Features of Academic Communication in the Asian World

Alexandra Sizova, PhD
Associate Professor, Head of the Chinese Studies Department, the School of Asian Studies, Faculty of World Economy and International Affairs, NRU Higher School of Economics
asizova@yahoo.com
What is on the agenda?

difficulties which arise in the process of cross-cultural communication

strategies for effective communication with Asian colleagues

real life cases of communication within the Asian context

Why it may be interesting to you?
- You plan to study or teach at Asian universities
- You are engaged in international projects with Asian colleagues
- You are interested in the issues of intercultural communication and academic traditions in various regions of the world
Why is Asia so impressive?
Asia is ...
The world’s largest population (2018)

IMF DataMapper

Population ( Millions of people, 2018)

Asian countries are among the world's leading economies.
Asian countries are among the world's leading economies
East Asia: Leading economies, the fastest economic growth (2018)

- **China**: 13,12 USD trillion (2nd)  
- **Japan**: 5.06 USD trillion (3rd)  
- **South Korea**: 1.6 USD trillion  
- **Russia**: 1,52 USD trillion

**Chart:** GDP, current prices (Billions of U.S. dollars)
Approaches to studying intercultural communication
The Lewis Model
- developed in the 1990s (When Cultures Collide, 1996)
Richard Lewis, after visiting 135 countries and working in more than 20 of them, came to the conclusion that humans can be divided into 3 categories, based not on nationality or religion, but on **behaviour**.
The scholar:
- considered that previous cross-culturalists, in accumulating the multiplicity of dimensions, ran the risk of creating confusion for those who sought clarity and succinctness;
- pointed out that the experts’ preoccupation with north/south, mono-chronic/poly-chronic dichotomies, had caused them to overlook or ignore the powerful Asian mindset (*reactive*).

https://www.crossculture.com/the-lewis-model-dimensions-of-behaviour/
The Lewis Model is essentially tripartite and cites the following characteristics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LINEAR-ACTIVE</th>
<th>MULTI-ACTIVE</th>
<th>REACTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talks half the time</td>
<td>Talks most of the time</td>
<td>Listens most of the time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does one thing at a time</td>
<td>Does several things at once</td>
<td>Reacts to partner’s action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans ahead step by step</td>
<td>Plans grand outline only</td>
<td>Looks at general principles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite but direct</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Polite, indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly conceals feelings</td>
<td>Displays feelings</td>
<td>Conceals feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronts with logic</td>
<td>Confronts emotionally</td>
<td>Never confronts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislikes losing face</td>
<td>Has good excuses</td>
<td>Must not lose face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely interrupts</td>
<td>Often interrupts</td>
<td>Doesn’t interrupt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job-oriented</td>
<td>People-oriented</td>
<td>Very people-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sticks to facts</td>
<td>Feelings before facts</td>
<td>Statements are promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth before diplomacy</td>
<td>Flexible truth</td>
<td>Diplomacy over truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes impatient</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Patient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited body language</td>
<td>Unlimited body language</td>
<td>Subtle body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respects officialdom</td>
<td>Seeks out key person</td>
<td>Uses connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separates the social and professional</td>
<td>Mixes the social and professional</td>
<td>Connects the social and professional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Lewis Model of cultural types

- The **Linear-active** group: English-speaking world – North America, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, and Northern Europe, including Scandinavia and Germanic countries.
- The **Reactive** group: in all major countries in Asia, except the Indian sub-continent, which is hybrid.
- The **Multi-active** group: Southern Europe, Mediterranean countries, South America, sub-Saharan Africa, Arab and other cultures in the Middle East, India and Pakistan and most of the Slavs.

