

## Chapter 7

# What Are the Major Differences in Intercultural Verbal Styles?

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When [getting] home from class, it might be normal for most people to grab something to eat and drink. However, as a quadriplegic, I am unable to do many things myself. So I wait for an opportunity when someone else gets a drink, and I might suggest that I would like one too. If no one makes a move for a snack, I might just mention that I'm kind of hungry, instead of openly asking for

something to eat. There are so many small things that people have to do for me that I become frustrated and embarrassed to ask. It seems rude to be continually interrupting the routine of others to get things for myself; especially what seem to be small things but become huge when you are unable to do them for yourself.

—Tony, College Student

*Intercultural frustrations often arise because of verbal communication style differences. When disabled individuals communicate with nondisabled individuals, they often experience emotional vulnerability or stress. Though some disabled individuals tend to not want to overimpose on other people for help, other nondisabled individuals tend to hold*

*negative stereotypes of disabled people as too "oversensitive or easily offended." Because of intercultural communication incompetence, even routine conversations can become very frustrating and stressful.*

*More important, our intercultural ineptness or ignorance often clutters our ability to communicate mindfully with the disabled or with culturally different others. One of the first steps toward developing more mindful verbal communication with dissimilar others is to develop a keen awareness of those verbal style differences. Our mindless versus mindful interpretations of those differences can ultimately influence the quality of our intercultural or intergroup relationship developments. This chapter is organized in five sections. First, we introduce the low-context and high-context communication framework. Second, we discuss four cross-cultural verbal style differences: direct and indirect styles, complementary, animated and understated styles, formal and informal verbal styles, and cultural attitudes toward talk and silence. Third, we take a further look at everyday intercultural conversation processes, especially the important concept of self-disclosure. Fourth, we discuss different modes of cross-cultural persuasion. We close the chapter by summarizing key points and offering practical checkpoints to improve intercultural conversation flexibility.*

### Intercultural Low-Context and High-Context Communication Framework

In this section, we discuss the low-context and high-context communication framework and present some lively, comparative dialogue examples.

#### Defining Low-Context and High-Context Communication

Hall (1976) claimed that human interaction, on the broad level, can be divided into low-context and high-context communication systems. In **low-context communication**, the emphasis is on how intention or meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages. In **high-context communication**, the emphasis is on how intention or meaning can best be conveyed through the context (e.g., social roles or positions) and the nonverbal channels (e.g., pauses, silence, tone of voice) of the verbal message (see Table 7.1). Furthermore, the structure of the language system itself may be more low-context in expression or high-context in verbal implication.

The English and German language systems, for example, tend toward a more direct, low-context mode, but the Arabic and Spanish language systems tend toward a more status-based, high-context verbal mode (see Table 7.2).

**Table 7.1** Low-Context Communication (LCC) and High-Context Communication (HCC): Verbal Patterns

<u>LCC Patterns</u>	<u>HCC Patterns</u>
Individualistic Values	Collectivistic Values
Linear Logic	Spiral Logic
Direct Verbal Style	Indirect Verbal Style
Matter-of-Fact Tone	Understated or Animated Tone
Informal Verbal Style	Formal Verbal Style
Verbal Assertiveness or Talkativeness	Verbal Reticence or Silence

**Table 7.2** Country Examples of Low-Context and High-Context Communication

<u>LCC Examples</u>		<u>HCC Examples</u>	
Germany	United States	Saudi Arabia	Japan
Switzerland	Canada	Kuwait	China
Denmark	Australia	Mexico	South Korea
Sweden	United Kingdom	Nigeria	Vietnam

To do a quick check, do you know what are the top-three countries that have the most English, Germanic, Arabic, and Spanish speakers, respectively? Take a quick guess, and check out the answers in Jeopardy Boxes 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, and 7.4.

**Jeopardy Box 7.1** Top-Ten Countries With the Most English-Language Speakers

<u>Country</u>	<u>Approximate Number of Speakers*</u>
1. United States	237,320,000
2. United Kingdom	58,090,000
3. Canada	18,218,000
4. Australia	15,561,000
5. Ireland	3,720,000
6. South Africa	3,700,000
7. New Zealand	3,338,000
8. Jamaica <sup>#</sup>	2,460,000
9. Trinidad and Tobago <sup>##</sup>	1,245,000
10. Guyana <sup>##</sup>	764,000

Notes: \*People for whom English is their mother tongue.

<sup>#</sup>Includes English Creole.

<sup>##</sup>Trinidad English.

Source: Adapted from Ash (2002), p. 101.

**Jeopardy Box 7.2** Top-Ten Countries With the Most German-Language Speakers

<u>Country</u>	<u>Approximate Number of Speakers*</u>
1. Germany	75,080,000
2. Austria	7,444,000
3. Switzerland	4,570,000
4. United States	1,850,000
5. Brazil	910,000
6. Poland	500,000
7. Canada	486,000
8. Kazakhstan	460,000
9. Russia	350,000
10. Italy	310,000

Note: \*People for whom German is their mother tongue.

Source: Adapted from Ash (2002), p. 101.

**Jeopardy Box 7.3** Top-Ten Countries With the Most Arabic-Language Speakers

<u>Country</u>	<u>Approximate Number of Speakers*</u>
1. Egypt	65,080,000
2. Algeria	26,280,000
3. Saudi Arabia	20,920,000
4. Morocco	18,730,000
5. Iraq	17,490,000
6. Yemen	17,400,000
7. Sudan	17,320,000
8. Syria	14,680,000
9. Tunisia <sup>#</sup>	6,710,000
10. Libya	4,910,000

Note: \*People for whom Arabic is their mother tongue.

<sup>#</sup>Another 2,520,000 people speak Arabic-French, and 300,000 speak Arabic-English.

Source: Adapted from Ash (2002), p. 100.

**Jeopardy Box 7.4** Top-Ten Countries With the Most Spanish-Language Speakers

<u>Country</u>	<u>Approximate Number of Speakers*</u>
1. Mexico	91,080,000
2. Colombia	41,880,000
3. Argentina	35,860,000
4. Spain <sup>#</sup>	29,860,000
5. Venezuela	23,310,000
6. United States	20,720,000
7. Peru	20,470,000
8. Chile	13,640,000
9. Ecuador	11,760,000
10. Dominican Republic	8,270,000

Notes: \*People for whom Spanish is their mother tongue.

<sup>#</sup>Castilian Spanish.

Source: Adapted from Ash (2002), p. 101.

