



LANGUAGE AND CULTURE



Chapter 1: Introduction to Culture

1. What is culture?


2. What are elements of culture?

3. What is language?

4. What is the relationship between language and culture?

1. What is culture?

Different fields of study differ in their concept of culture, in their definitions of culture, in their methods of investigating culture.

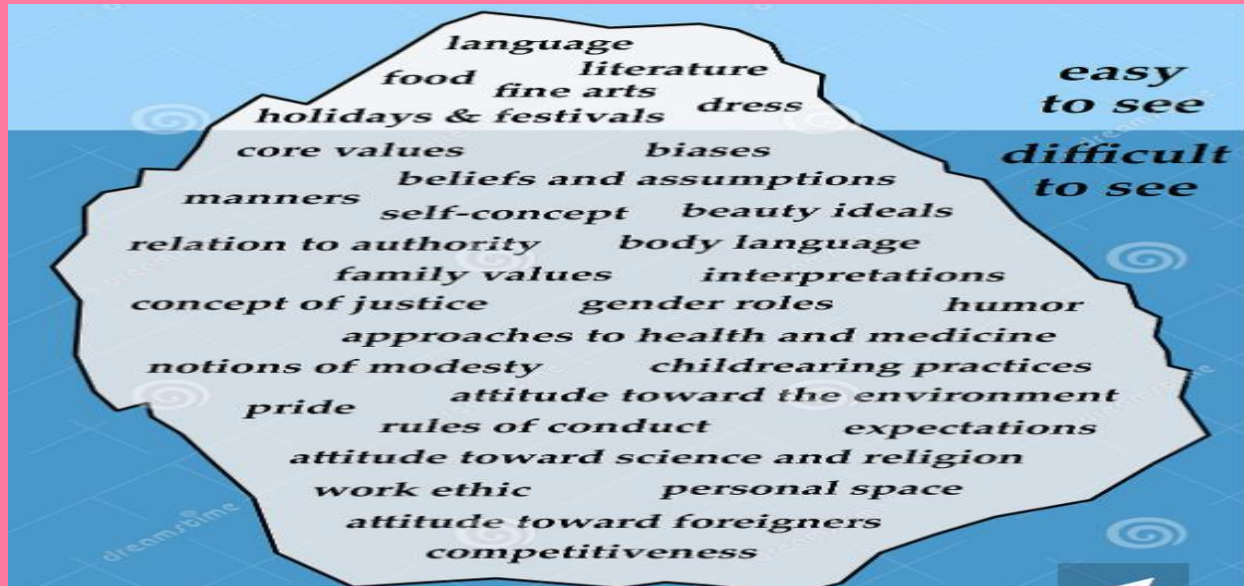


- Culture can be viewed as the set of fundamental ideas, practices, and experiences shared by a group of people.

- Culture can also refer to a set of shared beliefs, norms, and attitudes that are used to guide the behaviors of a group of people, to explain the world around them, and to solve their problems.

What are elements of culture?

Culture is the sum of many diverse elements.





01 beliefs

04 mores

02 values

05 taboos


03 norms

06 attitudes


These manifold elements are an integral part of
who we are and why we do what we do.




BELIEFS




Beliefs are an individual's convictions about the world, convictions that are shaped by the culture a person is raised in.



A belief that is held by most members of a culture is called a cultural belief. Cultural beliefs include fundamental teachings about what reality is and expectations of how the world operates.



E.g: Gift-giving?





- Values are ideals or abstract standards, whether good or bad, that members of a cultural group hold in strong affective regard.
- They fundamentally influence the behavior of individuals within their cultural context. Values have an evaluative dimension in that they dictate what individuals should or should not do.
- They tend to be the foundation on which individuals base their own decisions and actions and according to which they evaluate the decisions and behavior of others.

**Traditional Vietnamese family
values?**

Norms

Norms are the fixed behavior patterns for members of a cultural group. They are culturally shared notions about what is appropriate behavior.

Fomal norms: mores

- govern culturally and socially sanctioned behavior and incur social penalties or censure when they are violated

Infomal norms:folkways

- are culturally and socially preferred ways of doing things, but since they may onlybe weakly enforced, they incur relatively mild penalties or disapproval when they are disregarded

Taboos



A taboo is a vehement prohibition of an action based on the belief that such behavior is either too sacred or too accursed for ordinary individuals to undertake, under threat of supernatural punishment. Such prohibitions are present in virtually all societies



How are taboos represented?

