key reasons to adopt a global perspective in communication include economic, technological, demographic and peace imperatives. These motives can be extended to the realm of public speaking too.

**the economic imperative**

Globalization was perhaps one of the most distinctive phenomena of the 20th century, resulting in feverish exchanges of people, ideas, goods and money across national boundaries. Friedman (2005) contended that the world has “become flat” with India, China and other countries becoming an integral part of the global supply chain for services and manufacturing. The top 500 multinational corporations account for nearly 70 percent of worldwide trade (www.gatt.org). These global flows of resources have highlighted the need for organizations, whether profit, non-profit or governmental, to address diverse audiences. Moreover, local neighborhoods from Seattle to Singapore are becoming increasingly diverse. As a result, people who speak on behalf of organizations need to be sensitive to audience diversity while making speeches in public.

**the technological imperative**

Due to the rapid proliferation of information and communication technologies and the advent of modern transportation systems, the world has simultaneously shrunk and expanded. Shrunk because, in a Twitter moment, one can communicate with millions of people, and expanded because technologies and transportation systems have enabled access to diverse cultures and societies across the world. This situation makes it vital for public speakers to be conscious of the diversity of audiences who could be dispersed around the world but can be reached instantly over the Internet’s social networks.

**the demographic imperative**

Even though the history of the human race has been characterized by continual migration and socialization, one of the most extensive waves of migration and cultural mixing occurred during the 20th century. First-generation immigrants often carried with them a strong sense of cultural and ethnic identities that made issues of integration and assimilation hot-button issues in countries from the United States to Germany in Western Europe and to Singapore in Southeast Asia. Any attempt at public speaking that is not sensitive to the plurality of the audience in such an increasingly diverse and multicultural world is almost certainly bound to fail.
President Barack Obama’s speech at Cairo University has been highly commended for the respect and sensitivity he accorded to the host audience. Here is an excerpt from his speech that demonstrates not only respect towards the hosts, but also sensitivity towards the host culture by using a common salutation among Muslims, “assalaamu alaykum.” During his speech, President Obama (2009)said:

“I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo, and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt’s advancement. Together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I am grateful for your hospitality, and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. I am also proud to carry with me the goodwill of the American people, and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: assalaamu alaykum.”

the peace imperative

Worse still, intolerance reflected and magnified in public speeches can breed feelings of hatred and violence. Noreiga and Iribarren’s (2009) study on hate speech and its relation to hate crimes in conservative talk radio in Los Angeles found extensive evidence of hate speech against vulnerable groups such as foreign nationals and racial and ethnic minorities. Further, Yanagizawa-Drott (2012) found that around 10% of genocidal violence in Rwanda could be attributed to propagandist broadcasts on a radio station that had called for the extermination of the Tutsi minority during the Rwandan genocide in which around 800,000 people died over a span of 100 days in 1994.

These compelling reasons for public speakers to adopt a global perspective require an examination of the basics of speaking effectively to a global audience.

sensitivity and respect

Perhaps the most important advice in speaking to a global audience would be to cultivate a sense of sensitivity and respect — a keen awareness of and sensitivity to differences among people from diverse cultures and respect for others who are unlike the speaker. When speaking to a global audience, it is imperative for public speakers to suspend ethnocentric judgments and engage audiences in an open, tolerant, sensitive and respectful manner. According to Chen & Starosta (2005), the basic components of intercultural communication competence include intercultural sensitivity, awareness and effectiveness. Intercultural sensitivity requires speakers to know and control themselves. Intercultural awareness requires speakers to know and respect others. Intercultural effectiveness requires speakers to manage their behavior. Potential roadblocks to achieving intercultural communication competence include stereotyping.

Rush Limbaugh, the conservative radio talk show host, has often been lambasted for using sexist and racist stereotypes in his broadcasts. In an article on the CNN website, Jane Fonda, Robin Morgan and Gloria Steinem (2012) of the Women’s Media Center argued that the Federal Communications Commission should ban Limbaugh from the airwaves. Some instances of stereotypes of women he employed included referring to female cabinet members as “sex-rectaries”. On another occasion, he used a racial stereotype, telling an African-American female caller he could not understand to “take that bone out of your nose and call me back.”
prejudices

Similarly, prejudices are negative attitudes toward a cultural group, often based on little or no experience. Prejudices may arise from multiple sources, such as tensions between groups, unfavourable past encounters, status differences and perceived threats. The causes of prejudices could include societal sources, an innate need to maintain social identity, and scapegoating. Expressions of prejudice can range from subtle non-verbal acts to outright hostility. Public speakers can best avoid or overcome prejudices by increasing personal contact with groups with whom they do not regularly interact or through education (Cooper, Calloway-Thomas & Simonds, 2007). Similar to stereotypes, prejudices must be handled carefully. Public speakers should question themselves and identify potential prejudices they might have toward certain groups, steer clear of these negative attitudes, withhold judgment and deliver speeches free of baseless prejudices.

ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism refers to the notion that one’s own culture is superior to any other. It perpetuates the idea that other cultures ought to be judged by the extent to which they measure up to one’s own cultural standards. While ethnocentrism is universal and contributes to cultural identity, if left unchecked, it can stand in the way of achieving intercultural communication competence (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2010). In the quest for intercultural communication competence, speakers can aim for ethnorelativism, the acquired ability to see multiple values and behaviors as cultural rather than universal. This notion assumes that no one culture is central to describing and evaluating reality. Moving from realms of ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism helps public speakers move from egocentric to empathetic attitudes while preparing speeches for a diverse audience.

Samovar et al. (2010) proposed some guidelines to intercultural ethics, such as respecting differences, seeking commonalities, recognizing the validity of differences, looking past the superficial, withholding judgment and taking responsibility for one’s own actions. Suspending ethnocentrism and choosing the path to ethnorelativism and intercultural communication competence are undoubtedly sound advice. There are specific ways to prepare and deliver speeches to global audiences, and the next section explains the techniques that can be adopted at each step of the speechmaking process.

Ethnic stereotypes are boring and stressful and sometimes criminal. It's just not a good way to think. It's non-thinking. It's stupid and destructive.

~ Tommy Lee Jones
understanding a diverse audience

The previous section brought out the importance of addressing diverse audiences and highlighted the need to suspend ethnocentric judgments in favor of ethnorelativism. This section will examine how a speaker can be sensitive to diversity in the audience during the speech planning process.

Diversity in the world is a basic characteristic of human society, and also the key condition for a lively and dynamic world as we see today.

~ Hu Jintao

Cultural patterns refer to common themes through which different cultures can be understood. They consist of beliefs, values and norms shared among members of a group and which remain stable over time. They make most members of a culture respond or behave in more or less similar ways in similar situations. Of course, not all people in a cultural group behave in exactly the same way. Behavior will vary depending on personality orientations, individual values and self-constructs, or the way people think about themselves (Lustig & Koester, 2010).

Scholars have proposed different cultural patterns to explain cultural differences among people. Among the most widely accepted patterns are Hall’s (1976) categories of high- and low-context cultures and Hofstede’s (2001) cultural value dimensions. Public speakers need to stay critical and examine how their culture fits into these patterns and how the speaker as an individual fits or does not fit into these patterns. This awareness helps speakers stay conscious of their cultural background while avoiding notions of ethnocentrism as they prepare speeches for diverse audiences.

high- and low-context cultures

Hall proposed that communication patterns are organized by the “amount of information implied by the setting or the context of the communication itself, regardless of the specific words spoken” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.109). Low-context cultures prefer to use low-context messages, where the message is encoded in the words used, or in the verbal expression, and not in the context. However, high-context cultures prefer to use high-context messages, where the meaning is implied by the physical setting or is presumed to be part of the culture’s shared beliefs, values and norms.

People from high- and low-context cultures differ in their preferences for types of messages. People from low-context cultures tend to use more overt messages where the meaning is made very explicit. Low-context messages are intended to convey exact meaning through clear, precise and specific words. Verbal expression is of paramount importance, while the context of the speech is relatively unimportant. On the other hand, people from high-context cultures tend to use more covert messages where the meaning is implicit in the context in which the words are spoken. Nonverbal expressions take on more importance than verbal. Communication is intended to promote and sustain harmony and not necessarily to convey exact, precise meaning.

When preparing speeches for audiences that use low-context messages, public speakers will need to focus on their verbal expressions, using clear, specific and precise words that convey exact meaning. On the other hand, while preparing speeches for audiences that use high-context messages, speakers should focus more on non-verbal expressions and the specifics of the context.

Hofstede (2001), in his study of more than 100,000 employees of IBM in more than 70 countries, identified four cultural value dimensions that would differentiate diverse cultures. These dimensions were power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism-collectivism and masculinity-femininity.

power distance

The dimension of power distance refers to “the degree to which the culture believes that institutional and organizational power should be distributed unequally and the decisions of the power holders should be challenged or accepted” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.114). Cultures that have low-power distances tend to minimize social inequalities and challenge authority figures, and they prefer reduced hierarchical organizational structures. On the other hand, cultures that have high-power distances tend to ascribe a rightful place for each person in the order, to not question or challenge authority and to have hierarchical organization structures. Public speakers must keep in mind that audiences from high-power distance cultures are discouraged from asking questions because it is seen as questioning the speaker’s authority. On the other hand, listeners from low-power distance cultures might be more used to questioning authority and to challenge the assertions of the speaker.

Don’t walk behind me; I may not lead. Don’t walk in front of me; I may not follow. Just walk beside me and be my friend.