In general, **low-context communication (LCC)** refers to communication patterns of direct verbal mode: straight talk, nonverbal immediacy, and sender-oriented values (i.e., the sender assumes the responsibility to communicate clearly). In the LCC system, the speaker is expected to be responsible for constructing a clear, persuasive message that the listener can decode easily. In comparison, **high-context communication (HCC)** refers to communication patterns of indirect verbal mode: self-humbling talk, nonverbal subtleties, and interpreter-sensitive values (i.e., the receiver or interpreter of the message assumes the responsibility to infer the hidden or contextual meanings of the message) (Ting-Toomey, 1985). In the HCC system, the listener or interpreter of the message is expected to “read between the lines,” to accurately infer the implicit intent of the verbal message, and to decode the nonverbal subtleties that accompany the verbal message.

### Low-Context and High-Context Communication Examples

*Low-context communication* is illustrated by the following dispute between two European American neighbors in Active Dialogue 7.1.

#### Active Dialogue 7.1

**BELLA** (knocks on her neighbor's screen door): Excuse me, it's past 11 o'clock already, and your loud music and dancing around are really disturbing my sleep. Please stop your jumping and banging around immediately! I have an important job interview tomorrow morning, and I want to get a good night's sleep. Some of us do need to pay rent!

**HAYDEN** (resentfully): Well, this is the only time I can rehearse! I have an important audition coming up tomorrow. You're not the only one that is starving, you know. I also need to pay my rent. Stop being so petty!

**BELLA** (frustrated): I really think YOU'RE being VERY ANNOYING and INTRUSIVE! There is an apartment noise ordinance, you know. And if you don't stop banging around immediately, I'm going to file a complaint with the apartment manager and he could evict you. . . .

**HAYDEN** (sarcastically and turning up the music louder): Whatever! Do what you want. I'm going to practice as I please. Don't bother to ask for my autograph when I become a big-time Hollywood star!

In contrast, the following interaction in Active Dialogue 7.2 involving two Japanese housewives illustrates their use of *high-context communication*.

#### Active Dialogue 7.2

**MRS. KUROGI**: Hello, Mrs. Yamashita . . . Your son Toji is entering his high school karaoke contest, isn't he? I envy you, because you must be so proud of his talent. You must be looking forward to his future as a pop singer. . . . I'm really impressed by his enthusiasm—every day, he practices so hard, for hours and hours, until late at night. . . .

**MRS. YAMASHITA**: Oh, I'm so sorry . . . Toji is just a beginner in karaoke singing. We don't know his future yet. . . . He is such a silly boy singing so late. We didn't realize you can hear all the noise next door. I'll tell him to stop right away. I'm so sorry about all your trouble; it won't happen again.

In Active Dialogue 7.1, Bella and Hayden spell out everything that is on their minds with no restraints. Their interaction exchange is direct, to the point, bluntly contentious, and full of face-threat verbal messages. Active Dialogue 7.1 represents one possible low-context way of approaching a disagreement. Although the example represents an unproductive scenario, Bella and Hayden might actually turn their dialogue around and obtain a more productive outcome by identifying their common interests (e.g., urgency of the job search or rent payment due) and exploring other constructive options (e.g., closing the windows or practicing in another room). They can use the strengths of low-context, “explicit talk” in dealing with the disagreement openly and nonevaluatively.

In Active Dialogue 7.2, Mrs. Kurogi has not directly expressed her concern over Toji's singing with Mrs. Yamashita because she wants to preserve face and her relationship with Mrs. Yamashita. Mrs. Kurogi uses indirect hints and nonverbal signals to get her point across. However, Mrs. Yamashita correctly “reads between the lines” of Mrs. Kurogi's verbal message and apologizes appropriately and effectively before any real conflict can bubble to the surface. Active Dialogue 7.2 represents one possible high-context way of approaching a disagreement. In high-context disagreement scenarios, even minor disagreement is perceived as a major face-threat situation if the *face*, or *social self-image*, of the contending parties is not supported. From the high-context communication viewpoint, minor disagreement can easily turn into a major conflict if face-threatening and face-saving issues are not dealt with competently. However, if Mrs. Kurogi were the neighbor of Hayden in Active Dialogue 7.1, Hayden might not be able to “read between the lines” of Mrs. Kurogi's verbal and, more important, nonverbal message. Hayden might be clueless that a disagreement was already simmering between them. Hayden might actually take Mrs. Kurogi's verbal message literally as a compliment—and continue late-night practices!

Mrs. Kurogi and Mrs. Yamashita are practicing the high-context interaction style frequently used in Japanese society, but Bella and Hayden are using the low-context communication style more commonly employed in U.S. society. Overall, low-context interaction emphasizes direct talk and individual-centered expressions. High-context interaction, in comparison, stresses indirect talk and a round-about way of expression. Let's look at another story by Kate, a college student. She offers an account of her parents on their honeymoon; though they are both European Americans, the following story in Double Take 7.1 illustrates interesting male-female communication style differences.

### Double Take 7.1

Shortly after getting married, my parents took a trip to Hawaii. They checked into the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, which they both considered to be a huge splurge. My father said that my mom seemed to be very excited to be there—until they got to the room. Apparently, he sensed something was wrong with his wife, but he could not imagine what it could be.

He asked her if she liked the room and she assured him that everything was wonderful. About 5 minutes later, she started looking out the window and asked, "I wonder what the view would look like a few stories up." My dad sensed that

something was wrong so he asked her again if she like the room. Once again, she said that the room was perfect and that she was thrilled to be there.

A few minutes later, my mom posed another subtle question: "Do you think they forgot to clean this room? It smells smoky in here. . . ." My dad said [that] at this point, he finally realized my mom really didn't like the room and wanted to change the room. So he said, "Let's change the room." To this my mom replied, "Okay, if that is what you want to do."

—Kate, College Student

When Kate asked her mother about this situation, her mom recalled that she jumped at the chance when her husband offered to switch rooms. Because he was taking her on such a wonderful vacation, her mom felt it was not her place to complain directly about the room. Meanwhile, Kate's dad recalled that he never fully understood why his wife never came right out and said what was on her mind. If Kate's dad and mom had known about low-context and high-context communication styles, they might have been better prepared for this early miscommunication during their honeymoon period. Research actually indicates that males tend to be more low-context in their communication style, and females tend to be more high-context in their communication approach. Males in the U.S. culture tend to emphasize clarity in conversations, and females tend to emphasize not hurting other's feelings or imposing on others (Ting-Toomey, 1988).

## Low-Context and High-Context Verbal Style Comparisons

Before you continue reading, let's do Quick Poll 7.1 to check out your verbal style preference.

### Quick Poll 7.1

Check off any of the following behaviors that you find irritating or frustrating when you interact with individuals who talk that way.

- Not answering questions directly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Talking bluntly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Insisting on calling you Ms. or Mr.: \_\_\_\_\_
- Making a request directly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Using lots of silence in conversation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Talking about themselves constantly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Speaking slowly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Speaking really fast: \_\_\_\_\_
- Asking personal questions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Speaking softly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Speaking loudly: \_\_\_\_\_
- Constantly apologizing: \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you find some of the verbal behaviors irritating? Where did you acquire your own verbal habits or rituals? What cultural or personal values influence your verbal styles? Do you notice any verbal style differences between females and males in your culture? How so? Do you communicate very similarly in different situations? Or do you switch your verbal styles to adapt to different interaction situations?