- (a) verbal means: words, phrases, sentences; swear-words...
- (b) non-verbal means: attitudes, behaviour, gestures, facial expressions;
- (c) visual means: pictures, signs,...

What are Taboo words?

a-Words referring to processes and states of human biological existence.

b-Words referring to birth, death, pregnancy, various illnesses and diseases....

c-Names of deceased persons

d-Animals considered to have special power

e-Supernatural beings and their activities e-Words referring to religion

f-Words referring to incest, cannibalism, food, sex, pollution and death.

E.g:

- 1. "Dirty" words that are concerned with sex and excretion, such as "bugger," "shit."
- 2. Words that have to do with the Christian religion, such as "Christ" and "Jesus."

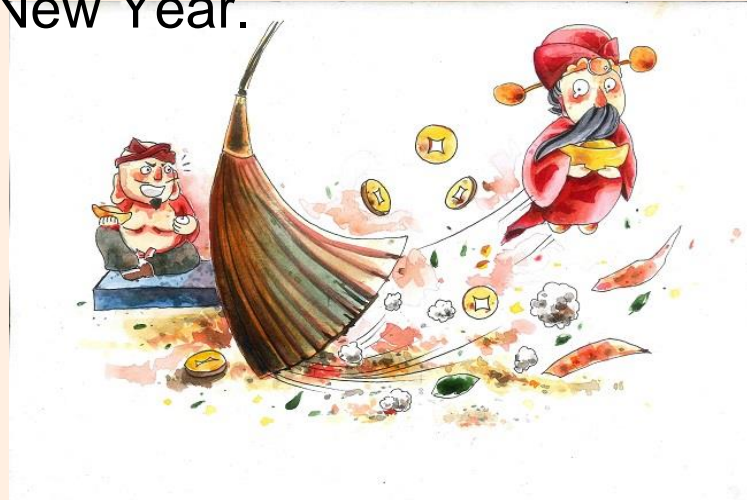


Taboos in Vietnam

Don't hold your chopstick vertically straight up.



Don't sweep the house or empty out the rubbish on the first day of the New Year.



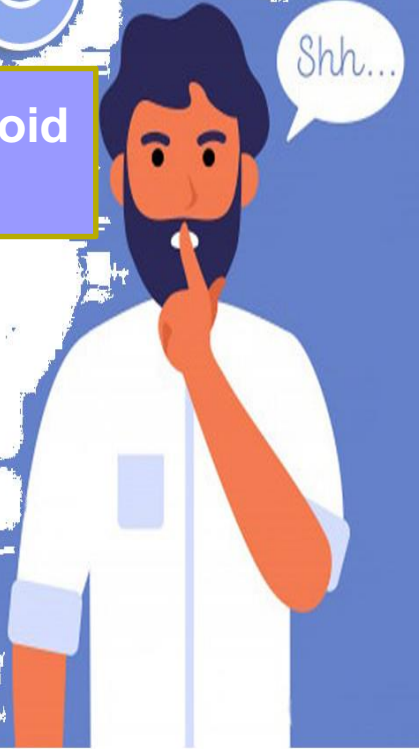
Don't ask someone to
repay you a debt or loan on
Tet holidays



- ✓ Do not point your feet at any sacred object or site.
- ✓ Avoid clicking the bowl or hitting the table with your chopsticks.
- ✓ Don't show up at somebody's house on the 1st day of the new year unless you have been invited by the house owner first.

TABOO

Why should we avoid
taboo words?



Taboo words are to be avoided because they are powerful and can cause unforeseen consequences. Underlying the avoidance of taboo words are cultural values and belief systems according to which attitudes are formed and judgements are made regarding the offending, dangerous, or sacred nature of certain words.

Attitudes

Attitudes are emotional reactions to objects, ideas, and people. People learn attitudes within a cultural context. The opinions individuals express and the communicative interactions and other behaviors in which they engage are based in large part on their attitudes and beliefs.

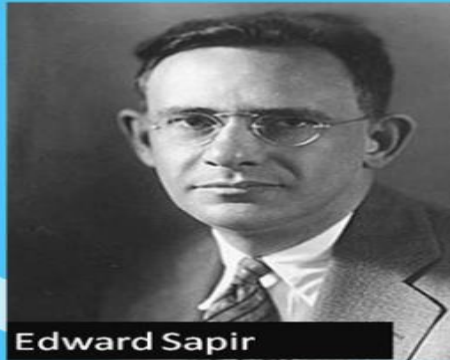
LANGUAGE

Language is an organized learned symbol system used to represent human experiences within a geographic or cultural group .