~ Albert Camus
uncertainty avoidance

The uncertainty avoidance dimension refers to “the extent to which the culture feels threatened by ambiguous, uncertain situations and tries to avoid them by establishing more structure” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.116). In other words, cultures with low uncertainty avoidance will have high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty, encourage dissent, tolerate social deviance and generally take more risks and experiment with new things. However, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance prefer to avoid uncertainty. They try to ensure security and certainty through an extensive set of rules and regulations. They do not tolerate dissent or social deviance and have a low-risk appetite. Therefore, when public speakers are preparing to speak to audiences from high uncertainty avoidance cultures, they must keep in mind that there are likely to be more and stricter rules and protocols governing speeches. On the other hand, speeches prepared for low uncertainty avoidance groups might be more creative or improvised. Audiences ranked low in uncertainty avoidance, or greater tolerance for ambiguity, can consider abstract ideas without many specifics.

individualism-collectivism

The dimension of individualism-collectivism refers to “the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.117). Cultures that rank low on individualism are highly collectivistic in nature and demand loyalty to the group. They believe that an individual’s primary obligations lie with the group, and they stress the dependence of individuals on organizations. On the other hand, in cultures that rank high on individualism, the autonomy of the individual is paramount and people are expected to take care of themselves. Audience members from individualistic cultures are responsive to ideas that emphasize personal achievement and highlight individual achievement. On the contrary, audience members from more collectivistic cultures might prefer recognition of group or team achievement to recognition of individual accomplishment.

masculinity-femininity

The dimension of masculinity-femininity refers to “the degree to which a culture values ‘masculine’ behaviors, such as assertiveness and the acquisition of wealth, or ‘feminine’ behaviors, such as caring for others and the quality of life” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.118). Cultures that rank low on the masculinity index tend to believe in life choices that improve aspects of quality of life, such as service to others and sympathy for the less fortunate. They prefer nurturing roles for both men and women, and have fewer prescriptive behaviors based on gender. On the other hand, cultures that rank high on the masculinity index stress ambition and achievement. When preparing speeches for audiences from predominantly masculine cultures, public speakers can emphasize ideas such as cooperation and solidarity.

time orientation

People from different cultural backgrounds can vary in their perceptions of time, irrespective of what the clock shows. Hall distinguished between a monochronic, or linear, time orientation and a polychronic, or cyclical, time orientation (Samovar et al., 2010). To people in monochronic cultures, linear time is tangible and can be ‘saved, spent, lost, wasted,’ etc. People from monochronic cultures tend to focus on one thing at a time. Schedules and deadlines are sacrosanct and punctuality is highly regarded. On the other hand, to people in polychronic cultures, cyclical time is less tangible and is seldom considered “wasted.” People from polychronic cultures can often be involved in multiple activities at the same time, with no strict division among the different activities. They usually stress involvement with people and cultivating relationships more than schedules and deadlines, so punctuality is not highly regarded.

America’s strength is not our diversity; our strength is our ability to unite people of different backgrounds around common principles. A common language is necessary to reach that goal. ~ Ernest Istook

Understanding an audience’s time orientation can enhance the effectiveness of a speech to a global audience. For example, an audience from a predominantly monochronic
Table 14.1: Countries/Cultures that Vary on Cultural Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Patterns</th>
<th>Examples of Countries/Cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low-context, explicit communication style</td>
<td>Germany, Sweden, England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-context, implicit communication style</td>
<td>Japanese, African American, Mexican, Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Power Distance</td>
<td>Guatemala, Malaysia, Philippines, Arab countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Power Distance</td>
<td>Austria, Denmark, New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivistic</td>
<td>Guatemala, Indonesia, Pakistan, West Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Greece, Portugal, Guatemala, Uruguay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>Denmark, Jamaica, Ireland, Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine Cultures</td>
<td>Austria, Italy, Mexico, Japan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine Cultures</td>
<td>Sweden, Thailand, Chile, Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monochronic Time Orientation</td>
<td>Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Unites States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polychronic Time Orientation</td>
<td>Arab, African, Indian, Latin American, South Asian Countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Lustig & Koester, (2010); Samovar et al. (2010)

culture might expect the speech to start and end on time. However, an audience from a predominantly polychronic culture might not expect a strict adherence to a schedule. Further, in the two different contexts, you would also have to deal very differently with latecomers. An understanding of cultural time orientation will help you in these situations.

*I am not struck so much by the diversity of testimony as by the many-sidedness of truth.*

~ Stanley Baldwin

selecting supporting materials

The credibility of the materials chosen to support a speech’s main idea is culturally dependent. This rule applies to the choice of stories, facts and statistics and testimonies, the materials most often used to support a speech.

stories

In many cultures, anecdotes, stories or parables enjoy high credibility as supporting materials. For instance, in Kenya the success of persuasive messages will often depend on the effective use of personal stories and anecdotes (Miller, 2002). Similarly, East and South East Asian cultures influenced by Confucianism also tend to rely on analogies, metaphors and parables to convey the main message of the speech (Xiao, 1996). An effective strategy for public speakers would be to choose stories and anecdotes to support their main arguments when addressing audiences predominantly from cultures that value such supporting materials.

facts and statistics

European American cultures often value facts and statistics as the most credible form of supporting materials (Lustig & Koester, 2010). Most public speaking textbooks include a section that emphasizes the importance of strengthening main points with facts and statistics. And, most public speeches made by politicians, activists or corporate CEOs are often peppered with statistics that appear to highlight or buttress their arguments. However, “facts” do not enjoy currency in all cultures. In cultures that value stories and parables, facts and statistics are not as well received.

