

California State University Dominguez Hills International Virtual Exchange Learning

Cross-Cultural Communication Skill-Building (PLO 5)

The CSUDH International Virtual Exchange Program (IVEL) provides students opportunities to develop their cross-cultural communication skills. Demonstration of clear communication and effective collaboration in cross-cultural social, academic, and professional contexts, both orally and in writing, using digital tools is Program Learning Outcome 5 (PLO 5).

Communication Styles

Communication styles differ between cultures significantly. A distinction is often drawn between **indirect** and **direct** communication styles. Indirect style uses tone, pitch, pauses, facial expression, and implication. Saying “yes,” in a culture where indirect style prevails, may imply “no.” Criticism may seem impolite. Social etiquette is valued. Direct style is blunt, gets to the point, and tends to rely on speech rather than body language or tone.

Social deixis

References to social distinctions between speakers are called **social deixis**. Examples are occupational titles, honorifics, or kinship terms. The importance of social deixis varies between cultures.

Greetings

Greetings in the US are typically verbal, often accompanied by a hand gesture. Other cultures may expect bodily movements, such as bowing, or hand gestures with or without verbalized greetings.

The greeting “*How are you?*” is common in American culture. In other cultures, “*How are you?*” may be interpreted as an intrusive inquiry and, as such, may seem too personal.

Apologies

Some cultures emphasize the value of being **apologetic** more than others. People may make gestures of regret or articulate apologies verbally through such phrases as “*I’m sorry*” or “*Please excuse me.*”

Apologies may be offered without due cause, functioning as an expression of civility. Some expressions of regret may implicate incorrectness on behalf of the other person, rather than the person making the apology.

Requests

Many cultures expect requesters to use phrases such as “*if you please*” for requests and to respond with phrases such as “*thank you*” or “*my pleasure*” when requests are filled.

Some may use **the interrogative case** to express a request or command. For example, “*Is the item available?*” may carry the meaning “*Make the item available.*” This use of the interrogative may seem impolite in some cultures.

Responsiveness

People in many cultures expect a reply when addressing someone. Failure to respond to an invitation, request, facial expression, or message may seem impolite.

Listening

Active listening may enhance cross-cultural communication. It involves the skills of paying close attention and seeking clarification.