

# Communicating across cultures

kia ora

<p><b>The Challenge</b></p> <p>When students come to school they bring knowledge shaped by their families and community; they return home with new knowledge fostered by the school and its practitioners.</p> <p><i>Students performance will likely be affected by the ability of both sides to negotiate this home-school relationship effectively.</i></p> <p>Adapted from NCCREST (2006)</p>	<p><b>What are your challenges?</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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<p><b><i>“Treat everyone like you would like to be treated yourself”</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does this saying make sense?</li> <li>• Should we live by it?</li> <li>• If we treat others like ourselves will it show respect or offence and/or alienate them?</li> </ul>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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<p><b>Communicating across cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the impact of cultural values</li> <li>• Communication styles</li> <li>• Expectations</li> <li>• Making it happen</li> </ul>	<div style="border: 1px solid gray; border-radius: 50%; padding: 20px; text-align: center;"> <p>Culture is rather like the colour of your eyes: you cannot change it or hide it, and although you cannot see it yourself, it is always visible to other people when you interact with them.</p> <p><small>-Holtgraves &amp; Pedersen</small></p> </div>
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<p><b>The stuff that gets in the way</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stereotyping</li> </ul> <p>A stereotype is a commonly held public belief about specific social groups or types of individuals based on some prior assumption.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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<b>The stuff that gets in the way</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethnocentrism Belief that "ours is the best way" and that one's cultural norms are superior.</li> </ul>	

<p><b>The stuff that gets in the way - Culture</b></p> <p>"Culture consists of shared mental programs that condition individuals' responses to their environment" (Hofstede, 1980)</p> <p>Culture is a programming of the mind.</p> <p>We are all programmed by cultural software that determines what we value; our behaviour; and our attitudes.</p> <p><i>Culture is the way you think, act, and interact.</i></p>	<p><i>Cultural programming guides our behaviour. As we grow we are taught to do things in a certain way, think in a certain way, we are taught what is right and wrong, what is important, how to behave and what is acceptable behaviour in different situations - all of this makes up our culture. Culture is not just a set of surface behaviours it is deeply embedded in us; consequently, it takes time to adjust when faced with a new code of behaviours and expectations.</i></p> <p><i>Though most cultural rules are never written, they are all the more powerful because they are absorbed unconsciously as we watch others and their reactions to us.</i></p> <p><i>How are you programmed? This is an important question and it is important to know yourself, what you value, what your culture is.</i></p>
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<b>Individualism – Collectivism - the extent to which a person values independence or interdependence</b>	
<p><i>In an individualist culture:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person's identity revolves around the "I"</li> <li>• Personal goals and achievement are strived for</li> <li>• It is acceptable to pursue individual goals at the expense of others</li> <li>• 'Individualism' is encouraged whether it be personality, clothes or music tastes</li> <li>• The right of the individual reign supreme; thus laws to protect choices and freedom of speech</li> </ul>	<p><i>In a collectivist cultures:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "We" is more important than "I"</li> <li>• Conformity is expected and perceived positively.</li> <li>• Individual's desires and aspirations should be curbed if necessary for the good of the group.</li> <li>• The rights of the family (or for the common good) are more important.</li> <li>• Rules provide stability, order, obedience</li> </ul>

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**Uncertainty Avoidance** - the degree to which members of a culture feel threatened by unpredictable, uncertain or unknown situations

*High uncertainty avoidance cultures:*

- Usually countries/cultures with a long history.
- The population is not multicultural, i.e. homogenous.
- Risks, even calculated, are avoided in business.
- New ideas and concepts are more difficult to introduce.

*Low uncertainty avoidance cultures:*

- Usually a country with a young history, i.e. England.
- The population is much more diverse due to waves of immigration.
- Risk is embraced as part of business.
- Innovation and pushing boundaries is encouraged.

**Power Distance** - The extent to which members of a culture expect and accept that power is unequally distributed

*In a high power distance cultures the following may be observed:*

- Those in authority openly demonstrate their rank.
- Subordinates are not given important work and expect clear guidance from above.
- Subordinates are expected to take the blame for things going wrong.
- The relationship between boss and subordinate is rarely close/personal.
- Class divisions within society are accepted.