testimonies

The acceptance of expert testimonies also varies from culture to culture. In some African cultures, no one is regarded as being objective. For instance, the testimony of a witness would have low credibility, because when someone speaks up about something, that person is expected to have a personal agenda in mind (Chang, 2004). On the contrary, in the United States, testimonies of witnesses are vital pieces of evidence. These differences in relative credibility accorded to testimonies by different cultures can affect the effectiveness of a public speech. Employing a mix of supporting materials might enhance credibility with a diverse audience.

speech organization

Members of different cultural groups have varying preferences for different organizational patterns such as linear and holistic.

linear pattern

Speakers from low-context cultures often use linear patterns, such as cause-and-effect, problem-solution, chronological and spatial. In these
patterns the speaker develops the main idea step by step, relying on facts and data to support the main argument. The main points and sub-points are connected via transitions, internal previews and summaries. The speaker relies more on facts and data, rather than on stories and emotional appeals, and contextual understanding is not emphasized. However, other speakers, mostly from high-context cultures, use holistic and configural organizational patterns that are more indirect than the linear patterns (Lieberman, 1994).

We have no hope of solving our problems without harnessing the diversity, the energy, and the creativity of all our people.

~ Roger Wilkins

holistic pattern

In holistic patterns, instead of directly and explicitly presenting key ideas, the speaker uses examples and stories to convey the main idea and leaves it to the audience to interpret the message encoded in the examples and stories told. The main points and sub-points are connected through implication rather than by clear bridges and transitions. Cheryl Jorgensen Earp (1993; as cited in Jaffe, 2004) has identified three distinct types of holistic organizational patterns: wave, spiral and star.

wave pattern

In the wave pattern, speakers adopt a crest-trough wave pattern in which they use examples and stories to slowly build up to the main point at the crest of the wave. The speaker then winds down and repeats the pattern, reiterating main points or introducing new points at the peaks. Speeches that follow the wave pattern usually end dramatically, at the crest. Ceremonial speakers often employ this pattern, using repetitive phrases to build up to the crest.

spiral pattern

A speaker employing the spiral pattern builds up dramatic intensity by moving from smaller and less-intense scenarios to bigger and more-intense scenarios, in an upward spiral. A speech about disciplining a child might use a spiral pattern. First, the speaker could say that for a small transgression a child might be given a time-out. The next scenario could describe a larger transgression and a bigger punishment such as being grounded for a day. Subsequent scenarios could build further in intensity.

star pattern

A variation of the more linear topical pattern, the star pattern presents a set of main points connected by an underlying common theme. For different audiences, speakers will start with different main points, but all main points will be united by one theme. For instance, while delivering a speech on “save the dolphins” to primary school students, the speaker might start with a main point that appeals to children, such as the “born to be free” argument, and then cover the other main points. However, when addressing marine biologists, the speaker might start with the main point that keeping dolphins in captivity is harmful to their health. Then the speaker would cover the remaining points, all tied to the theme of saving dolphins.

All patterns, whether linear or holistic, require careful and skillful planning and organization. When addressing a diverse audience, public speakers should make an effort to adjust their organizational patterns to reflect their audiences’ preference.

appropriate verbal expression

“That’s not what I meant!” Most people have made a statement like that at least once, if not many times. Oral communication between people can often result in misunderstanding, frustration and, if you are lucky, lots of laughter. Why does this happen? Words can hold different meanings for different people, because meaning inheres in people’s minds and not in the word itself. Public speakers are increasingly being challenged to reach beyond the comfort zone of speaking to audiences predominantly from their own culture, where their communicative ability is fairly high and to study and adapt to diverse audiences, where their intercultural communication competency will be challenged. This section explains how language and culture influence each other and what public speakers can do to use words effectively with multicultural audiences.

What we have to do... is to find a way to celebrate our diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities.

~ Hillary Clinton
the triangle of meaning

"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." This quote from Shakespeare reminds us that words are merely symbols, with little or no logical or semantic connection with the real life object or action they represent. Words as symbols are created through mutual social agreement and are fairly arbitrary. For instance, the word "rose" refers to a sweet-smelling flower that comes in different colors. Why call it a "rose"? We could have decided to call it "cheethi." In other words, the word "rose" is arbitrary and must be learned. Speakers of each language have to learn to associate their language's symbols with their referents. The symbolic, arbitrary nature of language has been represented as the triangle of meaning, with symbol, referent and thought forming the points of the triangle, as shown in the diagram below (Ogden and Richards, 1927; as cited in Cooper et al., 2007). To illustrate, the word rose is a symbol of the actual object in nature. The actual object is the referent, and the image of a rose that comes to mind is the thought.

In Figure 14.1 above, the symbol and the referent are connected by a dotted line, indicating that the symbol and its referent are not directly connected. Rather, they are connected only by the thought in the minds of speakers and recipients. This lack of direct connection between the symbol and the referent can cause issues especially when the referent is an abstract concept such as duty and respect.

Culturally diverse audiences, who will have different symbols and thoughts regarding everyday objects or abstract concepts, challenge public speakers. Further, public speakers must also be aware of different meanings that words can take.

denotative versus connotative meaning

Words can have denotative or connotative meanings. A **denotative meaning** is the socially agreed-upon meaning that can be found in a conventional dictionary. On the other hand, **connotative meaning** is the meaning attached to a word over time based on personal experiences and associations. For instance, the word "immigrant" is defined in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary as "a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence." However, the connotative meaning of immigrant arises in part from people’s experience with immigrants, whether positive or negative.