https://www.crossculture.com/the-lewis-model-dimensions-of-behaviour/
The Lewis Model of cultural types
## The Lewis Model of cultural types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Needed to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>task-oriented, highly-organized planners, who complete action chains by doing one thing at a time, preferably in accordance with a linear agenda</td>
<td>LINEAR-ACTIVE</td>
<td>organise, plan, see problems, analyse consequences, follow consistent policies, access rational thought, generate data, and challenge us objectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotional, loquacious and impulsive people who attach great importance to family, feelings, relationships, people in general. They like to do many things at the same time and are poor followers of agendas</td>
<td>MULTI-ACTIVE</td>
<td>generate enthusiasm, motivate, persuade, create a positive social atmosphere, access emotions, generate dialogue, and challenge us personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good listeners, who rarely initiate action or discussion, preferring first to listen to and establish the other’s position, then react to it and form their own opinion</td>
<td>REACTIVE</td>
<td>harmonise, act intuitively, be patient and see the big picture, think and act long-term, access feelings, listen, empathize and challenge us holistically</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individual cultural profiles and deviations from the national norm

The profile indicates not only how much affinity people’s behaviour has to that of other countries but also shows their similarity to or deviation from their own national norm, as well as their compatibility with other people tested.
12 dimensions of culture

- **Problem solving**: Problem solving is about using logic, research, data and analysis and about the role of inspiration, imagination, emotion and opinion.
- **Space**: Space is about giving access to different parts of your work and life, sharing experiences with new people and the professional/private divide.
- **Conflict**: Conflict is about recognising or smoothing over uncomfortable facts, finding common ground and handling disagreement.
- **Directness**: Directness is about getting to the point with factual content or paying attention to style, timing, body language and it is about making proposals and giving feedback.
- **Tasks**: Tasks are about the balance between focusing on goals and building trusting relationships in a business situation.
- **Use of time**: Use of time is about multitasking, or focusing on one thing at a time and about finding connections between different activities.
- **Time spans**: Time spans is about traditions and visions and the source of inspiration for making plans.
- **Fate**: Fate is about control over events, acceptance of circumstances as well as beliefs about luck and destiny.
- **Rules**: Rules are about applying regulations and contracts in different situations and about the clarity and flexibility of rules.
- **Power**: Power is about how we deal with hierarchy at work: bosses, senior colleagues, people who report to you or other junior personnel.
- **Responsibility**: Responsibility is about taking the initiative, giving instructions, using authority and defining personal goals.
- **Group membership**: Group membership is about balancing individual roles with recognition and benefits for the group.

(Sundae Schneider-Bean) [https://tandemnomads.com/tn86-avoid-intercultural-misunderstandings-sundae-bean/](https://tandemnomads.com/tn86-avoid-intercultural-misunderstandings-sundae-bean/)
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Collectivity and independence

Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Individualism
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Attitude to authority
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Public behaviour
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Approach to solving problems
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Complexity of self-expression
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Expression of discontent
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Social connections
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Culture of queuing
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Perception of time
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

The level of noise during communication
Differences of the “Western” and “Eastern” cultures

Mutual perception of Europeans and Asians
National characters & features of communication in the West and East
China and the Chinese
National character

- Traditionalism
- Collectivity
- Hierarchy
- Rationality
- Pragmatism
- Logic
- Strong feeling of “面子”
- Indirectness
- Politeness
- Modesty
- Formality
- Endurance
- Diligence
- Fast and slow moving
- Chasing fortune
Japan and the Japanese
National character: “Asia’s Germans”

- Traditionalism
- Conservatism
- Hierarchy
- Rationality
- Coolness
- Calmness
- Politeness
- Inscrutability
- Measure
- Careful planning
- Slow moving
- Orientation on details
- Lacking dynamism
Korea and the Koreans
National character: “Asia’s Italians”

- Traditionalism
- Hierarchy
- Individualism
- Energy
- Emotionality
- Directness
- Politeness
- Measure
- Quickness
- Fast moving
- Risk taking
- Nervousness
- Rough-and-ready
Regional features of communication in English
Paragraphing

- Paragraph is a building block of a paper – “a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit” (Lunsford and Connors, 116)
- Paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences that support one main idea
- The unity and coherence of ideas among sentences is what constitutes a paragraph

https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/
Requirements for a good paragraph

✓ Unified: All of the sentences in a single paragraph should be related to a single controlling idea (often expressed in the topic sentence of the paragraph)

✓ Clearly related to the thesis: The sentences should all refer to the central idea, or thesis, of the paper

✓ Coherent: The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development

✓ Well-developed: Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paragraph’s controlling idea

(Rosen and Behrens, 119)
Thank you for attention!

Let’s have some tea!

请喝茶！