

Helping our students become  
successful international communicators

CHIA SUAN CHONG

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 LC CONF  
2024

Languages Canada Conference 2024

What are the skills of an  
International communicator?

## Skills for the international communicator

- **Self-Awareness and the ability to reflect**
- **Curiosity about the other**
- **Mindfulness & Perceptiveness**
- **Open-mindedness & not judging others**
- **Patience & tolerance of ambiguity**
- **Emotional strength**
- **Interpersonal skills**
- **Communication skills**
- **Flexibility and Adaptability**
- **Sense of identity and objectives**

Communicating effectively with  
individuals and organisations  
from cultural backgrounds  
different from their own.

# Transactional communication

VS

# Interpersonal communication

- My first name is Chia Suan. CHONG is my surname.
- The toilet is down the corridor on the left.
- What's your soup of the day?
- How was your weekend?
- How long does it take to walk to Stanley Park?
- I'm sorry I didn't get to chat to you at dinner yesterday!
- I agree with you. I feel the same about poutine.
- Have you seen the film Blackberry?

## A

- Focus on information exchange
- Getting things done
- For the short term
- Shorter turns
- Predictable script
- Often measurable result

## B

- Focus on building relationships
- Getting to know people
- For the long term
- Longer turns
- Less predictable
- Not instantly measurable

## Transactional Communication

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## Giving and receiving directions

- 8 OWN IT!** Work in pairs. Look at the map. Tell your partner how to go from:
- 1 the university to the shopping centre
  - 2 the park to the library
  - 3 the museum to the cinema
- 9** Work in pairs. Ask for and give directions.  
**Student A:** Think of a place near your school. Ask your partner how to get there.  
**Student B:** Give your partner directions. Use a map if you need help.



# At a restaurant

## SPEAKING

5 Look at the menu above. Choose three dishes.

Dish 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Dish 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Dish 3 \_\_\_\_\_

6 Work in groups of three or four. One of you is a waiter. The rest are customers. Take turns.

**Customers:** Order your three dishes from the waiter. Follow the tips in the Communication skill box. Ask about one dish you don't know.

**Waiter:** You're busy. The customers must get your attention. Ask the customers what they'd like and ask them follow-up questions.

*A: Excuse me. Excuse me!*

*B: Ah, good evening! Would you like to order?*

*A: Hello. Yes, please. Can I have a cheeseburger?*

*B: Yes, of course. Would you like anything else?*

*A: Yes. I'd like fresh fruit and ...*



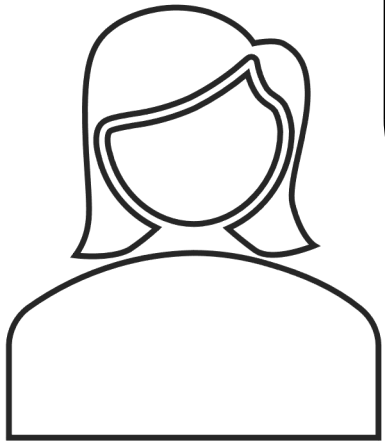
VOICES Beginner (Book 1)

Figure 1. The dimensions of global competence



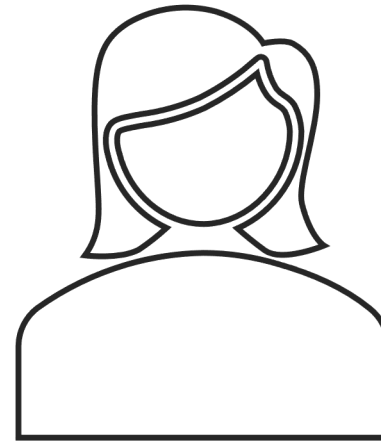
The OECD PISA global competence framework

# How we make meaning



What time  
does the first  
train leave?