Public speakers must stay aware of the connotative meanings that diverse audiences might attach to their words. Interculturally competent speakers need to carefully choose words that will encode their ideas well to evoke the intended reaction and that will not offend the audience. Gamble and Gamble (1998) contend that strategic word choice might be public speakers’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 14.2</th>
<th>Words to Avoid in Speeches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sexist Words</strong></td>
<td>Mankind, Chairman, Manpower, Firemen (instead use gender-neutral words such as humanity, chairperson, human resources and firefighters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racist Words</strong></td>
<td>Jap, Paki, Polack, etc., especially when used in a negative tone (instead say people from Japan, Pakistan, Poland, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ageist words</strong></td>
<td>Crone (old woman, used in a derogatory tone), geezer (a queer, odd, or eccentric person, used especially of elderly men), old goat (an elderly man who is usually disliked for being disapproving of younger people)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stereotypes</strong></td>
<td>Women talk too much, Blondes are dumb, Asians are good at science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patronizing Language</strong></td>
<td>For a woman, she is an effective manager. He is a caring nurse, for a male. She is just a stay-at-home mother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic Slurs</strong></td>
<td>Dirty Jew, Russian pig, Stupid American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic Epithets</strong></td>
<td>Chinky (people perceived as of Chinese descent), Golliwog (people with dark skin), Redskin (refers to Native Americans)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Lustig & Koester, (2010); Samovar et al. (2010)
Chapter 14 Speaking to a Global Audience

most powerful tool. Appropriate word choice refers to choosing words that are inclusive and avoiding sexist, racist and ageist language. For instance, in certain cultures elders are highly valued and given a lot of respect. While talking to a diverse audience, speakers must avoid language that demeans the elderly, or any other segment of the audience for that matter. Some examples of the types of words to avoid are given in Table 14.2.

communication style
The interculturally competent public speaker strives to learn the preferences in communication styles that a diverse audience may have. For example, Asians often prefer an implicit, subtle style of communication, while North Americans prefer more explicit, direct styles. Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) have identified two classes of communication styles that have a direct bearing on speech delivery: the direct-versus-indirect styles and the elaborate-versus-succinct styles.

direct versus indirect
Whether speech is direct or indirect is determined by the extent to which speakers place emphasis on the explicitness of verbal communication. In a direct style, speakers place emphasis on the words spoken. Words are chosen for clarity and precision. The intention of the direct-style speaker is to convey as clearly and logically the main idea of the speech, without “beating about the bush.” In such a style, non-verbal cues are not as important as the verbal message. Speakers from low-context cultures most often use this communication style.

In an indirect style, speakers place emphasis on the context of the speech rather than the words spoken. In the indirect style, meaning inheres in the context or is internalized with the people who are communicating. A competent speaker or listener in such a situation would be one who understands the context: where the words are spoken, who is speaking and to whom. People from high-context cultures usually employ the indirect style. Often people from high-context cultures might find people from low-context cultures too abrupt, straightforward and insensitive, while people from low-context cultures might not understand why people from high-context cultures never seem to “get to the point.”

Sometimes one creates a dynamic impression by saying something, and sometimes one creates a significant impression by remaining silent.
~ Dalai Lama

effective non-verbal expression
While interculturally competent speakers watch their words and verbal expression, they are also aware of their non-verbal expression. Linguist Deborah Tannen estimated that as much as 90% of all human communication is non-verbal (cited in Neuliep, 2006). What’s more, when verbal and non-verbal messages conflict with each other, receivers tend to believe the non-verbal cues more than the verbal. This insight takes on added significance in the context of speaking to a global audience, because scholars maintain that even though a substantial portion of our non-verbal behavior, including the expression of emotion, is innate and hardly varies across cultures, much of non-verbal communication is learned and varies significantly across cultures. This section examines several different categories of non-verbal communication, how they differ across cultures, and how public speakers can use this knowledge for diverse audiences.

elaborate versus succinct
These styles range on a continuum, with elaborate and succinct styles at the extremes and an exacting style at the mid-point. In an elaborate style, speakers use fairly rich language filled with proverbs, idioms, quotations and metaphors. For example, speakers from Arab countries and Mexico tend to use this style. On the other end of the spectrum, speakers employing a succinct style use a lot of silences, pauses, indirectness, circumlocution and understatement to convey their main ideas. The Japanese and people from a number of other Asian countries tend to use this style. In the middle of the continuum lies the exacting style wherein the speaker will give precisely the required amount of information — nothing more, nothing less. Speakers from Northern Europe and the United States tend to prefer an exacting style of communication.

Faced with a diverse audience, competent speakers will first identify their own communication style and the preferred communication styles of their audience. They then adjust and adapt their communication style so that the audience will welcome the message.
Kinesics

Kinesic behavior, or body movement, includes gestures, hand, arm and leg movements, facial expressions, eye contact and stance or posture. Ekman and Friesen (1969) classified kinesic behavior into four broad categories: (1) emblems, (2) illustrators, (3) affect displays, and (4) regulators.

