
Your politeness or my politeness ?

Politeness matters
in intercultural encounters.

Rudi Camerer

BESIG-CONFERENCE STUTTGART NOVEMBER 2012



Teaching culture-free English ...





Social customs 1 Use your knowledge of social customs around the world. Do this quiz with a partner. How close your answers to 100%?

Culture Quiz

1. How's dining business in the U.S.?
 a. Good, one hour in class
 b. Very good
 c. Very poor
 d. Very good, but only in the U.S.
2. In the Middle East you have to get permission to...
 a. go to work
 b. go to school
 c. enter the area
 d. enter the area
3. If you're going to a party to meet a friend...
 a. you don't have to bring anything
 b. you don't have to bring anything
 c. you don't have to bring anything
 d. you don't have to bring anything
4. How do you greet someone in the U.S.?
 a. Handshake
 b. Hug
 c. Kiss
 d. Handshake
5. How do you greet someone in the U.S.?
 a. Handshake
 b. Hug
 c. Kiss
 d. Handshake

Culture in course books

10 Project management (B)

Business Focus

1. **Introduction**
 Project management is a process that involves defining the project, identifying the project's objectives, and developing a plan to achieve those objectives.

2. **Definition**
 Project management is the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project's requirements.

3. **Importance**
 Project management is important because it helps to ensure that projects are completed on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of the client.

10 Project management (B)

Business Focus

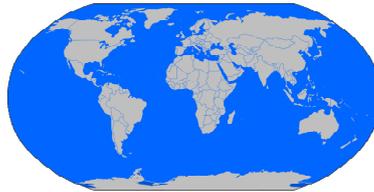
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POLITENESS:

key to intercultural competence



Is
POLITENESS
universal
?



Face



Ervin Goffman (1967) *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*
Brown&Levinson (1978/1987). *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*. CUP



Positive Face

The positive consistent self-image or 'personality' claimed by interactants

Negative Face

The basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e. the freedom of action and freedom from imposition.



Ervin Goffman (1967) *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*.
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Politeness & language?

- How important is language?
- What other factors may play a role?



Walt Kowalski

Martin

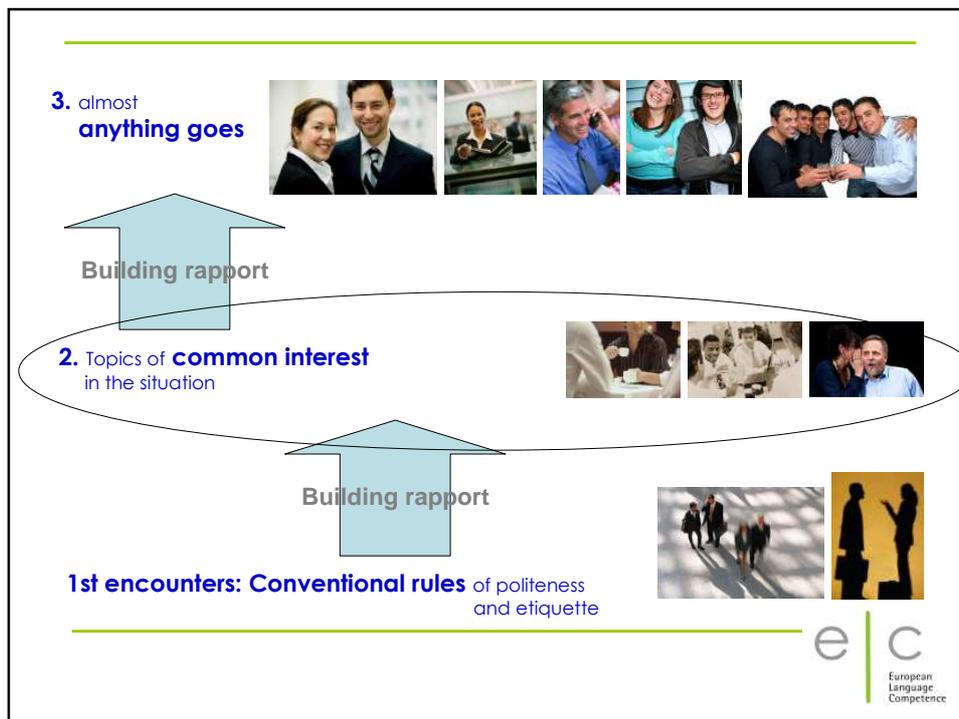
That'll be ten bucks, Bob
Ten bucks! Jesus Christ, man! Are you half Jewish or somethin'? If you're raisin the price as always. It's been ten bucks for the last five years, you hard-nosed Polak son of a bitch.
Oh yeah. Keep the change.
See you in three weeks, prick.
Not if I see you first, stiff shit.

GRAN TORINO
Clint Eastwood 2008



What exactly is happening during this 'lesson'?

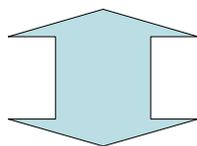
Can you draw any conclusions about politeness in general?



