



You Said What!?

Communication Skills for Library Staff

Emphasizing the Multicultural Experience

By Dr. Nara Venditti

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About the Presenter

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- Dr. Nara Venditti is the president and founder of *Succeed in America!* LLC --providing workshops on diversity, business communication and job search. She specializes in managing multicultural diversity and foreign born employee development.
- She is an author of over 60 published works including *How To Get A Job In The USA* and *Ameri\$peak*. She helps organizations (libraries, universities and colleges, companies, non-profits) manage and leverage diversity. She helps individuals to succeed in the American workplace.





Objective

**Increase
your personal effectiveness
when communicating across cultures**



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Why communication?

- **Communication with customers is vital to creating a successful relationship**
- **Yet, we are rarely taught how to communicate effectively, especially in multicultural setting**

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Demographic Shift is Happening All Across the Land

- Foreign born constitute 12.4% of the US population
- One in five speaks a language other than English at home
- At any given time we have about a half million international students in our educational institutions
- Minorities are responsible for 70% growth of the US economy
- About one million immigrants enter this county annually

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Barriers to Communication

- Poor Listening Skills
- Cultural Barriers
- Language Barriers
- Stereotyping
- More Barriers



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What Interferes with Listening?

1. **Customer was unclear** (felt rushed, spoke with accent, grammatically incorrect, more...)
2. **You were unclear** (spoke fast, used jargon, terms, idioms, acronyms, more ...)
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What is culture?

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



Iceberg Model of Culture



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

INVISIBLE:
norms, values,
assumptions, expectations, habits,
attitudes, tradition, family structure

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How cultures differ? By communication styles!

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

– Edward T. Hall

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Communication considerations of Cultural Differences

By verbal and non-verbal content

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

Attitude to time

Gift giving

Marriage and courtship

Grieving

Emotional responses

Individual or Group

Task or relationship

***** there are other considerations*****

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American Culture Major Values

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

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Some Hispanic Cultural Values

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

-Amado Padilla

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Some Chinese Cultural Values

- Mianzi – face
- Guanxi – relationships, networking
- Keji – politeness
- Inner and outer circles
- Renqing – reciprocity
- High appreciation for education
- Li and surface harmony

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Language Barriers

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

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Tips for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

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Speaking/Listening Tips

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

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Cont.

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

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Some Tips for Active Listening

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

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Selected Cultural Tips

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

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How They Say It with White

- In many European cultures white expresses innocence and purity. Very often it is associated with young love. It is the color worn at weddings.
- In contrast, in many Asian cultures white is color of mourning and death. It is the color worn at funerals.

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Some Language Tips

1. Reduce potentially confusing phrases (idioms, acronyms, slang)
2. Understand that choosing a wrong word is a common mistake with non-native speakers
3. Realize that same concepts can have different interpretations in different cultures

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Cont.

4. Use LinguoClick\$ to build relationships

(these are words and phrases that connect and build relationships, see "thank you" in different languages) Click [here](#) for a PDF file

5. Spell key words and proper names

6. Learn the correct pronunciation of the foreign name



The Naming Game

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

<http://www.succeedinamerica.com/articles/businessinsider2004.pdf>

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Translation Tips

- Picking a translator
- Back translation
- www.polytalk.info
- <http://lincolntrail.typepad.com/polytalk/2007/10/language-kit-vi.html>

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How do you learn about cultures? Use **NARA**[™] formula

- N** ● Never assume
- A** ● Ask your students/customers/client
- R** ● Relate to them on many levels
- A** ● Ask the expert

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Merci
Gracias
ՀորՀակարութիւն
Спасибо
Danke
ありがとうございます
THANK YOU