Although **low-context communicators** tend to emphasize direct verbal style, animated conversational tone, informal verbal treatment, and talkativeness, **high-context communicators** tend to value indirect verbal style, understated or exaggerated conversational tone, formal verbal treatment, and emphasis on the importance of silence. We compare low-context and high-context verbal style differences in this section.

### Direct and Indirect Verbal Styles

*Mannerism of speaking*, or verbal style, frames how a message should be interpreted or understood. Of the four styles of verbal interaction, the research evidence for the direct-indirect verbal style dimension is the most extensive and persuasive.

This stylistic pair, direct and indirect verbal styles, can be thought of as straddling a continuum. Individuals in all cultures use all of these

verbal styles to a certain degree, depending on assumed identities, intentions, interaction goals, relationship types, and the situation. However, in individualistic cultures, people tend to encounter more situations that emphasize direct talk. In contrast, in collectivistic cultures, people tend to encounter more situations that emphasize the use of indirect talk.

The direct and indirect styles differ in how they reveal the speaker's intentions through tone of voice and the straightforwardness of the content in the message. In the **direct verbal style**, verbal statements tend to reveal the speaker's intentions with clarity and are enunciated with a forthright tone of voice. In the **indirect verbal style**, verbal statements tend to camouflage the speaker's actual intentions and are carried out with a softer tone. For example, the overall U.S. American verbal style often calls for clear and direct communication. Phrases such as "be very clear," "don't beat around the bush," and "what is the point" are some examples. In contrast, in a verbal request situation, U.S. Americans tend to use a straightforward form of request, but Koreans tend to ask for a favor in a more roundabout and implicit way to sound not so imposing or demanding. The Koreans are not the only indirect group. Let's demonstrate a pair of contrastive "airport ride request" scenes in Active Dialogues 7.3 and 7.4 between two Irish Americans and two Latinas:

### Active Dialogue 7.3

IRISH AMERICAN 1: We're going to the Orange Bowl in Miami this weekend.

IRISH AMERICAN 2: What fun! I wish I were going to the game with you. How long are you going to be there? [If she wants a ride, she will ask.]

IRISH AMERICAN 1: Three days. By the way, we may need a ride to the airport. Do you think you can take us?

IRISH AMERICAN 2: Sure. What time?

IRISH AMERICAN 1: 10:30 p.m. this coming Saturday.

IRISH AMERICAN 2: All right. No problem.

### Active Dialogue 7.4

LATINA 1: We're going to the Orange Bowl in Miami this weekend.

LATINA 2: What fun! I wish I were going to the game with you. How long are you going to be there?

LATINA 1: Three days. [I hope she'll offer me a ride to the airport.]

LATINA 2: [She may want me to give her a ride.] Do you need a ride to the airport? I'll take you.

LATINA 1: Are you sure it's not too much trouble?

LATINA 2: It's no trouble at all.

Here we see that in the Latina conversation such requests for help are likely to be implied rather than stated explicitly and directly. Indirect requests can help both parties to save face and uphold smooth harmonious interaction. When Latina 2 detects a request during a conversation with Latina 1, she can choose to either offer help explicitly, or pretend not to acknowledge the request, or she can actually apologize, saying that she would like to take Latina 1 to the airport, but she's sorry she has to attend another party that night.

Thus, if Latina 2 with the high-context communication style decides not to acknowledge the implicit request, she might even subtly change the topic of conversation. Consequently, if Latina 1 discerns the cues from Latina 2, she will then subtly drop the indirect request. An implicit understanding generally exists between two high-context communicators. They do not need to overtly state their request or use an overt "no" to, in their opinion, hurt the feelings of the other high-context collectivist.

Intercultural misunderstanding, however, becomes highly probable when the Latina communicates with the Irish American. They each rely on their own cultural scripts to inform them of what to expect in the interaction. Let's look at Active Dialogue 7.5 of the "airport ride request" dialogue, this time between a Latina and an Irish American (adapted from Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998, p. 77).

### Active Dialogue 7.5

LATINA: We're going to the Orange Bowl in Miami this weekend.

IRISH AMERICAN: What fun! I wish we were going to the game with you. How long are you going to be there?

LATINA: Three days. [I hope she'll offer me a ride to the airport.]

IRISH AMERICAN: [If she wants a ride, she'll ask me.] Well, have a great time.

LATINA: [If she had wanted to give me a ride, she would have offered it. I'd better ask somebody else.] Thanks. I'll see you when I get back.

Thus, we see that while the Latina verbal model emphasizes indirect verbal style or implicit request, the Irish American model emphasizes direct verbal style and explicit request. Because neither person has any knowledge of high-context and low-context communication differences, they may misunderstand each other. Similarly, many Asian conversation contexts do not make negative responses, such as "No," or "I disagree with you," or "I cannot do it." Instead, they use apologetic expressions, delayed decisions, or indirect expressions, such as "I'm so sorry, I'll not be able to see you off at the airport because of my cousin's birthday . . ." or "Let me check my calendar and hope that I'll

make it. I'll call you later." In business conversations, some other Asian verbal messages could be "I kind of agree with you in principle; however, please understand my difficulties . . ." or "I sympathize with your difficulties; unfortunately . . ." Intercultural conversation bumps can easily spiral upward to become intercultural conflicts if we lack the knowledge and skills of code switching between direct and indirect communication styles when we construct our own messages and interpret others' messages. Becoming flexible intercultural communicators means mastering the art of verbal and nonverbal code switching without too much stress or pressure.

### Complementary, Animated, and Understated Verbal Styles

The terms *animated* and *understated* refer to the rhythms, emotional expressiveness, and intensity of tone of voice that accompany the verbal content message. The **complementary style** refers to a matter-of-fact tone in delivering your verbal message—nothing more, nothing less. If the message is clearly delivered, we believe we are effective communicators. In comparison, the more *animated* the conversational style, the more it conveys emotional expressiveness and emotional vitality. The more *understated* the conversational style, the more emotional restraint or stoicism is displayed in the conversation pattern.

For example, though mainstream American conversation follows a complementary style approach, French conversation often follows an interruption-punctuation verbal pattern in the context of well-established relationships. This "continuous interruption" in French conversation often baffles U.S. Americans. However, from the French perspective, the interruption-punctuation pattern reflects "spontaneity, enthusiasm, and warmth, a source of unpredictability, interest and stimulation, a call for participation and pleasure. They are the ties that bind and that bring the conversants closer together" (Carroll, 1987, p. 37). The more animated the conversation, the more pleasure the French derive from the conversation. Compare that with the British conversational style.