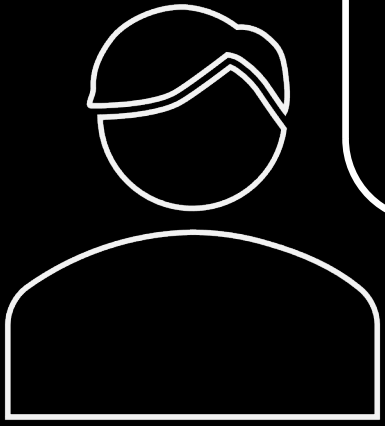
EMMA



The internet  
is down.

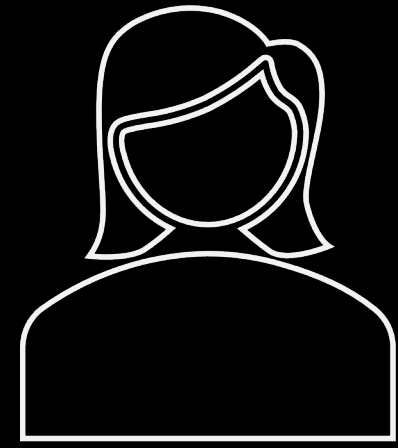
MARTINA

# Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Forces



What are you  
doing this evening?

FILIPPO



I'm washing  
my hair.

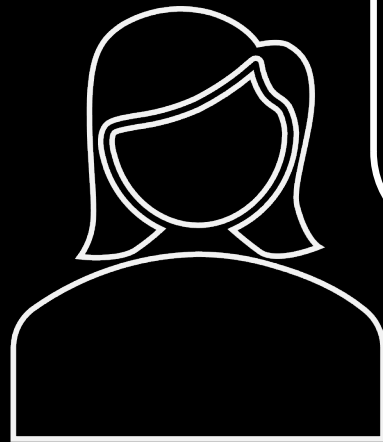
ANA

# THE ILLUSION OF TRANSPARENCY

Tendency to overestimate  
the degree to which our  
mental state is known to  
others.

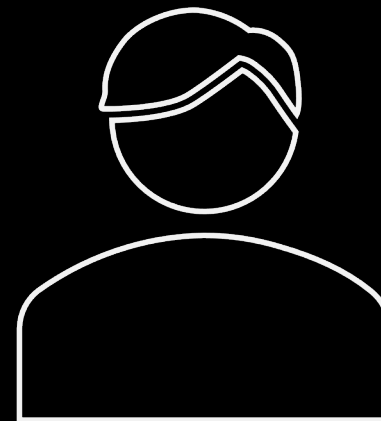
We always know what we  
mean, and so we expect  
others  
to know it too.

# HOW COULD ANYONE MISUNDERSTAND ME?



I thought I  
specifically told you  
to put away those  
books when I left!  
You didn't do it?

**ELIZABETH**



NO

**THIAGO**

“

*Nothing can be said in a way in  
which it cannot be misunderstood.*

”

**KARL POPPER**

## COMMUNICATION SKILL

### Fixing misunderstandings



#### Simplify

- The speaker can: identify the key information and repeat; check the listener has understood.
- The listener can ask for a summary.

#### Clarify

- The speaker can: assume cultural knowledge will not be known; explain anything unique to their culture or language.
- The listener can ask the speaker to explain.

#### Organize

- The speaker can: signpost the order clearly; write or draw the instructions.
- The listener can ask the speaker to start again.

## Useful language Fixing misunderstandings

### Identifying misunderstandings

That isn't what I meant.  
I'm getting mixed up.  
That's the wrong way round.  
I'm not following you.

### Fixing misunderstandings

Let's start again from the beginning.  
OK, to sum up, you need to ...  
So basically, you're saying ..., right?  
In other words, ...  
Shall I repeat it all back to you?

### Confirming understanding

That makes sense.  
Got it.  
I see what you mean.



# Polite requests in ELT

Buy a litre of milk, please.

Can you buy a litre of milk, please?

Could you buy a litre of milk, please?

Would you mind buying a litre of milk please?

