Cross-Cultural Communication Strategies

American English Webinar 2.4



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Webinar Goals

In this webinar we will attempt to…

* Recognize how cultural and linguistic differences affect communication
* Discuss the importance of preparing learners to communicate across cultures successfully
* Share activities that raise cultural and linguistic awareness among English Language Learners

Cross-Cultural Incident



Clara is an American attending a university in Norway. She has made a few friends. One morning, on her way to class, she sees her friend **Johann** walking ahead of her. She shouts and runs to catch up with Johann.

Clara smiles and attempts to make conversation, but Johann doesn't smile or say much except that he must get to class.

Clara says good-bye feeling confused and hurt. She thought they were friends and wonders if she did something to upset Johann.

Bridging Cultures: Elements of Culture and Communication

* Nonverbal communication
* Verbal communication
* Identity
* Values
* Social norms



Culture and Nonverbal Communication

* Nonverbal communication differs among cultures
* The way that we understand nonverbal codes differs among cultures



Types of Nonverbal Communication



Body Movement



Gestures



Eye Movement

Types of NonVerbal Communication



Clothing and Dress



Time

Um…

Vocalics

Types of Nonverbal Communication

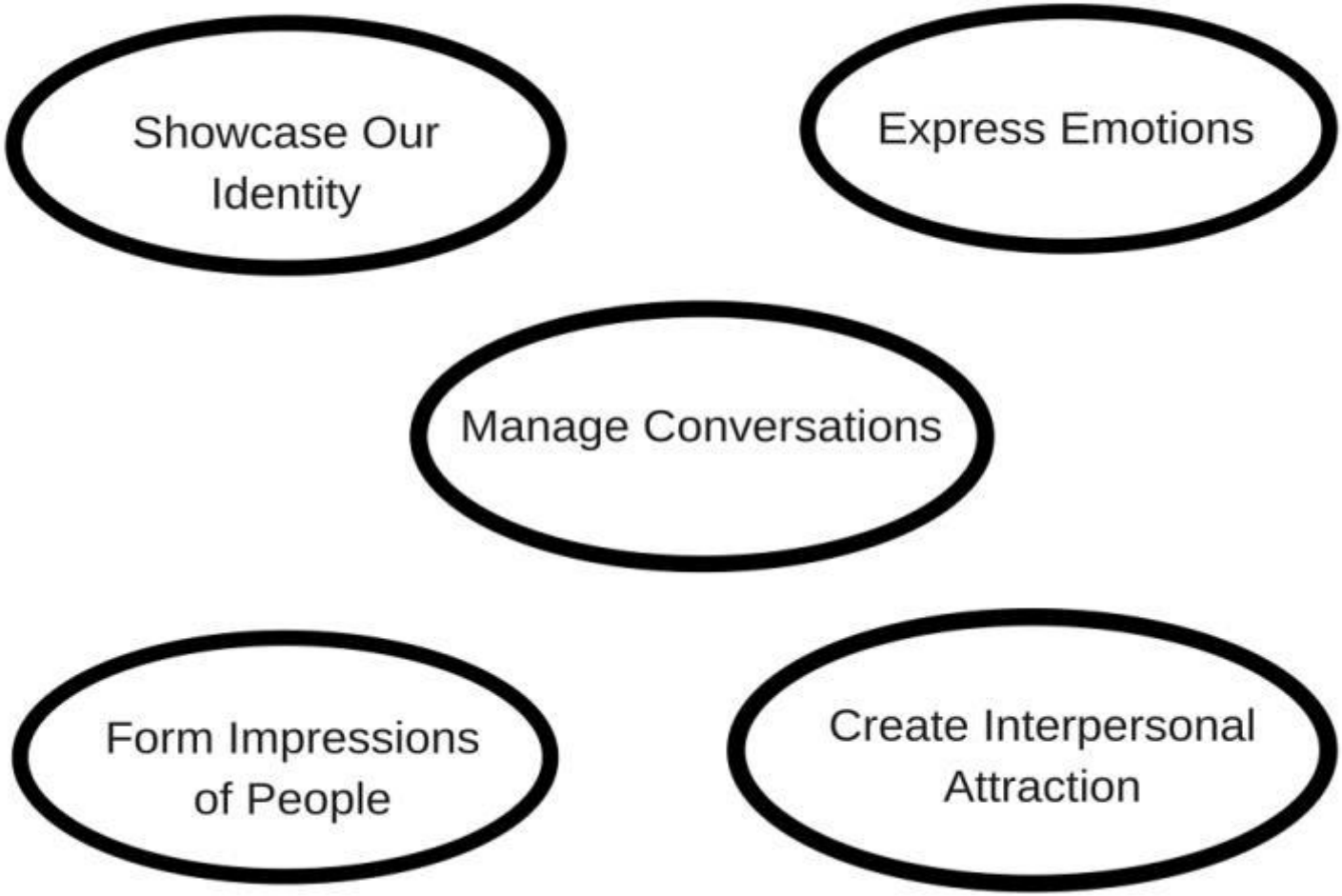


Space



Touch

Functions of Nonverbal Communication



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Teaching Nonverbal Communication

- Testing gestures
- Space exercise
- Vocalics of English and first language

Sharing Gestures

Goal: To highlight the differences in some simple nonverbal codes