The British prefer to practice using understatements and "good-mannered" conversation to make a point. For the British, emotional self-restraint means restraint in verbalizing one's feelings; it means ideally not showing them at all. The British distinguish between "*having* emotions and *showing* them; the former is natural and unavoidable, but the latter is entirely a matter of self-discipline—of which you can never have too much as far as the British are concerned" (Storti, 2001, p. 37).

Of course, there are ethnic verbal style variations in terms of animated or expressive verbal styles. As an example, distinctive differences between African Americans' and European Americans' verbal

styles exist within our domestic culture. Kochman (1990) notes that among African Americans and European Americans, public presentations are a regular cause of communicative conflict. African American presentations tend to be more emotionally animated and demonstrative than the more verbally straightforward European American presentation.

If the conversational patterns of people from different cultural or ethnic groups at some point annoy you, think about the stylistic level of conversation. Although the British are indirect in comparison with U.S. Americans, the Japanese would not find them to be in the least bit indirect. All cultural characterizations and comparisons are in the eye of the beholder more than with the behavior of the beheld—these are relative differences between cultural and ethnic groups, not absolute differences. By understanding such differences, we can learn to accept or even to adapt to some of the culture-based verbal style differences.

### Informal and Formal Verbal Styles

The **informal verbal style** emphasizes the importance of informality, casualness, and role suspension in verbal communication. The **formal verbal style**, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of upholding status-based and role-based interaction that reflects formality and large power distance. Let's do Quick Poll 7.2 here. The former emphasizes the importance of casual or horizontal interaction, whereas the latter stresses proper or hierarchical-based interaction. The informal style emphasizes the importance of respecting unique, personal identities in the interaction. The formal style emphasizes the importance of honoring prescribed power-based membership identities.

#### Quick Poll 7.2

How do you usually greet the following people in your everyday life? Do you address them by their first names or their titles plus last names? Circle the usual ways you address them in your cultural-ethnic community:

Your Teachers:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Your Parents' Close Friends:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Your Doctors:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Your Close Friends' Parents:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Job Interviewers:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Your Neighbors:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Restaurant Servers:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?
Siblings or Cousins:	First Name? or Title with Last Name?

Those who engage in status-oriented verbal interaction use specific vocabularies and paralinguistic features to accentuate the status distance of the role relationships (e.g., in parent-child interaction, superior-subordinate relations, and male-female interaction in many Latin American cultures). Although low-context cultures tend to emphasize the use of the formal verbal style, high-context cultures tend to value the status-based verbal style.

For example, Okabe (1983), in commenting on the Japanese language, contends that English is an individual-centered language whereas Japanese is a status-oriented language. Okabe also observes that U.S. Americans tend to treat other people with informality and casualness. They tend to "shun the formal codes of conduct, titles, honorifics, and ritualistic manners in their interaction with others. They instead prefer a first-name basis and direct address. They also strive to equalize the language style between the sexes. In sharp contrast, the Japanese are likely to assume that formality is essential in their human relations. They are apt to feel uncomfortable in some informal situations" (p. 27). In other words, the Japanese tend to uphold the proper roles, with the proper words, in the appropriate contexts to create a predictable interaction climate.

The mode of speaking, in short, reflects the overall values and norms of a culture. The cultural modes of speaking in many speech communities reflect the hierarchical social order, family socialization, asymmetrical role positions, and power distance values of the different cultures.

Before you continue to read the next section, fill out the brief survey in Know Thyself 7.1. The survey is designed to help you assess your attitudes toward talkativeness versus silence.

**Know Thyself 7.1 Assessing Your Attitudes Toward Talkativeness Versus Silence**

**Instructions:** Recall how you generally communicate in various situations. Let your first inclination be your guide and circle the number in the scale that best reflects your communication pattern in your everyday life. The following scale is used for each item:

	4 = SA = Strongly Agree
	3 = MA = Moderately Agree
	2 = MD = Moderately Disagree
	1 = SD = Strongly Disagree

	SA	MA	MD	SD
1. I enjoy talking in all kinds of social situations.	4	3	2	1
2. In my family, silence is respected.	4	3	2	1
3. Talking about a problem makes you think more clearly.	4	3	2	1

**Know Thyself 7.1 Assessing Your Attitudes Toward Talkativeness Versus Silence (continued)**

4. Silence is sometimes more powerful than words.	4	3	2	1
5. I like people who talk a lot.	4	3	2	1
6. I enjoy people who use silence to listen.	4	3	2	1
7. Talking is the glue that holds people together.	4	3	2	1
8. I like people who are on the quiet side.	4	3	2	1
9. In my family, almost everyone enjoys talking.	4	3	2	1
10. In my cultural or ethnic community, silence speaks louder than words.	4	3	2	1

**Scoring:** Add up the scores on all the odd-numbered items and you will find your talkativeness score. *Talkativeness score:* \_\_\_\_\_. Add up the scores on all the even-numbered items and you will find your silence score. *Silence score:* \_\_\_\_\_.

**Interpretation:** Scores on each communication dimension can range from 5 to 20; the higher the score, the more talkative and/or quiet you are in your communication behaviors. If all the scores are similar on both communication dimensions, you value both talkativeness and silence equally.

**Reflection Probes:** Take a moment to think of the following questions: Where did you learn your communication habits? Is your family a "talkative" family or a "silent" family? What do you think of people who talk a lot? What do you think of people who seem to use silence a lot in their everyday conversations? Do your cultural or ethnic groups respect "talkativeness" or "silence"?

**Beliefs Expressed in Talk and Silence**

The Korean proverb "empty wagons make the most noise" illustrates the importance of silence as opposed to talkativeness in many Asian collectivistic cultures. Silence can oftentimes say as much as words. Although silence occurs in interaction contexts in cultures around the world, how silence is interpreted and evaluated differs across cultures and between persons. Hall (1983) claims that silence, or *ma*, serves as a critical communication device in many Native American and Asian communication patterns. *Ma* is much more than pausing between words; rather, it is like a semicolon that reflects the inner pausing of the speaker's thoughts. Through *ma*, interpersonal understanding is made possible in many high-context cultures.

While silence may hold strong contextual meanings in high-context cultures, prolonged silence is often viewed as "empty pauses" or "ignorant lapses" in the Western rhetorical model. From the high-context perspective, silence can be the essence of the language of superiority and inferiority, affecting such relationships as teacher-student, male-female, and expert-client. The process of refraining from speaking can have both positive and negative effects. In some situations, notably in



many Native American collectivistic cultures, those who must themselves be quiet also expect quiet from others.