“Politeness is a state that one expects to exist in every conversation; participants note not that someone is being polite – this is the norm – but rather that the speaker is violating the *Conversational Contract*”

Bruce Fraser (1990). Perspectives on politeness. In: Journal of Pragmatics 14, 219-236

“Conversational Contract”



IDENTITY, ROLE, RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERACTANTS

SITUATION & CONTEXT

CULTURE

Politeness is **NOT INHERENT** in language

although language may play an important role

- Polite language may be used for impoliteness (and vice versa).
- Polite language may be understood as a sign of coldness, arrogance etc.
- Politeness strategies may be misinterpreted (e.g. self-effacing).



Politeness, Courtesy, Höflichkeit, Politesse
Courtoisie, Wakimae, Grzeczność, Artighet,
Gentilezza, Cortesia, Amibilidad, ...
in
HISTORY



Linguistic etiquette

➤ Close the window.



➤ Could you please close the window?

➤ Do you think I could possibly prevail upon you to close the window?

“Would you please, dear Sir, accept my most distinguished greetings.”

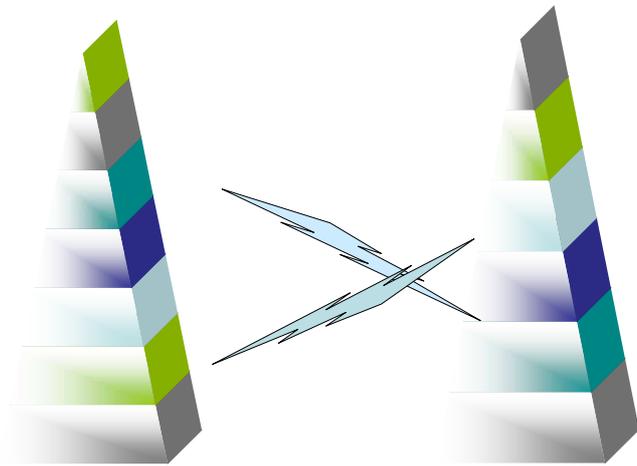


“Dear waiter, tell your respected father to kindly oblige me with a dish of rice and vegetable.”*



* Manfred Kummer "Politeness in Thai" in: R. Watts/ S. Ide/ K. Ehlich (eds.) (2005) Politeness in Language. Studies in its History, Theory and Practice. p. 331

Scales of politeness



Politeness

is a process of defining relationships positively through communication.

This includes

- Face-saving conventions (I must have got this wrong...)
- Language conventions (I totally disagree...)
- Discourse conventions (compliments, uncertainty, enquiries ...)
- Body language (posture, gestures, eye-contact, smiling ...)
- Rules of etiquette (dress, behaviour, formality...)
- Taboo topics (personal feelings, sex, money, politics, religion ...)
- Taboo actions (touching a person's head, use of left hand ...)
- Positive politeness (I like your dress...)
- Negative politeness (I hope you don't mind me asking ...)

All of these are culture-based and may change in time.

Politeness variables

1. **Social distance** (age, gender, status, kinship, education, profession, in-group/outgroup...)
2. **Power relations** (hierarchy, host/visitor, teacher/student ...)
3. **Absolute ranking of *FTA*** (from minor flaw to serious insult)
4. **Language-based conventions** (use of honorifics, use of 1st names ...)

All of these are culture-based and may change in time.

Politeness in intercultural encounters ?



POLITENESS

is a process of defining relationships through communication

4. COMMUNICATION

body language, linguistic etiquette, emphasis, face-saving strategies, taboo topics, taboo actions, strategies of trust-building ...

Never enter into intercultural encounters unprepared!

1. KNOW

Country specific etiquette, dos & don'ts, taboo topics, strategies of trust-building ...

ITY

sensitivity, open-mindedness, accepting attitude, flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity ...

3. SITUATION

identity, role, relationship
"conversational contract"

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Language
Competence

POLITENESS

is a process of defining relationships through communication

or

The Price for Being Unprepared

ICE Train-the-trainer Course

How to Insult an Egyptian Customer

A major Canadian high-tech manufacturing firm was deep in negotiations with an Egyptian public sector company. Vice President Paul White was pleased to learn that the head of the Cairo-based company was leading a delegation to Toronto with a view to concluding negotiations.

White was even more pleased when upon his arrival Dr. Mahmud Ahmed hinted strongly that discussions were moving along nicely and that a favourable outcome was likely. After all, this contract represented the largest and most profitable deal White's company had worked on to date.

Quite aware of the importance of relationship-building, Paul invited the Egyptian delegation to an elegant reception and buffet dinner at the prestigious Grand Hotel, with Dr. Ahmed as the guest of honor.

Dr. Ahmed was his usual charming, affable self when he arrived at the party and warmly shook hands with Paul. After a few minutes of chit-chat the Canadian led his chief guest to the drinks table, stocked with things the Egyptian was known to like. "Well now, what can I offer you to drink, Dr. Ahmed?"