I don't suppose you could buy a litre of milk?

I was wondering if you could possibly buy a litre of milk?

Least polite



Most polite

# Definition of politeness?

- Friendliness
- Respect
- Appropriacy
- Formality
- (In)Directness
- Maintenance of Distance



Photo from VOICES Int Plus

# Quiz

David starts a conversation with Jun-Seo by saying “You won’t believe what happened to me today!” and Jun-Seo says nothing.

a) polite

b) not polite or impolite

c) impolite

# Quiz

Fred asks Mila to go for dinner.

At the end of the dinner, Fred says, *'Can we pay half of the bill each?'*

a) polite

b) not polite or impolite

c) impolite

# Are you a bowling, basketball or rugby communicator?

Communication experts have identified three main styles of communication: bowling, basketball and rugby. Which one are you?

## **BOWLING**

slow pace, pauses between turns, no interruptions



## **BASKETBALL**

fast pace, quick turn-taking, rare interruptions

## **RUGBY**

very fast pace, many interruptions, no pauses



# Culture

## SALSA A LA HUANCAÍNA

The countries in South America have many spicy dishes. *Salsa a la huancaína* is a spicy sauce from Peru. It has hot yellow chillies, onions, salt, garlic, milk and cheese. Sometimes, it has eggs. In Peru, people usually eat it with potatoes.



## BERBERE CURRY

Africa also has many spicy dishes. *Berberé* curry is from Ethiopia. It usually has chicken, red meat or fish. It also has onions, garlic, vegetables, salt and the Ethiopian *berbere* spice. The *berbere* spice is full of chilli. It's very hot! People usually eat *berbere* curry with bread.



## SOM TAM

In Asia, many people love spicy food. *Som tam* is a spicy salad from Thailand. It's green papaya with salt, garlic, lime, fish sauce, peanuts, sugar and – of course – chillies! Thai people usually put a lot of chilli in their *som tam*.



The world drinks 6 billion cups of tea a day. It is the world's favourite drink.