For example, the concept of silence occupies a central role in the Apache culture in the United States (Basso, 1970). Silence is appropriate in contexts where social relations between individuals are unpredictable and involve high levels of ambiguity. In this culture, individuals also prefer silence in situations in which role expectations are unclear. Members of the Navajo and Papago Indian tribes exhibit similar silent behavior under the same conditions as the Apache. In France people tend to engage in animated conversations to affirm the nature of their established relationships; in the absence of any such relationship, silence serves the French as a neutral communication process. This is why in the elevator, in the street, or on the bus, people don't talk to each other readily in France. This is a seemingly inexhaustible source of misunderstanding between the French and U.S. Americans, especially because "these rules are suspended under exceptional circumstances and on vacation (and therefore on the train, on the plane). . . . U.S. Americans often feel rejected, disapproved of, criticized, or scorned without understanding the reason for this hostility" (Carroll, 1987, p. 30). With strangers, the French and many Native American groups generally preserve formal distance by means of silence. In contrast, European Americans tend to use talk to "break the ice" and reserve silence for their most intimate relationships.

Intercultural miscommunication can thus often occur because of the different priorities placed on talk and silence by different groups. Silence can serve various functions, depending on the type of relationship, the interactive situation, and the particular cultural beliefs held. Silence can also serve as a powerful means of sharing or persuasion.

### Intercultural Conversation Process: Self-Disclosure

Both the willingness to reveal something about yourself and the willingness to pay attention to the other person's feedback about you are necessary to build a trusting intercultural relationship. We discuss an important communication concept in this section: self-disclosure.

#### Self-Disclosure: Verbal Revelation Versus Concealment

Let's take a look at the sharing process by Grant in Double Take 7.2.

In any relationship, verbal revelation and concealment act as critical gatekeepers in moving a relationship to greater or lesser intimacy. Verbal self-disclosure often follows a *trust-risk dilemma*. To trust someone, you have to be willing to take some risks to share some unique information about yourself. Through taking the risk, you may also

### Double Take 7.2

I'm half Caucasian and half Chamoro (from my mom's Guamanian side). I was born and raised in Orange County, California. I am an openly homosexual individual who is active in helping my campus community through the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Alliance as well as helping out in other ethnic organizations on campus. I enjoy reaching out to assist my community to learn about lesbian and gay and cultural issues. . . .

I grew up in an intercultural environment; my father is white and my

mother is part of the API community. In front of my father, I was expected to behave like an "All-American boy." But around my mother's family, I was expected to play the role of the "All-Chamoro boy." At my home with my father and mother, there was one way of living and acting, but around my grandparents, there was an alternative identity to play—which parallels my homosexuality.

—Grant, College Student

have established an initial trusting cycle in the interpersonal relationship. However, you may also have to worry about your friend betraying the exclusive information you have just shared. Thus arises the trust-risk dilemma—to tell or not to tell.

Before continuing with this section, fill out the Know Thyself 7.2 self-disclosure survey. The survey is designed to help you understand your degree of readiness for self-disclosure to strangers versus best friends.

#### Know Thyself 7.2 Assessing Your Readiness to Self-Disclose to Strangers Versus Best Friends

**Instructions:** Recall how you generally feel and communicate in various situations. Let your first inclination be your guide and circle the number in the scale that best reflects your overall impression of yourself. The following scale is used for each item:

- 4 = SA = Strongly Agree
- 3 = MA = Moderately Agree
- 2 = MD = Moderately Disagree
- 1 = SD = Strongly Disagree

Generally speaking, I readily disclose to strangers about the following topics:

	SA	MA	MD	SD
1. My interests and hobbies.	4	3	2	1
2. My goals and dreams.	4	3	2	1
3. My work or study situations.	4	3	2	1
4. How much money I make.	4	3	2	1
5. My political opinions.	4	3	2	1

Know Thyself 7.2 Assessing Your Readiness to Self-Disclose to Strangers Versus Best Friends (continued)

6. My racial beliefs and viewpoints.	4	3	2	1
7. My dream dates.	4	3	2	1
8. Conflicts with family members.	4	3	2	1
9. My feelings about my face.	4	3	2	1
10. My feelings about my body.	4	3	2	1
11. My positive qualities that I really like.	4	3	2	1
12. My own negative personality traits.	4	3	2	1

Generally speaking, I readily disclose to my best friends about the following topics:

	SA	MA	MD	SD
1. My interests and hobbies.	4	3	2	1
2. My goals and dreams.	4	3	2	1
3. My work or study situations.	4	3	2	1
4. How much money I make.	4	3	2	1
5. My political opinions.	4	3	2	1
6. My racial beliefs and viewpoints.	4	3	2	1
7. My dream dates.	4	3	2	1
8. Conflicts with family members.	4	3	2	1
9. My feelings about my face.	4	3	2	1
10. My feelings about my body.	4	3	2	1
11. My positive qualities that I really like.	4	3	2	1
12. My own negative personality traits.	4	3	2	1

**Scoring:** Add up the scores on all the "strangers" disclosure items and you will find your strangers disclosure score. *Strangers Disclosure score:* \_\_\_\_\_. Add up the scores on all the "best friends" items and you will find your best friends disclosure score. *Best Friends Disclosure score:* \_\_\_\_\_.

**Interpretation:** Scores on each self-disclosure dimension can range from 12 to 48; the higher the score, the more you are ready to self-disclose to strangers and/or best friends on a variety of topics. If the scores are similar on both item sets, you are very balanced in your readiness to self-disclose to both strangers and best friends.

**Reflection Probes:** Check out your two scores with a classmate. Interview each other and ask each other the following questions: Where did you learn your self-disclosure habits? Do you come from a low self-disclosive family or a high self-disclosive family? How do you feel about people who self-disclose too much? How do you feel about people who self-disclose too little?

Source: Scale adapted from Barnlund (1989).

Here **revelation** or openness refers to the disclosure of information concerning the different facets of the public self (e.g., interest, hobbies, political opinions, career aspirations) and/or the private self (e.g., deep family issues, identity, self-image and self-esteem issues); **concealment** or closedness refers to the lack of disclosure or sharing of exclusive information about either the public self or the private self. The term **public self** refers to those facets of the person that are readily available and are easily shared with others; the term **private self**, on the other hand, refers to those facets of the person that are potentially communicable but are not usually shared with others (Barnlund, 1975).

Barnlund (1975) found that the Japanese tend to have a relatively small layer of public self and a relatively large layer of private self. In contrast, his research revealed that U.S. Americans have a larger layer of public self and a smaller layer of private self. Sharing information concerning either the public or the private self is conducted through relational openness. The Japanese were found to be more guarded as to disclosing their inner attitudes and private feelings and desires. In comparison, U.S. Americans are more responsive in disclosing information of a personal, private nature.