A language consists of symbols. These symbols – vocabulary- convey essentially uniform meanings among the speakers of the language. The language must also consist of rules - grammar and syntax- so that its speakers are able to manipulate the symbols meaningfully in order to communicate.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

- There are certain thoughts of an individual in one language that cannot be understood by those who live in another language.
- There are two different versions of the hypothesis:
 1. Linguistic Determinism (Strong Version)
 2. Linguistic Relativity (Weak Version)



Edward Sapir

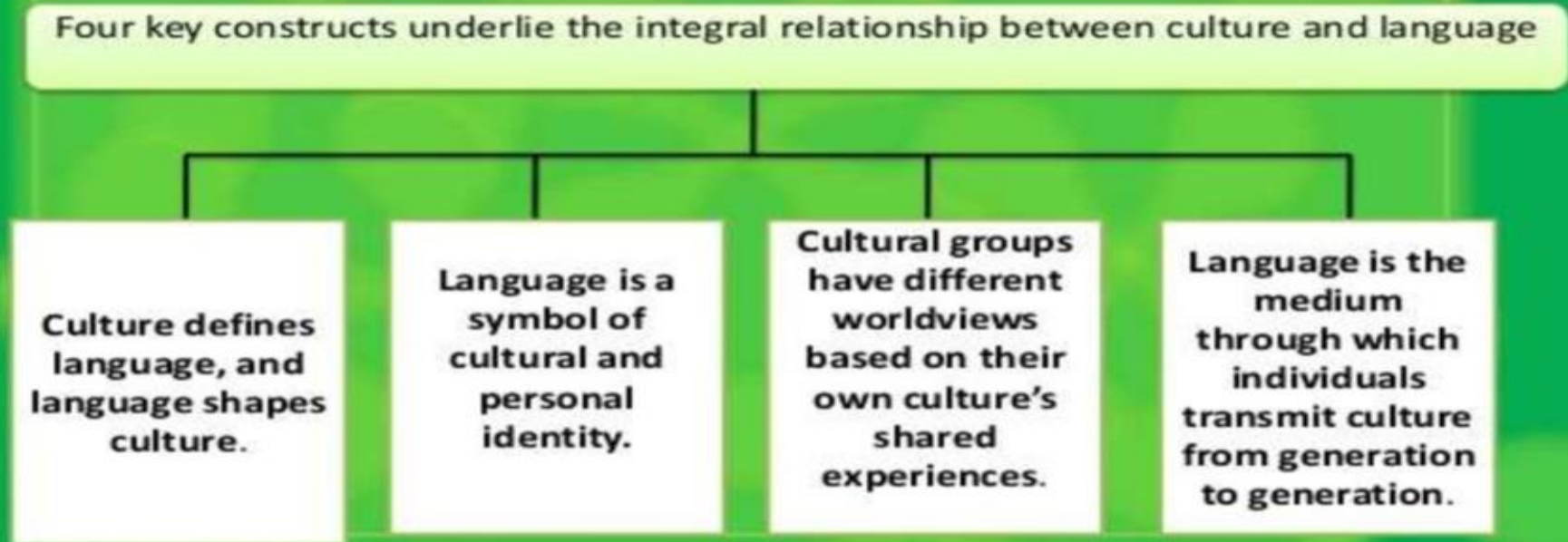


Benjamin Lee Whorf

Language and Linguistic Relativity

The degree to which language influences human thought and meaning is termed **linguistic relativity**.

Relationship between language and culture





02 Cultural Perspectives



- 1. Individualism and Collectivism**
- 2. Polychronic and Monochronic time**
- 3. Low-context cultures (LCC) and high-context cultures (HCC)**
- 4. The concept of face**

Individualism and Collectivism



Both collectivism and individualism are principles, practices, political theories, and cultural patterns.