Emblems and Illustrators

Emblems refer to hand gestures that translate directly into words. For instance, putting index finger to lips indicates a “shhh…” requesting silence. Illustrators, on the other hand, are hand and arm movements that accent or complement the words being used, such as pounding a fist on the lectern to emphasize a verbal message.

Both emblems and illustrators differ widely across cultures. For instance, in the United States, making a circle with the thumb and index finger while extending the other fingers indicates “okay.” However, in Japan and Korea it indicates money. African-Americans and people from Mediterranean countries, the Middle East, and South America tend to be animated speakers and use hand gestures liberally, while in many Asian countries, such as Japan and China, excessive use of gestures is not encouraged. Speakers from these cultures tend to use fewer gestures and speak in a more restrained and subdued manner (Gamble & Gamble, 1998).

Affect Displays

Scholars contend that human beings tend to adopt universal facial expressions to convey basic emotions such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, distrust and surprise. However, where and to whom these emotions are displayed depends on the cultural context (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). For instance, in many Mediterranean cultures, people tend to emphasize signs of grief or sadness. Conversely, the Japanese, Chinese and Koreans tend to play down public expressions of sorrow, as well as anger, confusion and disgust. Further, while a smile can be a sign of happiness, it can convey multiple meanings in some cultures. For instance, in Japan, a smile can be used to mask another emotion or to avoid answering a question, as well as a sign of happiness (Samovar et al., 2010). An understanding of these cultural differences can help public speakers to gauge an audience’s emotional response or lack thereof. Speakers can also tailor their emotional display to the cultural context.

Regulators

Regulators are the actions and behaviors that manage the flow of conversation. These include eye contact, head movements, and communicator distance. One of the most important regulators in public speaking is eye contact. Determining an appropriate amount of eye contact between the speaker and audiences varies across cultures. Public speakers are encouraged to establish direct eye contact with audiences in North America, but this is often not the case in other cultures. For instance, Japanese communicators use less eye contact, as prolonged eye contact is considered rude in Japan. Eye contact is expected from receivers in Arab cultures as a mark of interest in the speaker’s words. In France, eye contact is not only frequent but often intense, and this might be intimidating to some (Cooper et al., 2007).

Paralanguage

Paralanguage refers to the vocal cues, such as volume, rate and pitch that accompany spoken language. These cues contribute to the meanings people associate with the words spoken. Some paralinguistic devices, such as volume, are learned and vary across cultures. For instance, Latinos and Arabs tend to speak more loudly than people from other cultures (Gamble & Gamble, 1998). To Arab listeners a higher volume indicates strength and sincerity, while speaking too softly implies that the speaker lacks confidence or is timid. On the other hand, speaking softly is much

Why do people always gesture with their hands when they talk on the phone?

~ Jonathan Carroll
appreciated by Asians. South Koreans avoid talking loudly in any situation, as it is seen as rude and unbecoming since it tends to draw attention to one’s self (Cooper et al., 2007).

A related and important paralinguistic device is silence. Hasegawa and Gudykunst (1998) found that culture influences the use of silence. They found that in the United States silence is used to mark a pause or break in verbal communication. When meeting strangers, Americans tend to be conscious of and uncomfortable with silence. On the other hand, for the Japanese, silence during verbal communication holds immense meaning. Since the Japanese place a lot of importance on maintaining harmony and encouraging indirectness and ambiguity to maintain harmony, silence is often used to avoid directly saying “no” to a request.

Yet another paralinguistic device, pitch refers to the highness or lowness of a voice on a tonal scale. Varying pitch adds expressiveness to messages and reveals information such as whether the speaker is asking a question or expressing concern. Many Asian languages such as Mandarin, Thai and Vietnamese are tonal languages in which the same syllable can take on different meanings depending on the tone used to deliver the sound. For instance, the meaning of the word “Ma” could vary from “mother” to “horse” to “grass” or “to scold,” depending on the tone used (Neuliep, 2006). Understanding these paralinguistic devices and how they apply to public speaking situations can enhance the effectiveness of speeches.

Nothing strengthens authority so much as silence.
~ Leonardo da Vinci

physical appearance

The physical appearance of the speaker can also affect speechmaking to a diverse audience. This is because people often draw inferences about a person’s socio-economic status, gender, age and cultural background based on physical appearance (Ruben, 1992). These inferences in turn affect whether listeners are positively or negatively predisposed to the speaker.

In public speaking, the two main categories of physical appearance that could affect audience perceptions are beauty and clothing, both of which can feed ethnocentrism. For instance, in the United States, the cultural ideal of beauty tends to value the appearance of tall, slender women and men with muscular bodies. However, in many parts of Africa, plumpness is valued as a sign of beauty (Gardiner & Kosmitzki, 2002). Interculturally competent speakers guard against culturally ingrained notions that could impede communication. In addition, competent speakers adapt their clothing for diverse audiences.