Self-disclosure is one of the key factors in developing a personalized relationship in any culture or ethnic group. **Self-disclosure** is the deliberate process of revealing significant information about oneself that would not normally be known. Two social psychologists, Altman and Taylor (1973), have developed *social penetration theory*, which explains the two dimensions of self-disclosure: breadth and depth. The *breadth* of self-disclosure refers to the number of topics a person is willing to share with others. When two friends meet for drinks or a meal, the number of topics is typically large. Issues can range from travel plans, to dating experiences, to school and work updates. The *depth* of self-disclosure refers to the level of intimacy or emotional vulnerability a person is willing to reveal in her or his conversation exchange process. For example, when two close friends talk about their interracial dating experiences, the depth of disclosure usually consists of intimate details, the high and low points, concerns, frustrations, family reactions, and exhilaration points. The same topic may be covered on a more superficial level with an acquaintance or coworker. Thus, you may also converse on similar topics with acquaintances or coworkers but really go to more deep and intimate levels—revealing your fears, worries, pride, or joy—with selective close friends. Fill out the "Who am I?" questions in Know Thyself 7.3, and rank order your answers from 1 = *less important* to 10 = *most important*. Share whatever you want to share with a classmate. What influences your self-disclosure process? Do you come from a high self-disclosive family or a low self-disclosive family? How did your classmate's self-disclosure process influence your self-disclosure pattern in the conversation?

**Know Thyself 7.3 Who Am I?**

**Instructions:** Let your first inclination be your guide and complete your gut-level answer on each question. Next, review your answers and rank order your answers from #10 to #1 (please use all 10 numbers)

**#10 = This Particular Identity Is Extremely Important to Me**  
**#1 = Comparatively, This Particular Identity Is Less Important to Me**

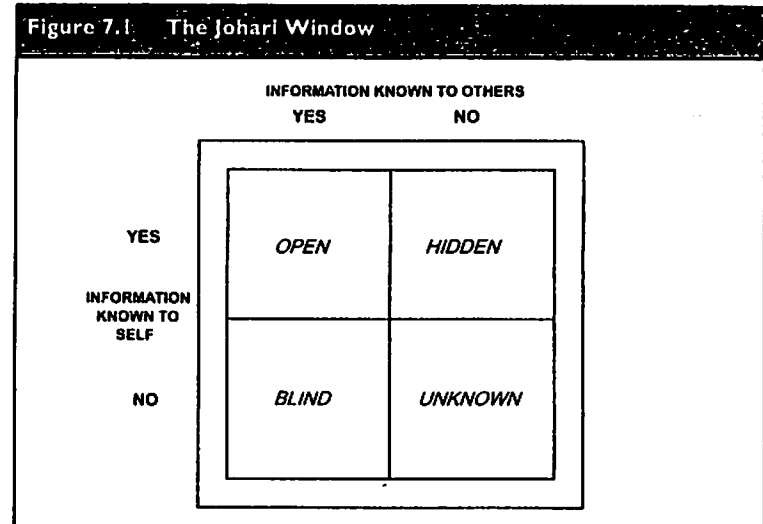
	Answer	Rank
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____
Who am I? I am ...	_____	_____

**Reflection Probes:** Check out your answers with a classmate. Share whatever you want to share and keep private whatever you want to keep private. Take a moment to think of the following questions: Which one identity are you the most proud of? Why? Which one identity are you the least comfortable with? Why? Which one identity, in particular, is shaped by the values of your ethnic-cultural membership? In what ways? If someone wanted to find out more about who you are, how should they approach you? What are the best ways to get to know you? What influences your sharing or self-disclosure process with your classmate throughout this interactive exercise?

**Johari Window**

One way to understand self-disclosure in more depth is to check out the Johari Window. The label “Johari” takes its name from Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham—the first names of the window’s creators. The window can be conceived as having four panels: *open*, *hidden*, *blind*, and *unknown* (see Figure 7.1). On a broad level, the *open panel* is defined as information known to self and also information known to generalized others or a specific person. The *hidden panel* is defined as information known to self but unknown to others. The *blind panel* is defined as information not known to self but information that is known to others. Last, the *unknown panel* is defined as information not known to self or to others. One example of this is based on a true story. Two interethnic college friends shared a close friendship, including much sharing about their dating experiences. After graduation, they took a vacation together. While having dinner on the second day of their vacation, the conversation turned deep. One friend, processing

all the information and the conversation, came out (admitted she was gay) to the other friend. This surprised them both. The gay friend had no idea until then that she was, in fact, gay. Due to the deep self-disclosure conversation and perceived acceptance, the one friend actually helped the other friend to sort out some of her core identity issues in a very spontaneous yet authentic manner.



Individuals who have big open panels and small hidden panels are more willing to disclose and share information about themselves compared with individuals with small open panels and big hidden panels. The blind panel can shrink in size by paying attention to feedback and comments from others. The blind area means we are unaware (or in denial) that such attitudes (e.g., sexist, racist, and homophobic attitudes) or behaviors (e.g., gay bashing) exist in us, but our friends actually observe those attitudes or behaviors. Through obtaining feedback from others, information that we are previously unaware of becomes known to us. The mysterious panel, the unknown area, at first glance seems strange. However, we can deduce that the unknown panel exists in all of us because there is always something surprising or new to discover about ourselves and others—through new learning, traveling, life experiences, or meditations about the unconscious self. It is not unusual to discover those “a-ha” moments of unrecognized talents, strengths, resilience, or vulnerabilities. Some of these previously unknown topics can then be moved to the open panel or the hidden panel—depending on whether you want to share them or not.

The relative size of each panel may change from one life stage to another, from one topic to another, and from one relationship to another. We can analyze our own self-disclosure patterns, for example, about our views on affirmative action, interracial relationships, or gay-lesbian relationships on a general self-disclosure level and on a targeted relationship (e.g., my best friend) level. We can also analyze whether we are in the ethnocentric stage or ethnorelative stage of intercultural learning by being receptive to the feedback and observations from our friends. We can also gain some more self-insights by willingly revealing some of our own honest attitudes and sentiments and exploring why we are the way we are in approaching various interracial or intercultural communication topics.

### Intercultural Persuasion Process

Persuasion is the art of influencing someone to do something you want or to accept an idea you believe is important. In intercultural communication, we are constantly engaging in persuasion—for example, an African American student asking her Latino professor to extend a deadline on an assignment; an Asian immigrant asking his European American supervisor to grant him a sick leave to tend to his ailing grandfather; or Disneyland representatives needing to persuade the Chinese to work on developing a China Disney. All of these situations require flexible intercultural persuasion skills and responsive intercultural facework skills. We discuss several persuasion styles in this section.

Before you continue reading, take a couple of minutes to fill out the Know Thyself 7.4 assessment. This brief survey is designed to help you to explore your diverse persuasion styles.