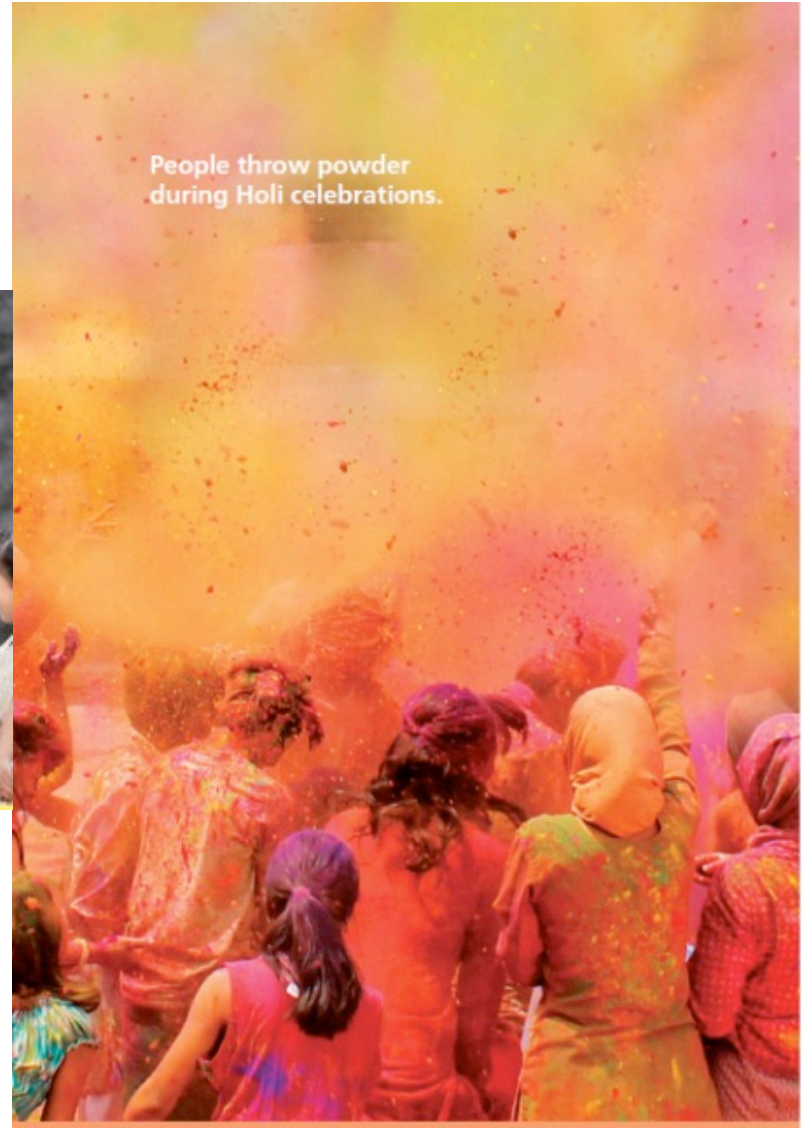


Rice is the main food for 3.5 billion people in the world. But, in a global survey by Oxfam, pasta is the world's favourite food.



In 2018, more than 103 billion servings of instant noodles were eaten worldwide. That's about 14 servings for every person in the world!

# Culture



People throw powder  
during Holi celebrations.

VOICES Elementary (Book 2)

# Culture

## Greetings around the world

**Cheek kissing**  
In many countries in the Mediterranean, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central and South America, e.g. Italy, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Peru



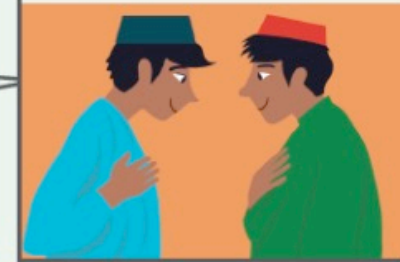
**Bowing**  
In certain parts of Asia, e.g. Japan, Korea



**Shaking hands**  
In many parts of the world, e.g. the US, China, Brazil, the UK



**Putting your hand on your heart**  
In Malaysia and some Middle Eastern countries



**Pressing your hands together (while bowing)**  
In some South Asian and South-East Asian countries, e.g. Thailand (where this greeting is called the *Wai*) and India