Individualist* (typically reflect western ideals)	Collectivist† (typically reflect eastern ideals)
Independent	Socially interdependent
Self-reliant	Connected
Achievement orientated	Moderate/traditional
Competitive	Cooperative
Assertive	Obedient
Pleasure seeking	Self-sacrificing
Self-assured	Sensitive
Direct	Self-controlled
Self-interest	Equalitarian

Polychronic and Monochronic time

Monochronic people	Polychronic people
Do one thing at a time	Do many things at once
Concentrate on the job	Are highly distractible and subject to interruptions
Take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously	Consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible
Are low-context and need information	Are high-context and already have information
Are committed to the job	Are committed to people and human relationships
Adhere religiously to plans	Change plans often and easily
Are concerned about not disturbing others, follow rules of privacy and consideration	Are more concerned with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy
Show great respect for private property, seldom borrow or lend	Borrow or lend things often and easily
Emphasize promptness	Base promptness on the relationship
Are accustomed to short-term relationships	Have strong tendency to build lifetime relationships

Source: Based on Hall and Hall (1990)

Low-context cultures (LCC) and high-context cultures (HCC)

LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES	HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES
Overt, explicit, and direct communication	Covert, implicit and indirect communication
Verbal message	Non-verbal contextual messages
Explicit and precise <u>intructions</u> , signs, rules	Imprecise
Clear intentions, meanings	Not clear intentions; meanings depend upon circumstances
Line logic	Spiral logic
Conflict and confrontation are natural	Avoidance of conflict and confrontation
Importance of action and solution	Value of face saving, relations with others, social harmony
Protecting own dignity and self-respect even at the expense of others	Desire to be acknowledged and approved by others
Discussions and arguments, revealing	Smooth strategies to manage conflict
Reactions on the surface	Reserved reactions
Equality	Importance of obligations, status, position and power
High organized time	Flexible time
Flexible in-groups and out-groups	Distinct in-group and out-groups
Short-lasting relationships, casual, fragile, low involvement	Long lasting relationships, commitment, loyalty, trust, high involvement
Diffused authority, difficulty to pin down one's responsibility	Importance of authority and responsibility

The concept of face



a range of meanings based on a core concept of “honor”

A Chinese mother makes many efforts to give her child the opportunity for a good education, both through financial and emotional support. The result is that the child is accepted at a prestigious foreign university. Not only do the parents feel proud of their child's achievements, but they also feel that they have 'gained face' through the child's achievement.

Face is related to the social status, influence, and prestige an individual has, and it is realized and sustained through each person's interaction with other members of that culture

Comparing Western Ego vs. Face

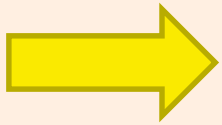
- Unlike “Western face”— which is more self-oriented and individualistic - Asian face is more other-directed and relational.
- Western cultures tend to focus on the individual as an independent, self-reliant being. In raising children, the focus is on helping them develop a strong sense of personal integrity and individuality

“Deeply rooted in the Chinese concept of face are conceptualizations of a competent person in Chinese society: one who defines and puts self in relation to others and who cultivates morality so that his or her conduct will not lose others’ face. This contrasts with the American cultural definition of a person who is expected to be independent, self-reliant, and successful. The end result is that a Chinese person is expected to be relationally or communally conscious whereas an American person is expected to be self-conscious.”

Yvonne Chang (2008), Cultural ‘Faces’ of Interpersonal Communication in the U.S. and China,

Societal Roles

A societal role is embodied by the cultural expectations of how someone in that role is expected to behave.



Ascribed roles.
Achieved roles

Societal identities

A person's societal identity is determined in large part by that person's societal roles. Personalities and behaviors are often shaped by the identities that individuals hold in different situations because different societal roles carry with them different sets of expected behaviors.

Role Conflict

Role conflict is a situation in which the behavioral expectations of one role are inconsistent with those of another role. Role conflict occurs when people are confronted with incompatible role expectations in the various social statuses they occupy. When the roles are associated with two different statuses, the result is known as **status strain**. When the conflicting roles are both associated with the same status, the result is known as **role strain**. Conflict may also occur when people disagree about what the expectations are for a particular role or when someone simply has difficulty satisfying expectations because their duties are unclear, too difficult, or disagreeable.

- ▶ **Examples:**

- ▶ A parent may feel conflicting obligations to employers who demand full devotion to the job and children who need to be cared for when they are sick (status strain).

Social Interaction

Understanding a culture's system, whether intuitively or explicitly, allows members of that culture to make accurate predictions about people's roles and their expected behaviors. An essential part of language and societal roles involves knowing the rules of discourse and social interaction.

Ethnocentrism /,eθ.nou'sen.trɪ.zəm/

What is Ethnocentrism?

- Ethnocentrism is the belief that one's cultural group is centrally important and superior to others
- We are ethnocentric when we use our cultural norms to make generalizations about other peoples' cultures and customs.
- Ethnocentrism leads to cultural misinterpretation and it often distorts communication between human beings.