Two of the most important cultural issues regarding clothing are modesty and formality. Culturally acceptable levels of modesty vary from culture to culture. For example, in Muslim communities, women are often expected to wear loose fitting, flowing garments that do not reveal the contours of the body or expose parts of it (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2010), and a woman may be expected to cover her head with a scarf or a hijab. While delivering speeches to a diverse audience, competent speakers consider culturally based sartorial preferences. For instance, Hillary Clinton’s wearing of a headscarf while on a trip to Cairo was particularly appreciated in Cairo (Huffington Post, 2009).

Wearing the correct dress for any occasion is a matter of good manners.
~ Loretta Young

In terms of formality, the United States has an informal culture where professors on campuses and organizations in Silicon Valley often adopt casual dress codes. Some other cultures such as in Japan and Germany are more formal. Among corporate employees in Japan and in many Asian countries, there is a general proclivity for conservative dress styles that emphasize conformity to society’s collectivistic nature (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2010). While addressing audiences that place high importance on formal attire, competent speakers dress appropriately.

As emphasized throughout this chapter, the most important thing that interculturally competent public speakers must keep in mind is to be sensitive to differences among cultures and to respect diversity. Successful public speakers will research their audience and adapt as far as they can. At the very least, public speakers must show respect for audience diversity while preparing and delivering speeches. This section has offered a few examples of how non-verbal communication can vary across cultures. Public speakers who need to address a diverse audience must be keenly aware of these variations among cultures and employ culturally appropriate kinesic behavior, paralinguistic devices and dress appropriately.

constructing visual aids

The more varied the listeners’ cultural backgrounds, the more important it is for speakers to use visual materials to illustrate their ideas. Well-chosen visual aids are especially useful to help address language differences (Gamble & Gamble, 1998; Jaffe, 2004). However, interculturally competent public speakers are sensitive to the
Supporting Materials

- Help audience make sense of your talking points
- Hold audience’s attention
- Build credibility
- Provide evidence for your ideas

diverse sensibilities of their audience and choose visual aids that would likely be most effective with their audience. Research on intercultural website design has shown that low context cultures prefer more text heavy websites that state ideas explicitly and directly and follow a more consistent color scheme and structure. On the other hand, high context cultures prefer visually heavy websites that state ideas intuitively and indirectly and follow a more diverse color scheme and structure (Usunier & Roulin, 2010; Wurtz, 2005). Borrowing from this literature, public speakers could choose between literal, direct visual aids that follow a consistent color scheme and structure; or more subtle, abstract ones that employ more diversity in colors and structure, depending on whether the audience hails from low- or high-context cultures.

Further, color holds additional significance in different cultural contexts. For instance, a professor of Dutch origin was lecturing to a group of students in Singapore. She was happy that she had inserted a slide at the end of her presentation wishing the students “Gong Xi Fa Cai” (Happy Chinese New Year). However, she was greeted with frozen faces instead of friendly smiles. Later, a student enlightened her that instead of using red, which is seen as an auspicious color, she had used a black background, which is seen as inauspicious!

conclusion

This chapter started by exploring the technological, demographic, economic and peace imperatives for learning how to speak to global audiences. It then addressed ways in which this could be done. At the most basic level, public speakers must cultivate sensitivity to and respect for differences among diverse cultures and societies. At the same time, they must overcome barriers such as stereotypes, prejudices and ethnocentrism to achieving intercultural communication competence. Then the chapter examined ways in which public speeches can be made culturally acceptable and appropriate to diverse audiences.

The chapter discussed ways to understand a diverse audience through learning about cultural patterns and value dimensions. The chapter reviewed Hall’s categories of high- and low-context cultures and Hofstede’s value dimensions of individualism-collectivism; power distance; uncertainty avoidance; and masculinity-femininity. This knowledge could help speakers address diverse audiences. The chapter also considered monochronic and polychronic time orientations, and it offered tips on choosing supporting materials, such as stories, analogies, facts, statistics and testimonials, that are culturally acceptable. The chapter then explained that speeches might be organized for diverse audiences using linear and/or holistic structures, and within holistic structures substructures such as wave, star and spiral patterns.

Next, the chapter focused on choosing culturally appropriate verbal and non-verbal expressions during speech delivery. It covered challenges to effective verbal delivery to diverse audiences, including the triangle of meaning: the pitfalls of denotative and connotative meanings; and different communication style preferences, such as explicit and implicit styles. The chapter also examined culturally appropriate non-verbal expressions, including cultural variations in the use of kinesics, paralanguage and physical appearance. It also suggested making visual aids culturally appropriate.

The ability to make effective speeches to global audiences is a skill of the utmost importance in this time when disparate cultures are brought together by globalization, immigration and information and communication technologies. These skills will also come in handy for a variety of situations, from job interviews and presentations with companies in other countries, to local community speeches to welcome new immigrants into the neighborhood. The skills can also be utilized in a myriad of other situations where people will be making public speeches to increasingly global audiences, like Megan Tan, who was well prepared for her “mini-United Nations” of undergraduate students.

Design is the method of putting form and content together. Design, just as art, has multiple definitions; there is no single definition. Design can be art. Design can be aesthetics. Design is so simple, that’s why it is so complicated.