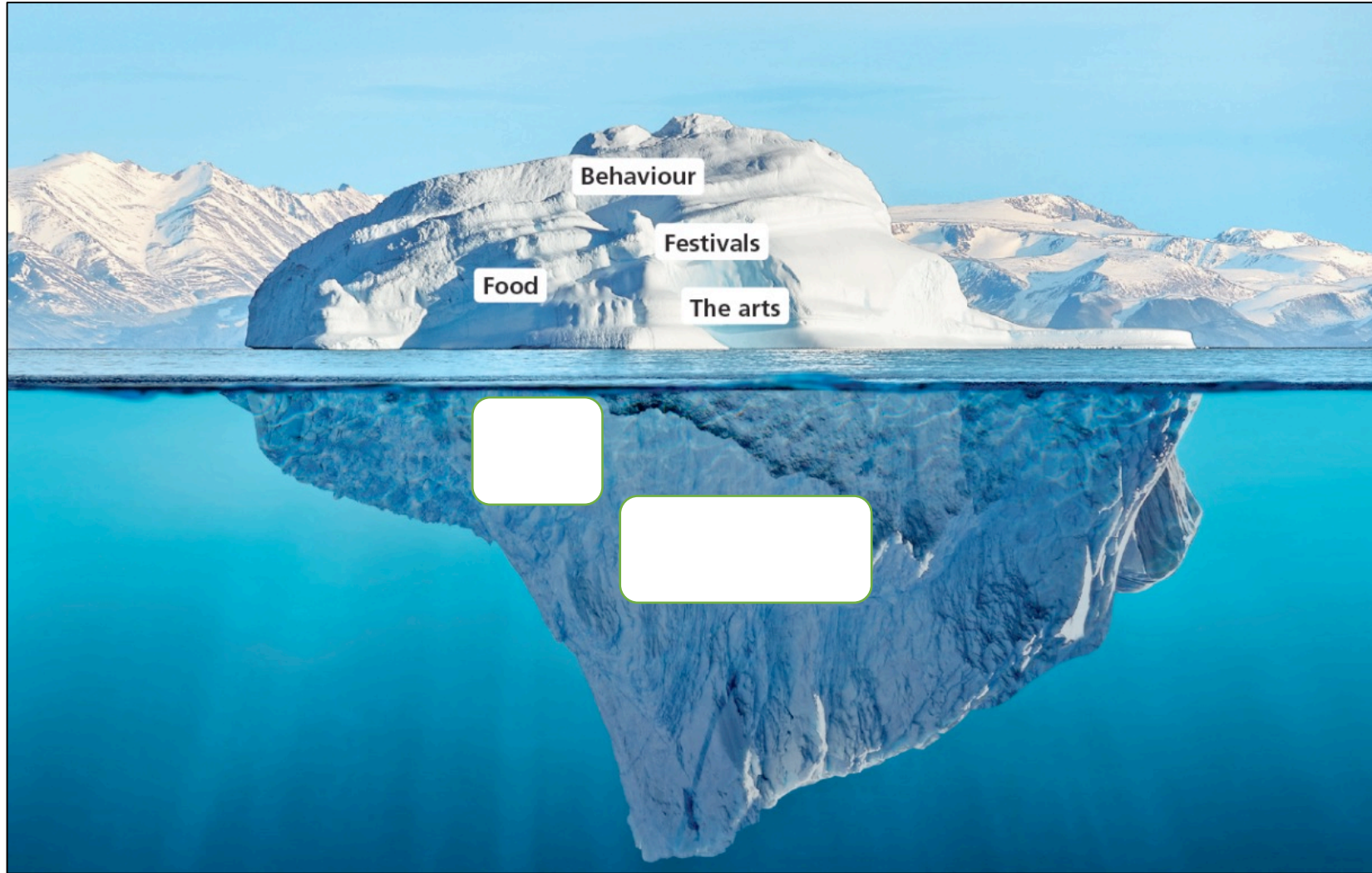


**Touching noses**  
In New Zealand (where this greeting is called the *Hongi*) and some countries in the Middle East, e.g. the UAE