*In a low power distance culture the following may be observed:*

- Superiors treat subordinates with respect and do not pull rank.
- Subordinates are entrusted with important assignments.
- Blame is either shared or very often accepted by the superior due to it being their responsibility to manage.
- Managers may often socialise with subordinates.
- Societies lean more towards egalitarianism.

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## Communication style – low / high context

**Low context** - Meaning is encoded in the verbal code, words are trusted.

*A linear and direct style works well for individualistic cultures as they strive to present themselves as an individual.*

**High context** – meaning is gleaned from the physical, social, and psychological contexts.

*Circular or indirect communication works well for collectivist cultures as the relationship and harmony is important.*

**Often misunderstandings arise because one is listening for an explicit point and the other is listening for the point that is implicit in the message.**

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## Communication

Silence – part of communication or not?

Does yes mean Yes or Yes?

- Yes, I heard you.
- Yes, I will think about it.
- Yes, but don't really understand.

*Because of the value placed on relationships and harmony a person from a collectivist culture may not say no.*

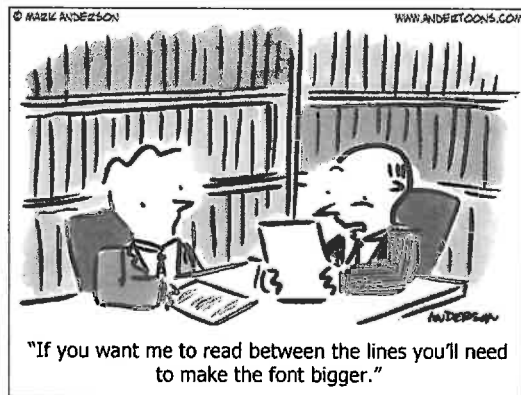
*They do not want to lose face by saying they do not understand.*

*They do not want you to lose face – if they ask for more information they see that as telling you that you have not explained it properly.*

*Always question further is you need confirmation of understanding.*

## Language

- Jargon / terminology
- Words vs context - ESOL
- Tone, pitch
- The 'niceties' e.g. please, thank you
- Nonverbal



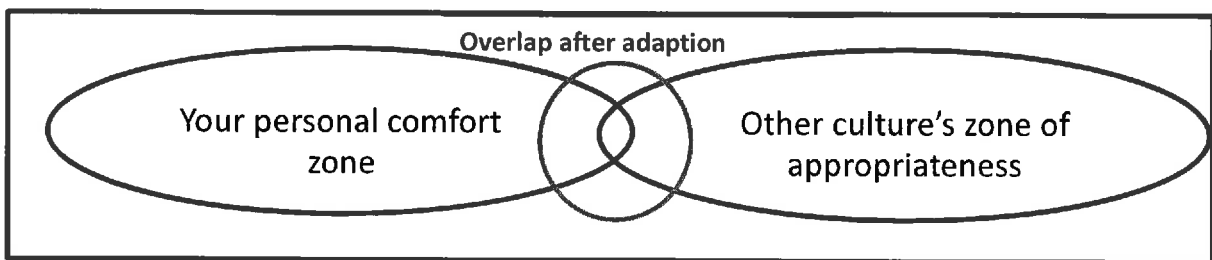
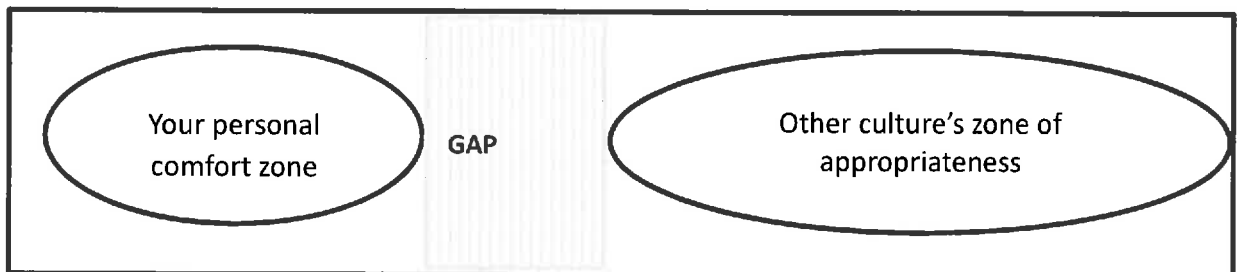
I'M ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT I SAY NOT FOR WHAT YOU UNDERSTAND

