



CULTURE CLASH:

*WHERE COMMUNICATION
BREAKS DOWN WITH THE
JAPANESE*

*presented
at the*



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by

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FACTORS WHICH MAY INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION STYLE



Age

Education

Position

Exposure to West

Place of origin

Gender

Time of day

Location

Occasion

Relationship to you and others in room

Content of communication

Desired outcome

Skill in English

Individual personality

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EXPLICIT VS IMPLICIT



Explicit

Little is left to implication

Must provide background information

Pools of information

Implicit

Much is implied

Listener responsible for background information

Saturated with information

Use indirect communication to provide context, to preserve options, and to be diplomatic.

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IMPLICIT / INDIRECT EXERCISE

The following are direct statements or questions typically heard in America. Write a more indirect phrasing as might be heard from Japanese or that might produce the best results.

1. **You pick up a Japanese guest at the airport in the early afternoon. You have a big dinner planned but in the meantime you are showing him the sights. He didn't get a meal on the plane and is hungry. What might he say?**

DIRECT: I'm hungry. Could we stop and get something to eat?

INDIRECT: _____

2. **You are having a conversation with a visiting Japanese colleague. He doesn't feel confident about his English on the phone so he would actually like you to change a reservation for him. But what does he say?**

DIRECT: Would you change my reservation for me?

INDIRECT: _____

3. **Even though you have a meeting scheduled in two days with a client, he would actually like you to stop by today to discuss a point. What does he say?**

DIRECT: Could you come by this afternoon?

INDIRECT: _____

4. **You can tell there is a problem with what you've proposed. What do you say to try to find out what is wrong?**

DIRECT: What exactly is the problem?

INDIRECT: _____

5. **Your Japanese counterpart doesn't think your idea will work. He says...**

DIRECT: I don't think this will work.

INDIRECT: _____

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HONNE AND TATEMAE



Honne – the “real” truth or one’s real intention

Tatemaie – one’s public position

- **Diplomatic**
- **Strategic**
- **Political**

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WAYS TO PERCEIVE THE TRUTH

(GETTING TO *HONNE*)



- Listen for euphemisms.

- Watch nonverbal behaviors.

- Ask questions skillfully.

- Question a third party.

- Try to make it a habit to get together informally. Use a one-on-one informal setting to talk more frankly.

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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION



- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Use short, concise sentences.
- Explain major points in two different ways.
- Use open-ended questions.
- Avoid negative questions.
- Take turns talking.
- Use active listening.
- Write down large numbers.
- Check out assumptions.
- Announce a change in subject.
- Avoid using slang or idiomatic expressions.
- Avoid telling jokes.

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USING INTERPRETERS



- Look at the person to whom you are speaking.
- Pause for interpretation every few sentences.
- Do not interrupt interpreter.
- Repeat main points.
- Must have knowledge of your field.
- Prepare the interpreter well.
- Interpreter is not a negotiator.
- Debrief your interpreter afterward.

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DEVELOPING A “VIRTUAL” RELATIONSHIP



- Get background information from a third party.
- Try to build a rapport.
 - Refer to current events in the news about Japan.
 - Share some information about yourself.
 - Suggest exchanging bios with hobbies/picture included if you are embarking on a project together.
 - Look for commonalities.
 - Use references to common experiences from work.
 - Send a picture of yourself on a trip.
- Try to make sure your emails will not be misinterpreted and that you do not misinterpret theirs.
- Send small presents with others going to Japan.
- Send bits of information they might be interested in.
- Show consideration for the other party (“I’m sorry to bother you when you are so busy...”). It goes a long way.
- If you have an occasion to speak on the phone, call from time to time to keep voice contact.
- Look for ways to build partnership over issues.
- Take every opportunity to host.

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DIANA ROWLAND



Diana Rowland is a cross-cultural trainer specializing in Japanese-American business, relying on 30 years of experience in working with the Japanese. She lived abroad for ten years, nine of which were spent in the Asia/Pacific area and seven of which were spent in Japan, and has traveled in fifty-six countries. After her return from Japan, she functioned as a liaison for a Japanese trading company. Her current work focuses on lecturing, training, and consulting with companies who want to do business more successfully with the Japanese.

Ms. Rowland is author of the best-selling book, *Japanese Business Etiquette: A Practical Guide to Success with the Japanese* (Warner Books 1993). This definitive work in the field, which focuses on effective interaction with the Japanese, has sold 100,000 copies and is currently in its second edition, seventeenth printing. By popular demand, a third edition is in the works. The new edition will examine ways Japanese behavior and expectations have changed over the last ten years and will include a more in-depth negotiation section.

Ms. Rowland is also co-author of *International Excellence: 7 Breakthrough Strategies for Personal and Professional Success*, (Kodansha International, 1996). Her television appearances include the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour and has been interviewed on Australia radio. She is often featured in publications such as *Fortune*, *Esquire*, *Business Tokyo*, *Japan Newsweek*, *Journal of the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan*, *the International Herald Tribune* and *Asian Wall Street Journal*.

Since 1986 she has been on the faculty of the Pacific Rim Management Programs at the Graduate School of Business Administration, University of Southern California, as well as on the faculty of USC's Asia/Pacific Conference. She has also taught programs at Mercer College, West Georgia College School of Business, and the University of California in San Diego. Additionally, she teaches courses at various Japan America Societies and is on the Board of Directors of the Japan Society of San Diego and Tijuana.

She is the only non-Japanese to have completed a two-week sky diving course instructed entirely in Japanese by Self Defense Forces personnel. She has made 1,200 sky dives and has organized and participated in numerous world record jumps, including the largest formation to be completed at night.

Ms. Rowland is president of Rowland & Associates, a globally respected consultancy providing essential international business skills to multinational corporations. The trainings are designed to facilitate productive communication and effective business interaction. Clients include: American Airlines, Arco, AT&T Bell Labs, Bell Northern Research, Beckman, BellSouth, Boise Cascade, Callaway Golf, Chevron, Deloitte & Touche, Electronic Industry Association, GE Capital, Georgia Power, Goodyear, Hughes Electronics, Hughes Space & Communications, Idaho Power, IDI, Intel, International Paper, ITOCHU International, ITT, Japan Society of New York, Johnson & Higgins, La Costa Resorts, Levi Strauss, Lincoln National, Litton Guidance Systems, Louisiana Power & Light, Medtronic, Merrill Lynch Realty, Mobil, Motorola, National Association of Realtors, NEC, Nippon Express, Nortel, NYNEX, Panasonic, Pacific Telecom, Public Relations Society of America, Roland Corporation, Southern California Gas, TDK, Toshiba, Toyota, TRW, Unisys, UPS and Weyerhaeuser.

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