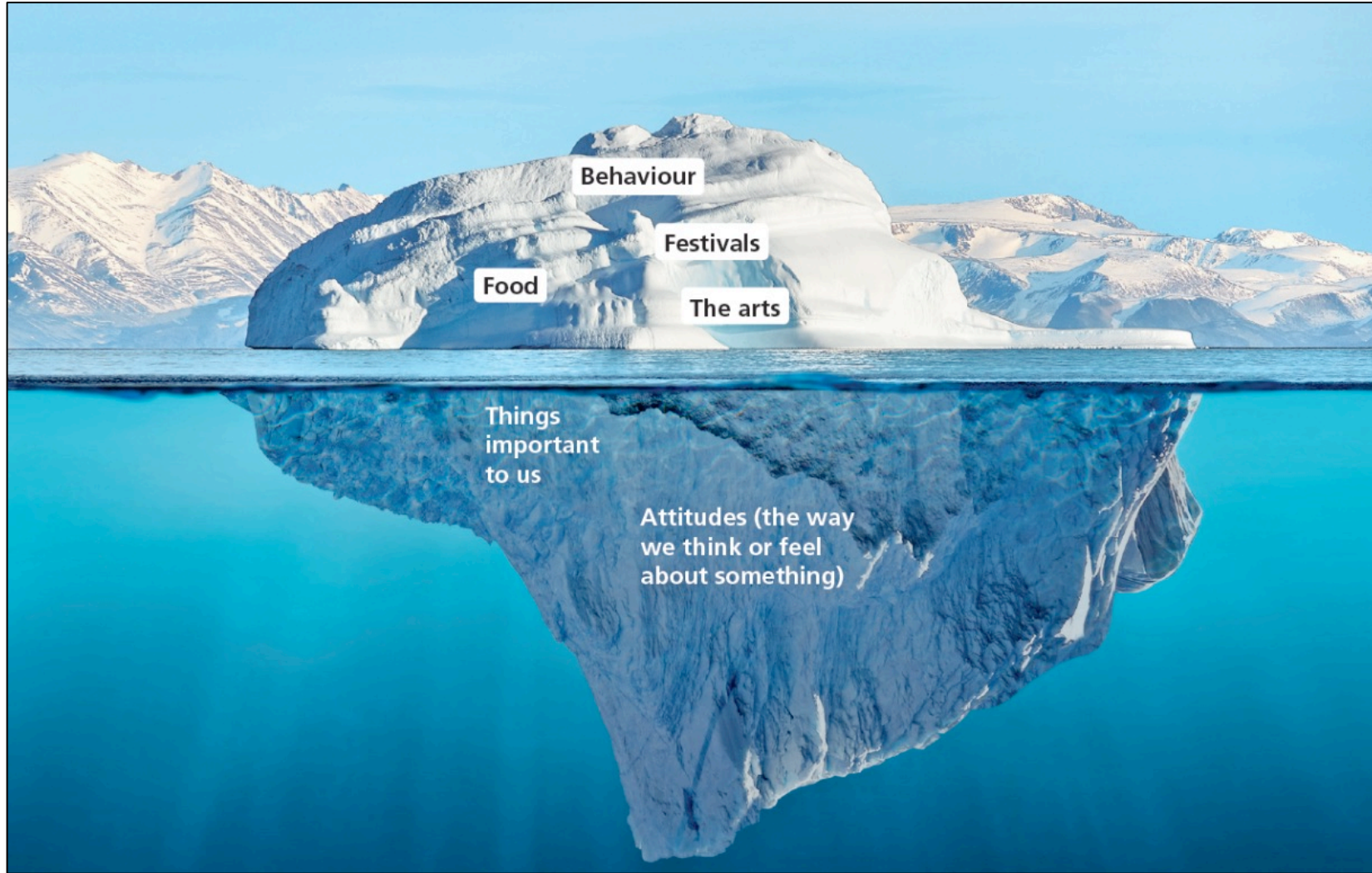


# The Cultural Iceberg



VOICES Elementary (Book 2)

# The Cultural Iceberg



VOICES Elementary (Book 2)

# Causes of misunderstandings in business?

**51%**

Differences in cultural traditions  
in different countries

**49%**

Different norms of workplace  
behaviour

**27%**

Diversity of  
languages across  
countries

**23%**

Poor quality  
of translations



# CEFR on Pluricultural Competence

- **Capacity to deal with ‘otherness’ to identify similarities and differences...to enable communication and collaboration**
- **Willingness to act as intercultural mediator**
- **A will to show sensitivity to differences and readiness to offer and ask for clarification**
  - **anticipating possible risks for misunderstanding**

## Do's

- ✓ Dress properly
- ✓ Bring a gift when visiting an office
- ✓ Bow when you meet someone
- ✓ Slurp when eating noodles
- ✓ Use both hands to accept business cards

## Don'ts

- ✗ Tip at a restaurant
- ✗ Open a gift until you leave
- ✗ Blow your nose in public
- ✗ Speak loudly on public transport
- ✗ Wear your shoes when entering a house

# CULTURAL FILTERS



**SECTOR**



**COMPANY**



**PROFESSIONAL /  
FUNCTIONAL**



**GENDER**



**AGE**



**RELIGION**



**POLITICAL  
AFFILIATION**



**REGION**



**CLASS**



**ETHNIC  
GROUP**



**SPECIAL  
INTEREST**

“

*Culture is a fluid, creative social force which binds different groupings and different aspects of behaviour in different ways.*

”

**HOLLIDAY ET AL (2010)**



Photo by Kay Kim taken from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kaykim/3883340152> Creative Commons by 2.0 Deed.