* Students stand in a circle
* Teacher calls out a word/phrase
* Students must perform the associated movement or gesture



Using Space and Touch



Goal: To recognize that people use and value space differently

* Send half of the students out of the room
* The remaining students are told this:
  * You will have a conversation with a student when they return
  * As you talk you will move closer and closer to your partner
  * Observe your partner's reaction and your own

* Bring the other students back to find a partner

Vocalics as Communication

Goal: To identify some of the nonverbal sounds used in English to communicate meaning

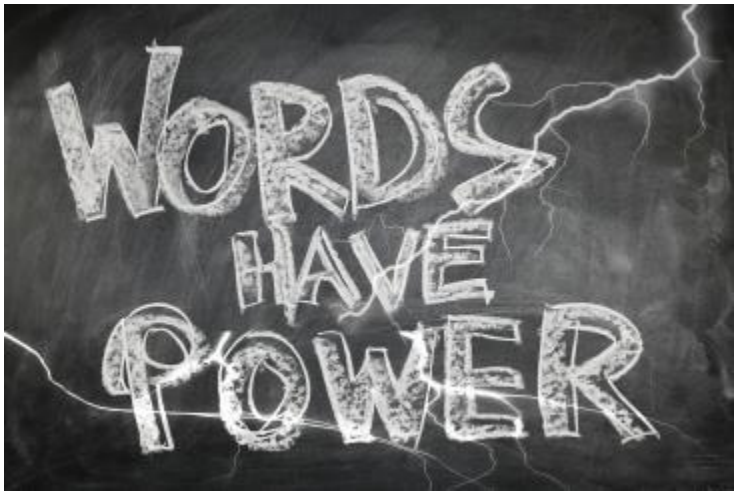
- The teacher will make sounds in English that relate to particular phrases/words
  - Example: uh-huh, hmmm (with rising intonation)
- Students must try to identify what these sounds mean



Verbal Communication

- Theory of Linguistic Relativism or Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis
  - Language shapes and influences how we view the world
  - We can learn to use and understand new languages and cultures
- Think about this:

The way we think is filtered through our own language, so what relationship is there between culture and language?



Culture and Verbal Communication

Written



Oral



* Language Rules (Sounds, Grammar, Meaning)

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Teaching Verbal Communication

- Language of relationships
- Making requests
- Writing appropriate emails
  - Extension: Prepare an email request and a spoken request; ask students to identify differences

Language of Relationships

Goal: To practice the language of relationships and show how language might create different beliefs about relationships across cultures