CAN YOU THINK OF EXAMPLES?

Mmm. perfect! Really.
no cuisine is as
good as ours.



**Her belief that her cuisine is the best
is a classic example of ethnocentrism.**

¹⁴ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי מֵאֲרָחַת בְּרָקִיעַ
הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהַבְדִּיל בֵּין הַיָּם וּבֵין הַלַּיְלָה וַהֲיִי
לְאֹתָתָה וּלְמוֹעֲדִים וּלְיָמִים וְשָׁנִים: ¹⁵ וַהֲיִי
לְמֵאוֹרֹת בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-
הָאָרֶץ וַיְהִי-כֵן: ¹⁶ וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שְׁנֵי
הַמֵּאֲרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת-הַמָּאֹר הַגָּדֹל
לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-הַמָּאֹר הַקָּטָן
לְמַמְשֶׁלֶת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים: ¹⁷ וַיִּתֵּן
אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים בְּרָקִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיִם לְהָאִיר עַל-
הָאָרֶץ: ¹⁸ וּלְמַשָּׁל בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה וּלְהַבְדִּיל
בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין הַחֹשֶׁךְ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים כִּי-

1 בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ: ² וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ
וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל-פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת
עַל-פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם: ³ וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְהִי אוֹר
וַיְהִי-אוֹר: ⁴ וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאֹר כִּי-
טוֹב וַיַּבְדֵּל אֱלֹהִים בֵּין הָאֹר וּבֵין
הַחֹשֶׁךְ: ⁵ וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים ׀ לְאֹר יוֹם
וּלְחָשֶׁךְ קֶרָא לַיְלָה וַיְהִי-עֶרֶב וַיְהִי-בֹקֶר
יוֹם
אֶחָד: פ

We talk about written Hebrew as reading
"backward." Why not just say "from right to left"
or "in the opposite direction from English."



Cultural Stereotypes



- **Stereotypes/'ster.i.ə.taɪp/** are overgeneralized, exaggerated, and oversimplified beliefs that people use to categorize a group of people.
- **Stereotyping** is a psychological process whereby members of one group ascribe characteristics to another group, creating beliefs and expectations about people's behavior, attitudes, views.

CHAPTER 3: CULTURE SHOCK



- ◆ Defining Culture Shock
- ◆ Stages of Culture Shock
- ◆ Causes of Culture Shock
- ◆ Aspects of Culture Shock



Culture shock is the phenomenon individuals commonly experience when they are confronted with the realities of a different cultural environment. The term culture shock is used to describe the feelings of individuals when they encounter different social norms, values, beliefs, and ways of doing.

Oberg (1960) defines culture shock as the distress of new comers to a different culture experience as a result of being confronted with an environment in which their familiar patterns of social interaction are no longer valid.



The factors of culture shock

- 1. Degree of difference between the individual's culture and the new culture*
- 2. An individual's prior cross-cultural experiences*
- 3. The individual's preparedness*
- 4. The social support networks*
- 5. The cultural distance between the two cultures*
- 6. The psychological characteristics of the individual*



STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK

Watch the following video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTuc3sJFdT4>



STAGE
01

HONEYMOON

**CULTURE
SHOCK**

STAGE
02

STAGE
03

ADJUSTMENT

ADAPTATION

STAGE
04



Oberg (1960)'s four-stage model

1. Honeymoon stage (tourist phase)
open to new experience, focus on positive aspects
2. Culture shock
feel overwhelmed and confounded by the new culture,
experience disorientation and unease. Homesick.
3. Adjustment (acculturation) stage : develop problem-solving skills.
4. Recovery (adaptation) stage - function effectively in the new culture, successful in resolving problems

Causes of culture shock

Factors that foster culture shock include the degree of an individual's sense of ethnocentrism; tendency to stereotype; low levels of similarity in beliefs, values, norms, and attitudes; and misinterpretations of the behaviors and intentions of members from the other cultural group.

- Contact with another culture
- The need for a new language/ culture
- When the shared expectations of appropriate social behavior through enculturation process in the given culture are violated
- When most of the cues of social behavior familiar to them are no longer present



What are the three levels that culture shock impacts? Provide examples.