You're going to look at a photo for five seconds.

What do you see in the photo?



Can you describe what you saw in the photo?

“

*Being empathetic is seeing the world through the eyes of the other, not seeing your world reflected in their eyes.*

”

CARL ROGERS

# GLOCALISATION



# GLOCALISATION



McSpicy Chicken Rice meal

# GLOCALISATION



Spicy Rice Bowl with  
Chicken Nuggets



McSpicy Chicken Rice meal

# GLOCALISATION



Spicy Rice Bowl with  
Chicken Nuggets



McSpicy Chicken Rice meal



Dosa Masala Burger®



# GLOCALISATION



Spicy Rice Bowl with Chicken Nuggets



Maple BBQ & Bacon Quarter Pounder



McSpicy Chicken Rice meal



Dosa Masala Burger®

# GLOCALISATION



Spicy Rice Bowl with Chicken Nuggets



Maple BBQ & Bacon Quarter Pounder

Screenshots taken from McDonalds' Singapore, Canada, Vietnam, North&East India and West&South India websites



McSpicy Chicken Rice meal



**Dosa Masala Burger®**

# GLOCALISATION



Plain Bagel With Butter



Everything Bagel with Butter



Sesame Bagel with Butter



Everything Bagel With Regular Cream Cheese Product



Egg BLT Bagel with Plain Bagel



Bacon 'N Egg Bagel with Plain Bagel



Sausage 'N Egg Bagel with Everything Bagel

# GLOCALISATION



Plain Bagel With Butter



Everything Bagel with Butter



Sesame Bagel with Butter



Everything Bagel With Regular Cream Cheese Product



Egg BLT Bagel with Plain Bagel



Bacon 'N Egg Bagel with Plain Bage'



Sausage 'N Egg Bagel with Everything Bagel



Chicken McGriddles



Bacon, Egg & Cheese McGriddles

# GLOCALISATION



Plain Bagel With Butter



Everything Bagel with Butter



Sesame Bagel with Butter



Everything Bagel With Regular Cream Cheese Product



Egg BLT Bagel with Plain Bagel



Bacon 'N Egg Bagel with Plain Bage'



Sausage 'N Egg Bagel with Everything Bagel



Breakfast Burrito



Chicken McGriddles



Bacon, Egg & Cheese McGriddles

“

*Cultural awareness alone isn't going to get you very far. It's not going to build that relationship, seal the deal with a customer, or lead that meeting. What's really critical when crossing cultures is the ability to adapt and adjust your behavior in light of the differences that exist. It's behavioural flexibility that matters, not just cognitive awareness.*

”

**ANDY MOLINSKY**

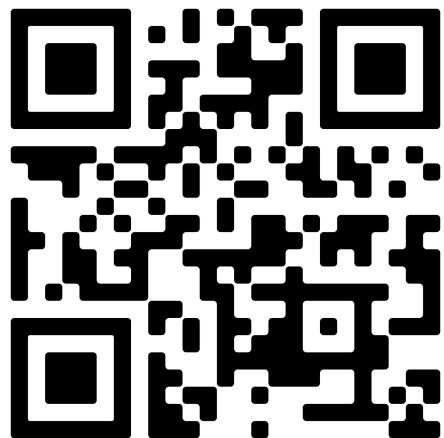
AWARENESS

UNDERSTANDING

FLEXIBILITY

# Join our upcoming webinar with Chia!

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## Five Tips for Developing Students' Communication Skills and Intercultural Skills

with Chia Suan Chong

**March 7, 2024**

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[ELTNGL.com/webinars](https://ELTNGL.com/webinars)



THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!

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Author of *Successful International Communication*