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Jargon	What jargon do you use?
In plain English what would this mean?	
"My cuz who's a cockie out in the wop-wops packed a sad after his chippie he had working on his bach shot through with his old Sheila".	
a. There's been a murder involving a famous dead German composer and Sheila is suspected.	
b. A relation who is a farmer in a remote area is aggrieved because his wife has run off with the builder who had been working on his holiday home.	
c. It is a trick question as that is plain English. (NZ Herald, 2007)	

## Bridging the gap



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# Bridging the gap

## Counter discrimination and racism

- Identify the kinds of practices that disadvantage or discriminate against those of different cultural backgrounds and promote inclusive practices in their place.
- Encourage everyone to speak up and take positive action against discrimination.

## Build connections

- Connecting with others who have been through the same experience provides opportunities to talk about difficulties and reduce isolation
- Connect with culture specific community groups
- Connect with community leaders, religious leaders

## Engage parents, guardians & caregivers

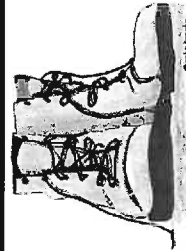
- When spoken or written language is a barrier – interpreters and translated material can help
- Contact families prior to or early on during the new school year may help involve them
- Having an open door policy at designated times might encourage more communication, questions & engagement

## Staff training

- We don't know what we don't know
- How to manage diversity in the workplace
- How to build relationships across cultures

## My Shoes

- *I just want to help my child succeed*
- *I don't want to bring shame to my family*
- *I don't understand English so well; I can't help my child with their homework*
- *I worry the staff will not understand me, I will embarrass my child*
- *My child speaks better English than me*
- *The system is so different – can I trust this system?*
- *I want my children to have friends but I don't have the language skills to meet the parents*



*Stand in my shoes for a moment*

## Get to know your community

- Build accurate knowledge about the diversity of families
- Gain awareness of families journeys
- Identify needs and preferences for receiving information

## Communicate effectively

- Gain awareness of communication styles
- VARK – visual, aural, read/write, kinaesthetic
- Be mindful of school correspondence, displays and activities – are they inclusive of diversity?

## Celebrate diversity

- Invite parents to share information about their culture
- Build mutual respect – this involves being open to learning different ideas
- Be mindful of different parenting styles
- Celebrate festivals – create a festival calendar

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## Be curious – ask for feedback; ask questions

	<p>Feedback – how do you know if a person understands? Ask for feedback through questioning.</p> <p>Change your style if person does not understand. Don't make people wrong because their communication style is different from yours (not what's wrong with your attitude), if you do, you will not only have to deal with communication problems but also conflict and negative feelings.</p> <p>Ask for examples of aspects you have been discussing.</p> <p>Watch for nonverbal feedback – do not mistake a 'poker face' for misunderstanding "I don't understand" or "I don't fully understand"</p> <p>Questions – open questions – pause – give person time to process the question and then answer.</p> <p>Do they look confused? Are they unusually quiet? When asked if they have any questions, do they answer with a hesitant no?</p> <p>Learning by association – associate with examples from their workplace, culture</p>
<p><b>Questions to ask</b> (NZ Curriculum Update - 2011)</p>	
<p>What are the important cultural and religious celebrations for your culture that could impact on your child at school?</p>	
<p>What responsibilities are expected of your children in the family, the home, outside of school?</p>	
<p>What do you expect for the future of your children – for example jobs, marriage, continuing education etc?</p>	
<p>What are your community's expectations of teachers and of the school?</p>	

## Remember we're all acting normally!

*Should you ...*

*"Treat everyone like you would like to be treated yourself"*

OR

*"Treat others like they would like to be treated"*

???

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