Aspects of Culture Shock

Emotional Level

Rational Level

Identity Level

Culture shock on emotional level

- ★ Emotional turmoil, anger, anxiety, depression, loneliness, homesickness, frustration, worry, irritation, helplessness, hostility, obsession with cleanliness etc.
- * Mood swings.

Both physical and psychosomatic illnesses



Culture shock on rational level

Norms and perspectives of one's own culture
are no longer valid

Negative stereotyping and ethnocentricity

Culture shock on identity level

- * Human identities – things we share with other human beings
- * Social identities – individual's societal roles, nationality, gender, membership
- * Personal identities- individual's personality traits



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER 6: Pragmatics and Communication

- 1. Pragmatics**
- 2. Speech acts**
- 3. Pragmatic competence**
- 4. Topic Appropriateness**
- 5. Discourse Styles**

Pragmatics and Communication

Language is a defining characteristic of human beings. All humans use language in some form or another to communicate with others.



Speakers communicate most effectively when they share the same expectations, beliefs, and interpretations of the social context and of the speakers' roles and identities.

- 
- Pragmatics is concerned with how speakers use language and construct meaning within social contexts

These sentences can all express the same request, but often indirectly. (Buckley, 2004)


Please shut the window
I wonder if we should shut the window.
It's cold in here.
Do you feel a draft?

Pragmatic competence entails knowledge of speech acts and speech function, as well as knowledge of dialect, register, and other cultural factors in language use.

Speech Acts:

What is a Speech Act?

An action performed in saying something. We perform speech acts when we offer an *apology, greeting, request, complaint, invitation, compliment, or refusal*. A speech act is an utterance that serves a function in communication. A speech act might contain just one word, as in "Sorry!" to perform an apology, or several words or sentences: "*I'm sorry I forgot your birthday. I just let it slip my mind.*"

- 
- when these speech acts are used and how they are expressed differ.
 - Much of the difference between speech-act use is embedded in different cultural norms and assumptions governing communicative interactions.



REQUIRED COMPETENCES

To understand the meaning of a sentence and the speaker's intended meaning requires two kinds of knowledge: literal and contextual. Understanding the literal meaning is contingent on knowledge of grammar, while understanding the intended message depends on knowledge of context. According to Bachman (1990), these two types of language knowledge can be labeled **organizational competence** and **pragmatic competence**.

Language Competence

Organizational Competence		Pragmatic Competence	
Grammatical Competence	Textual Competence	Illocutionary Competence	Sociolinguistic Competence
vocabulary	cohesion	ideational functions	sensitivity to dialect or variety
morphology		manipulative functions	sensitivity to register
syntax	rhetorical organization	heuristic functions	sensitivity to naturalness
phonology		imaginative functions	cultural references and figures of speech

Bachman (ibid., p.87)



Organizational competence

Organizational competence refers to speakers' grammar knowledge, or their knowledge of linguistic units and how they systematically function together, at both the sentence level and the broader discourse level, according to the rules or patterns of a language.



Pragmatic Competence

For Chomsky pragmatic competence is defined as the ability to place "language in the institutional settings of its use, relating intentions and purposes to the linguistic means at hand."

He distinguishes it from grammatical competence by claiming that grammatical competence is limited to the knowledge of the form of the language, while pragmatic competence is more related to its use.



Topic Appropriateness

Topic appropriateness is also an area where there are cultural differences and where misunderstandings often occur.

Country	Appropriate Topics	Topics to Avoid
Australia	professions, cars, skiing, music	money, religion, divorce/separation
Germany	travel abroad, international politics, hobbies, soccer	World War II, questions about personal life
Great Britain	history, architecture, gardening	politics, money/prices, Falklands War
France	music, books, sports, the theatre	prices of items, person's work, income, age
Mexico	family, social concerns	politics, debt, inflation problems, border violations
Japan	history, culture, art	World War II

Discourse Styles

What is discourse style?

the way we use language in different styles depending on the context of a communicative act in terms of subject matter, audience, occasion, shared experience, and purpose of communication.

Discourse Style

(Speech Style)

An oratorical style

A deliberate style

A consultative styles

Casual conversation

An intimate style

Cross-Cultural Conversational Exchanges

The nature of the structure of conversational exchanges often leads to cases of miscommunication between native and non-native speakers of a language. Speakers expect that certain utterances will lead into other specific communicative exchanges or turn-taking sequences. When an exchange sequence is broken because of cross-cultural or cross-linguistic differences in turn-taking sequences, miscommunication occurs.