~ Paul Rand
review questions and activities

review questions
1. List four reasons for learning how to speak to a global audience.

2. Identify three barriers to achieving intercultural communication competence and give examples of each from your own or others’ experience.

3. Explain Hall’s concept of high- and low-context cultures and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. Drawing on examples from your experience, explain how these cultural patterns can help you tailor your speech to a diverse audience.

4. Distinguish between monochronic and polychronic time orientations and discuss how these might affect a speech to an audience that is predominantly from a culture that follows polychronic time.

5. Discuss ways in which you can make the supporting materials for your speech inclusive and culturally appropriate.

6. Name and explain, with examples, any two holistic patterns of speech organization.

7. What is the triangle of meaning? How does an understanding of this notion help you prepare to speak to a global audience?

8. What is the difference between denotative and connotative meaning, and how does it affect speaking to a global audience?

9. Explain two communication style preferences and discuss how these preferences would affect speaking to a global audience.

10. What are the different aspects of body language that might affect speech delivery in a multi-cultural context? Explain, with examples.

activities
1. As you prepare your speech for a multicultural audience, it is important to stay conscious of cultural patterns, yours as well as those of your audience. This will help you to become more aware of yourself and avoid notions of ethnocentrism while preparing your speech. Imagine you are giving a sales presentation to three groups, each consisting of Arabs, Japanese and British. How would you tailor your speech to each audience?

2. The transcript of Martin Luther King’s speech “I have a dream” can be accessed at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3170387.stm. Analyze the organization pattern that has been used to structure the speech and discuss your findings in class.

3. Watch a TED talk at http://www.ted.com/ in a language that you don’t understand. Analyze the nonverbal communication of the speaker and identify aspects of kinesics and paralanguage that the speaker uses to effectively add to the verbal message.
glossary

**Connotative Meaning**
A connotative meaning is the meaning you attach to a word based on your personal experiences and associations.

**Cultural Patterns**
Cultural patterns refer to common themes through which different cultures can be understood. They consist of beliefs, values and norms shared among a group of people and remain stable over long periods of time.

**Denotative Meaning**
A denotative meaning is the socially agreed conventional meaning found in a dictionary.

**Ethnocentrism**
Ethnocentrism is the notion that one’s own culture is superior to any other.

**High-context Message**
The meaning of the message is implied by the physical setting or is presumed to be part of the culture’s shared beliefs, values and norms.

**Holistic Pattern**
Holistic patterns, instead of directly and explicitly presenting key ideas, use examples and stories to convey the main idea and leave it to the audience to interpret the message encoded in the examples and stories told.

**Individualism-Collectivism**
The dimension of individualism-collectivism refers to the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group.

**Kinesics**
The study of body movement including gestures, hand, arm and leg movements, facial expressions, eye contact and stance or posture.

**Low-context Message**
A low-context message is one where the message is encoded in the words used or in the verbal expression and not as much in the context.

**Masculinity-Femininity**
The dimension of masculinity-femininity refers to the degree to which a culture values such behaviors as assertiveness and the acquisition of wealth or caring for others and the quality of others.

**Monochronic Time**
Monochronic time refers to linear time; is tangible and can be “saved, spent, lost wasted,” etc. People from monochronic cultures tend to focus on one thing at a time. Schedules and deadlines are sacrosanct, and punctuality is highly regarded.

**Paralanguage**
Paralanguage refers to the vocal cues that accompany spoken language such as volume, rate and pitch.

**Power Distance**
Power distance refers to the degree to which the culture believes that institutional and organizational power should be distributed unequally and the decisions of the power holders should be challenged or accepted.

**Prejudice**
Prejudice refers to a negative attitude toward a cultural group, often based on little or no experience.

**Polychronic Time**
Polychronic time refers to cyclical time. Time is less tangible and is seldom considered “wasted”. People from polychronic cultures can often be involved in multiple activities at the same time, with no strict division among the different activities.

**Spiral Pattern**
A type of holistic pattern in which the speaker builds up dramatic intensity by moving from smaller and less intense scenarios to bigger and more intense scenarios, in an upward spiral.

**Star Pattern**
A type of holistic pattern, the star pattern presents a set of main points connected by an underlying common theme. For different audiences, speakers will start with different main points. However, all main points will be united by one theme.

**Stereotype**
A standardized conception or image of a group of people, a stereotype forces a simple pattern upon a complex mass and assigns a limited number of characteristics to all members of a group. Stereotypes are simple, acquired, often erroneous and resistant to change.
Triangle of Meaning
Refers to the symbolic, arbitrary nature of language wherein the word spoken or the symbol of the actual object in nature (the referent), has no actual connection to the object it represents. The symbol and the referent are connected only by the thought in one’s mind.

Uncertainty Avoidance
Uncertainty avoidance index refers to the extent to which the culture feels threatened by ambiguous, uncertain situations and tries to avoid them by establishing more structure.

Wave Pattern
A type of holistic pattern that follows a crest-trough wave pattern where speakers use examples and stories to slowly build up to the main point at the crest of the wave.

references


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**photo credits**

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p. 5 USAID 50th anniversary event in Mali
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