* Ask students to generate family vocabulary

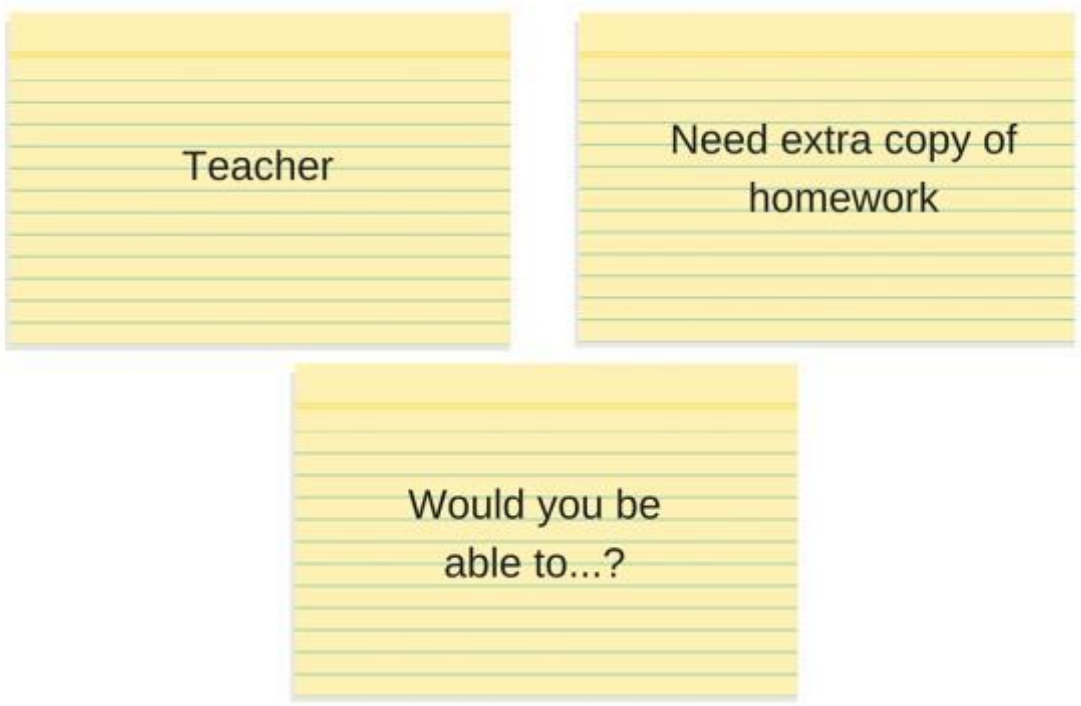
Mother	Father	Aunt	Uncle

* Work as a large group to determine how the word in English differs from the word in the L1
  * Give students time to do a few in small groups or pairs