### Linear Logic Versus Spiral Logic Persuasion

Low-context communicators tend to practice linear-mode persuasion style, whereas, high-context folks tend to practice spiral-mode persuasion style. The **linear persuasion style** can have one of two forms: the **factual-inductive form** or the **axiomatic-deductive form**. The **factual-inductive form** emphasizes the importance of presenting facts, evidence, eyewitness accounts, testimonials, and proofs, and from these specific facts proceeds to draw conclusions or generalizations. The overall U.S. persuasive style has been labeled as following the **factual-inductive approach**. In comparison, the **axiomatic-deductive form** emphasizes the importance of starting from general principles, or axiom, and then moving forward to fill in specific details. Models, diagrams, and big-picture conceptual frameworks can help to

#### Know Thyself 7.4 Assessing Your Persuasive Style Preferences

**Instructions:** Recall how you generally feel and act in various situations. Let your first inclination be your guide and circle the number in the scale that best reflects your overall impression of yourself. The following scale is used for each item:

- 4 = YES! = *strongly agree—IT'S ME!*  
 3 = yes = *moderately agree—it's kind of like me*  
 2 = no = *moderately disagree—it's kind of not me*  
 1 = NO! = *strongly disagree—IT'S NOT ME!*

	YES!	yes	no	NO!
1. When I make a request, I like to be as tactful as possible.	4	3	2	1
2. I like to hear a clear "no" if someone does not want to do something.	4	3	2	1
3. I don't like people who brag about their accomplishments.	4	3	2	1
4. I like to be forthcoming and direct when persuading someone to do something.	4	3	2	1
5. I like to offer enough details before making a request.	4	3	2	1
6. I prefer to be clear and concise in my everyday conversations.	4	3	2	1
7. I am sensitive to the other person's feelings when refusing a request.	4	3	2	1
8. I like to get to the point to save time.	4	3	2	1
9. I don't feel comfortable talking about my own achievements at all.	4	3	2	1
10. I believe honesty is the best policy when you try to say "no" to someone.	4	3	2	1

**Scoring:** Add up the scores on all the odd-numbered items and you will find your high-context persuasive style score. *High-Context Persuasive Style score:* \_\_\_\_\_

Add up the scores on all the even-numbered items and you will find your low-context persuasive style score. *Low-Context Persuasive Style score:* \_\_\_\_\_

**Interpretation:** Scores on each persuasive style dimension can range from 5 to 20; the higher the score, the more low context and/or high context you are. If the scores are similar on both persuasive style dimensions, you are a bicontextual communicator.

**Reflection Probes:** Take a moment to think of the following questions: What do you think of people who converse with you using a different context of communication than you? What do you think are some of the strengths and limitations of your persuasive style? After reading this chapter, do you have any new thoughts and/or feelings about how to deal effectively with a person who uses a different context of communication?

move the negotiation process along from broad to specific points of conclusion.

The overall Russian persuasion style has been identified as following the axiomatic-deductive verbal approach (Glenn, 1981). The Russians will start with an agreement in principle (i.e., the big picture) and then fill in the details. However, one of the major challenges between Russian and U.S. American communication stems from the different ways each approaches verbal diplomacy and compromise. U.S. Americans generally regard compromise as inevitable and desirable. Russian negotiators, on the other hand, consider compromise as a sign of weakness, a retreat from a correct and morally justified position. Russians, therefore, are "great 'sitters,' prepared to wait out their opposite numbers in the expectation that time and Russian patience will produce more concessions. . . . Chess is a Russian national pastime, and Russians negotiate in the same way they play chess, planning several moves ahead" (Richmond, 1996, pp. 150–151).

Alternatively, there are different forms of *spiral persuasion styles*—from the dramatic to the subtle. Members in many Arab cultures, for example, tend to use effusive metaphors, similes, stories, parables, and a wide range of flowery adjectives to reinforce a point. Thus, the dramatic and metaphorical styles of many of the Arabic cultures often tend to emphasize image over digital content and form over function. Members of Italian, Slavic, Jewish, and many African cultures, for example, also have a tendency to use effusive metaphors, parables, or stories to dramatize the emotional impact of their message. Many Asian and Native American cultures, however, may resort to hints, implicit analogies, Zen sayings, and subtle nonverbal gestures to convey an intended meaning. Double Take 7.3 is a Zen story (Pearmain, 1998, p. 119) that illustrates a spiral mode of storytelling.

### Double Take 7.3

#### A Zen Story

Once upon a time, two Buddhist monks were on a journey to a distant monastery when they came to a river. There on the bank sat a young woman. "I beg you," she asked, "could you carry me across? The current is strong today and I'm afraid I might be swept away."

The first monk remembered his vows never to look at or touch a woman, and so, without so much as a nod, he crossed through the heavily flowing currents and soon reached

the other side. The other monk showed compassion and bent down so that the woman could climb upon his back to cross the river. Although she was slight, the current was strong and the rocky bottom made it difficult crossing. Reaching the other side, he let the woman down and went on his way.

After some hours journeying down the dusty road in silence, the first monk could no longer contain his anger at the second for breaking

their vows. "How could you look at that woman!" he blurted out. "How could you touch her, let alone carry her across the river? You've put our reputation at stake."

The first monk looked at his companion and smiled. "I put that woman down way back there at the river bank, but I see that you're still carrying her."

What do you think of the above story? Can you rewrite the story to reflect a more linear mode of storytelling? Which persuasive mode do you prefer, the linear mode or the spiral mode? Why? In addition to the linear versus the spiral mode of persuasion, we can also consider the implications of the self-credentialing and self-humbling modes of persuasion.

### Self-Credentialing and Self-Humbling Verbal Modes

The **self-credentialing verbal mode** emphasizes the importance of drawing attention to or boasting about one's credentials, outstanding accomplishments, and special abilities. The **self-humbling verbal mode**, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of lowering oneself via modest talk, verbal restraints, hesitations, and the use of self-deprecation concerning one's effort or performance. For example, let's check out Active Dialogue 7.6, a conversation between Jorge Estrada, who is from Puerto Rico, and Alfred Rohner, who is from Switzerland.

### Active Dialogue 7.6

JORGE: Thanks for making the time to see me, Mr. Rohner.

ALFRED: What's on your mind?

JORGE: Well, I heard from Haeme, the production assistant, that there will be open auditions for the new play *But Can He Dance?*

ALFRED: Yes, this is true.

JORGE: Well, I think this is good. It is an excellent play.

ALFRED: Yes?

JORGE: Well, I have been working on designing sets for the past four years, and all have been well received. My work in this theater has never faltered, and I never missed work. [pause] See, I was hoping to get a chance to audition. And since this play is so close to my experience . . .

ALFRED: Oh! You want to audition. I understand. Why do you want this part?

JORGE: Well, as I said, I enjoyed the play. And I always wanted to get my foot into the acting business . . .



ALFRED: But you are an amazing set designer. Why are you qualified for this role?

JORGE: Actually, the role would give me more money. I have my sister's children who will come to live with me. They need to attend a better high school and college. With more money, I can at least afford to have them both stay in my house.

ALFRED: Jorge, are you serious? You want this role because you have kids coming to live with you? There are many people who have qualifications in acting getting degrees and training. So this does not make any sense to me at all!