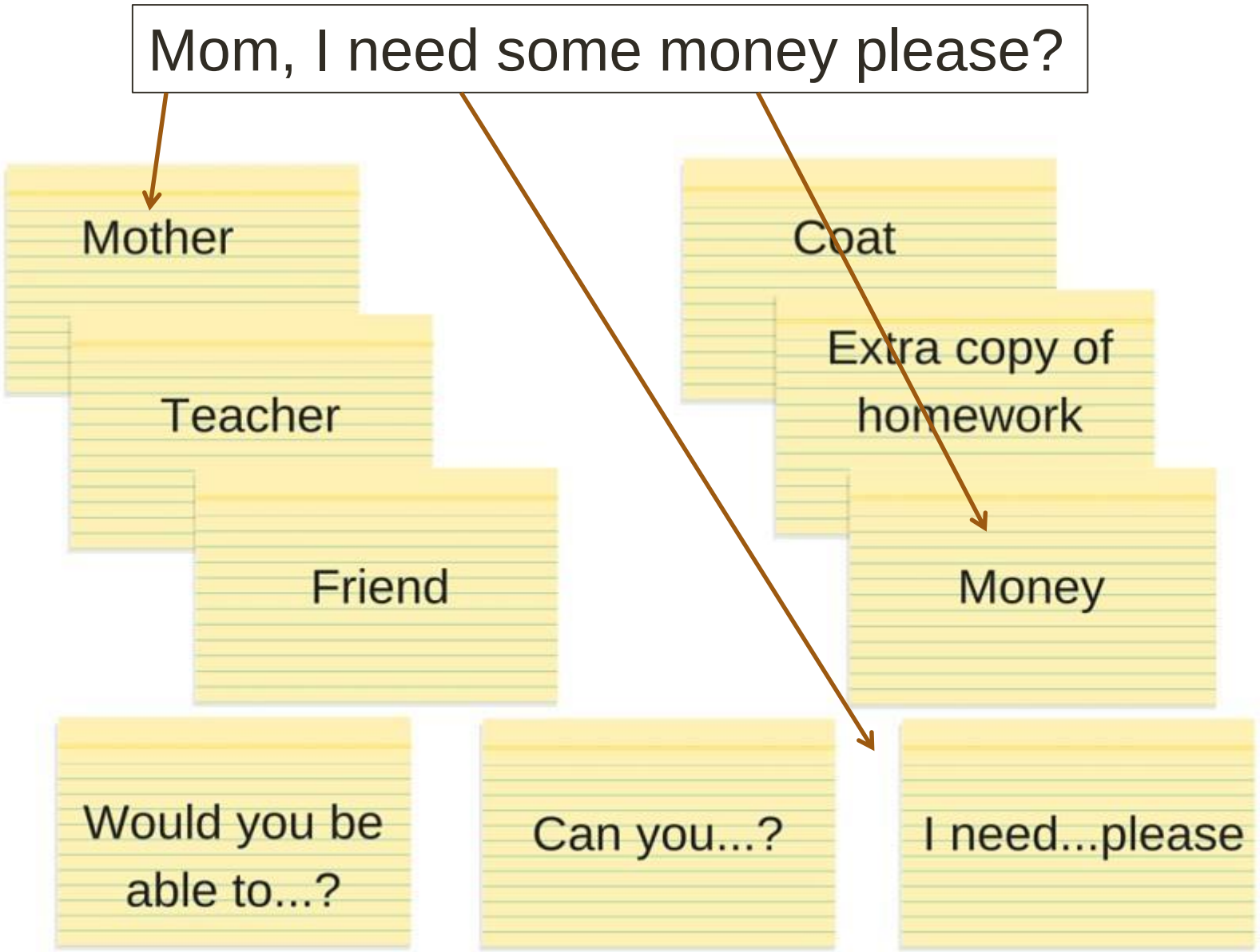
* Ask students why these differences might exist

Making Requests

Goal: To recognize the appropriate way to make a request in English



* Working in groups have students arrange the cards so that the person, request, and phrase work together to be pragmatically appropriate
* Then students must complete the request


Mom, I need some money please?
Mother
Teacher
Friend
Coat
Extra copy of homework
Money
Would you be able to...?
Can you...?
I need...please

Writing Emails

Goal: To practice writing polite emails in English

To: Professor Washington

Subject: English Class Absence ← Clear subject

From: Dan Bunk

Professor Washington, ← Professional/Respectful Greeting

My name is Melissa Mendelson and I am a student in your English Language class. I'm writing to let you know that I'm home sick today. I will miss class. ← Polite and brief message explaining situation

One of my classmates will be giving me the materials that I miss.

Sincerely, ← Appropriate Closing Word

Dan Bunk ← Full name given

Culture and Identity

- Personal identity within each of us is formed by different aspects joining together. These can include:
  - Personalities, goals, and interests
  - Religious beliefs
  - Social class and status (income, education, family)
  - Language
  - Gender
  - Social roles
  - Ethnicity

Cross-Cultural Incident



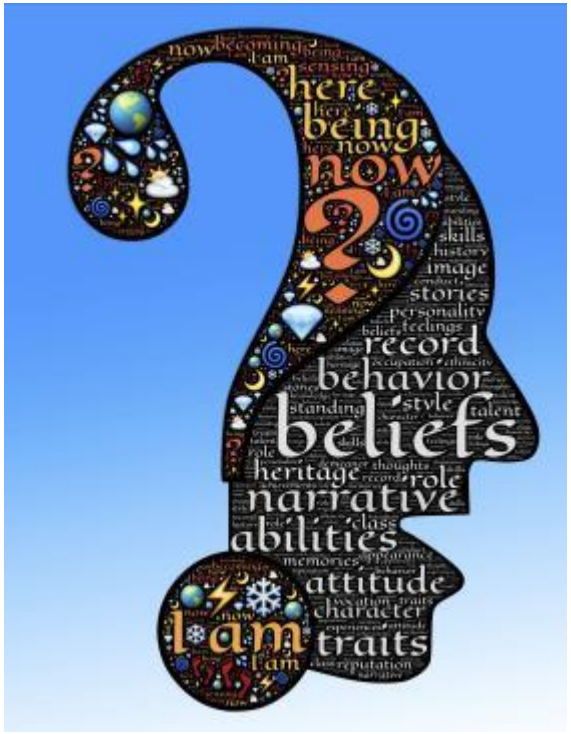
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Teaching Culture and Identity

- Who am I?
- How are we different? (Peace Corps Lesson)
- Girls and boys (Gender Identity)
- Clothing and impressions



Who Am I?



Goal: To support self-discovery through brainstorming and self-reflection through writing and discussion

* Ask students to list or think of ten words in English about themselves

* Pair or group students and have them share there lists

* Once they've shared, put them to work writing the information into a paragraph to share

* When they've finished they can return to their groups to share their description.

How are we different?

Goal: To extend the conversation on identity and generate empathy as students recognize differences in others



* This activity comes from U.S. Peace Corps website:

http://www.peacecorps.gov/wws/lesson-plans/everyone-has-culture-everyone-different/

Peace Corps Lesson Handout

Everyone Has a Culture—Everyone Is Different

Directions: Write one sentence or phrase about each topic. Then rate each item from 1-10 (1 is most important) according to what value this topic has in your culture.

Rank

_____ What language(s) do you speak?



_____ What is your religion?

_____ What music do you listen to?

_____ What dances do you know?



_____ What foods do you eat at home?

_____ What do you wear on special occasions?

_____ What holidays and ceremonies are important?



_____ What is most important to you?

Clothing and Impressions

* **Goal:** To recognize and develop knowledge about how we use clothing to give people details about ourselves

  * Have students look around the room
    * What can they tell about each other based on what they are wearing/carrying?
    * Give students a list of people. Have them work in groups to generate the clothing each person might wear to show who they are

  * When finished, bring students back together and ask them to reflect on what their own style says about themselves. What do they want to say about themselves through appearance?

Culture and Values

Fairness **Not Doing Harm** **Authority**

Purity **Community/Group Loyalty**

- Me ≠ You
- Identity shapes values; both influence behavior
- An older friend, Sam, meets you for coffee dressed in an outfit that you think is too informal. In fact, your friend is wearing a swimsuit. How do you respond?

Culture and Cultural Norms

- Cultural norms = Behavior and rules
- They are learned early and reinforced often
- These rules make us very ethnocentric (our rules are the only rules) and are the cause of many cultural miscommunications
- Learning that other cultural norms exist can help us be more accepting and reduce instances of cultural miscommunication

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Teaching Values & Cultural Norms

- Greetings across cultures
- Spot the difference
- Cross-cultural incidents



Spot the Difference

Goal: To recognize that everyday activities, living arrangements, and habits vary around the world and generate discussion on how to handle those differences

* Show drawings or pictures of everyday activities taking place in the U.S.
  * How are these different from their own daily activities?
  * What would they do if they were in the U.S. and were asked to act in a different way?



Cross-Cultural Incidents

Goal: To use a cross-cultural incident as a way to prompt discussion about communicating across cultures

* Readily available on the Internet

* Provide students with a case study as a way to work through cross-cultural communication and generate possible solutions

Final Thoughts



Teach students to…

* Ask questions
* Observe
* Make mistakes
* Teach people about new ways and cultures

www.americanenglish.state.gov

American English for Educators Facebook Page

Thank You

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