JORGE: But Mr. Rohner, I have worked overtime, triple time, covered people who were sick, and never shrugged off any of my duties. I just wanted a chance to audition for this role.

ALFRED: Jorge, who will design the set?!

Verbal self-humbling or self-effacement is a necessary part of pervasive Puerto Rican American politeness rituals. In Swiss or U.S. culture, we encourage individuals to "sell themselves and boast about their achievements." Otherwise, in a performance review or job interview session, who would notice the accomplishments from a self-effacing individual? However, the notion of merchandising oneself does not sit well with many Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or Cuban Americans.

Likewise, in many Latin, Native American, and Asian cultures, individuals believe that if their performance is good, their supervisors in situations that have to do with promotion review will notice their behavior. However, from the Western cultural standpoint, if their performance is good, they believe they should document or tell everyone so that their supervisors will be sure to take notice. This difference is probably due to the listener-centric value of the collectivistic, high-context communication pattern, as opposed to the sender-centric value of the Western, low-context communication pattern.

We should note that the pattern of verbal self-humbling cannot be generalized to many Arab or African cultures. In Egypt, for example, a popular saying is "Make your harvest look big, lest your enemies rejoice" (Cohen, 1991, p. 132). Effusive, or highly expressive, verbal style is critical to the enhancement of one's face or honor in some large power distance Arab cultures; expressively complimenting or praising the other person's effort or networking ability is also a common characteristic in these cultures. Additionally, an effusive, other-enhancement persuasion style is also often practiced in many of the Arab cultures. The nature of Arabic as a rather ornate language, in conjunction with larger power distance values, probably contributes to the effect of effusive persuasion style. Furthermore, many Arab hosts feel obligated to engage in effusive other-enhancement talk in communicating with honored guests. The tendency in Arabic to use somewhat exaggerated or dramatic expressions during

international negotiation sessions has possibly caused more misunderstandings between the United States and some Arab countries than any other single factor (Cohen, 1987).

### Face-Negotiation and Requesting Strategies

How competently we persuade others often relies on how skillful we are at using different facework conversation strategies. **Face** is a claimed sense of social self-worth that a person wants others to have of her or him (Ting-Toomey, 1988). It is tied to the emotional significance that we attach to our own social self-worth and that of the others' social self-worth. It is about maintaining our social poise in conversations and, at the same time, extending our consideration in supporting or threatening the social poise of the other communicator. We can talk about two types of face concerns in conversation: self-face concern and other-face concern. **Self-face concern** means we are much more interested in upholding our identities and favorable self-images in our interaction with others. **Other-face concern**, conversely, means we are much more interested in providing identity respect and support for the other person's interest or need in the face-negotiation process.

**Facework** refers to the specific verbal and nonverbal behaviors or actions that we engage in to maintain or restore face loss and to uphold and honor face gain. *Face loss* occurs when we are being treated in such a way that our identity claims in a conversation are challenged or ignored. Face loss can be recouped via diverse face-saving strategies. Everyday conversations, such as requests, promises, compliments, criticisms, or conflicts (see Chapter 10), may entail active facework management tactics. For example, in our daily conversations with others, it is inevitable that we make requests for others' help or that others make requests for our help. We may think of *face issues* in terms of how to reject a request or in terms of how to get our own requests granted and not to appear overly imposing. For example, according to research, members of individualistic cultures tend to perceive direct requests as the most effective strategies for accomplishing their interaction goals, but members of collectivistic cultures perceive the requests as the least effective (M.-S. Kim & Wilson, 1994; M.-S. Kim, 2002).

In terms of persuasive strategies between managers and employees, research indicates that U.S. managers prefer to use direct persuasive strategies, such as an *open invitation* (e.g., "Feel free to let me know if you have any ideas to improve this project"), to make *promises* (e.g., "Don't hesitate to offer your creative ideas because this company always rewards innovative input"), or to pay *direct compliments* (e.g., "You are one of the brightest marketing people in this department, and I really value your judgment") in dealing with employees. Japanese managers, however, tend to use altruistic strategies (e.g., "For the

future success of our company, please share your suggestions with us”) or appeals to duty (e.g., “Remember that it is your duty as a good company employee to model trustworthy behaviors”).

To be flexible intercultural conversationalists, we need to develop culture-sensitive persuasion skills. By understanding some of the differences between low-context and high-context communication styles and the different expectations concerning persuasion issues in everyday conversations, we may become more skillful in dealing with culturally diverse others.

### **Intercultural Toolkit: Recaps and Checkpoints**

In this chapter we explored the differences between low-context communication and high-context communication. We examined four low-context verbal styles with ample dialogue examples: direct style, complementary style, informal style, and preference for talkativeness. We also compared these four styles with four high-context verbal styles: indirect style, animated understated style, formal style, and preference for silence. We then moved on to examine an intercultural conversation process more closely through two key concepts: self-disclosure and persuasion. In the self-disclosure section, we introduced the four panels of the Johari Window. In the persuasion section, we introduced several persuasion modes: linear and spiral logic of persuasion, self-credentialing mode and self-humbling mode, and finally, cross-cultural face-negotiation and requesting strategies.

To close the chapter, we present you with the following checkpoints for developing intercultural verbal sensitivity and understanding:

- Understand the fundamental differences between low-context and high-context communication patterns and your potential ethnocentric tendency to negatively evaluate the opposing characteristics.
- Know that individualists tend to engage in direct, low-context verbal communication in expressing thoughts and feelings, and collectivists tend to practice responsive, high-context communication in anticipating the thoughts and feelings of the other person.
- Know that individualists tend to be more self-face oriented in their everyday conversations, and collectivists tend to be more mutual-face and other-face oriented in their everyday relationship development process.
- Remember that individuals who engage in low-context patterns of communication often prefer direct verbal style, mat-

ter-of-fact mode, self-credentialing enhancement, and talkativeness to pursue effective conversation goals.

- Remember that individuals who engage in high-context patterns of interaction often prefer indirect verbal style, emotionally understated mode, self-humbling talk, and silence to gauge the situation and the cultural stranger.
- To be flexible intercultural communicators, we need the knowledge of both verbal and nonverbal communication to communicate sensitively across cultural and ethnic boundaries.
- Both low-context and high-context communicators need to practice the use of collaborative dialogue in their interactions. Collaborative dialogue is based on a culture-sensitive, respectful inquiry process, in which intercultural parties try to suspend their own assumptions regarding how to conduct a smooth conversation. Rather, they work on inviting the other parties to tell their stories, expectations, and needs. Collaborative dialogue aims to unfold common identity-need issues, such as safety, honor-dignity, boundary, approval, competence, and meaning issues. The more we learn to display a genuine, inquiring attitude in our intercultural conversations, the more we may uncover deep-level common interests and common ground. ♦