"Oh, nothing for me right now," replied the Egyptian with a smile. The two men conversed pleasantly about sports, music and other mutual interests for a while and then White guided his guest to the buffet table loaded with delicacies Dr. Ahmed preferred. Paul was surprised when Dr. Ahmed again declined politely, saying that he wasn't hungry.

Puzzled by his guest's lack of interest in food and drink, Paul wondered what the problem might be. Then the Canadian host was drawn into conversation with some of the other guests and did not notice when Dr. Ahmed left the party early.

At the negotiating session next day Dr. Ahmed was cool and distant. No progress at all was made towards an agreement. That afternoon Paul learned that the head of the Egyptian company was complaining vociferously to his colleagues about the "rude and offensive treatment" he had undergone at the dinner party. "I certainly do not intend to do business with such discourteous people," he was heard to say.

With the delegation due to leave Canada in three days, Paul White was desperate to know what was happening. Was this a negotiating ploy - a pressure tactic? Or had his team really offended Dr. Ahmed somehow? If so, what could be done now?



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WHICH ENGLISH

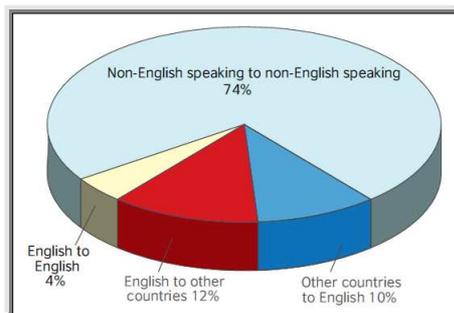
in intercultural communication?



International English



INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH:



2004

INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH:

Each speaker will use his or her own politeness conventions and the use of English as an apparently common language may well hide more than it reveals.

Two basic rules should therefore be observed:

1. First and second encounters are crucial and will most probably have an effect on how the relationship continues.

2. The higher the level of the speaker's English (in linguistic terms), **the more serious** will breaches of politeness conventions generally be considered.

Training Intercultural Competence in English

Section 1:	Theory (?)
Section 2:	My own cultural programming
Section 3:	Country specifics
Section 4:	Communicative competencies
Section 5:	Meta-communication
Section 6:	Critical incidents



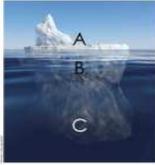
THEORY (?)

- NO LECTURES
- FOCUS ON USE OF LANGUAGE (Discourse strategies, politeness conventions ...)
- PRACTICAL COMMUNICATION EXERCISES



THEORY(?)

THE CULTURE ICEBERG



What do you think is the most interesting thing about an iceberg?

For most people, it is that the largest part of the iceberg is invisible, i.e. that most of the iceberg is under the surface. What you can see is a very small and unimportant part of the whole. The part that really matters cannot immediately be recognised but it is this enormous hidden part which makes all the difference – as the Captain of the Titanic found out to his cost.

The deeper you go in the water the more essential – and potentially dangerous – the iceberg becomes.

- How can culture be compared to an iceberg?
- What do you think are the most important elements of a culture (your own or another)?
- Where would you place the following aspects of culture on the Iceberg – A, B or C?

EDUCATION	HUMOUR
TABLE MANNERS	ORGANISATION OF COMPANIES
DEMOCRACY	PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP
DIRECTNESS OF SPEECH IN BUSINESS	PHYSICAL GESTURES
ARCHITECTURE	AUTHORITY & RESPECT
EMOTION SHOWN IN PUBLIC	ATTITUDE TO TIME / PUNCTUALITY
FAMILY LIFE	SOCIAL LIFE: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE
ROLES OF MALES AND FEMALES	TREATMENT OF OUTSIDERS/FOREIGNERS
GREETINGS	VALUES AND BELIEFS
RELIGION	NATIONAL ANTHEM

- Take notes.
- Discuss your notes with your partner.

You may find these phrases useful:

EXPRESSING AN OPINION:

- I feel ...
- I think ...
- I believe ...

DISAGREEING:

- I see your point, but ...
- Maybe you're right, but ...

REPAIRING / COMPENSATING:

- What I'm trying to say is ...
- How does one say ...?

AGREEING:

- You are absolutely right.
- I absolutely agree.
- That's correct.

SUGGESTING SOMETHING:

- Perhaps we should also consider ...



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH 2

GESTURES



- What does each gesture mean?
- Which gestures could you use in Germany, the UK or the US?
- Which of the gestures, if any, are different from the gestures used in your culture?
- In what situations do you use gestures?

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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH 4

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MY OWN CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

- WHAT IS NORMAL FOR YOU?
- FOCUS ON USE OF LANGUAGE (Discourse strategies, politeness conventions ...)
- PRACTICAL COMMUNICATION EXERCISES



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MY OWN CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

WHAT'S NORMAL FOR YOU?

Punctuality

Discuss the following questions with your partner:

What does **punctuality** mean? Does it mean the same

- Are you always on time?
- How long do you wait if someone is late for an appointment?
- If you get an invitation to a party which says "do you go?"
- When do you say "Come for coffee" / "Come "Dood evening"?"
- Do you always wear a watch?
- What do the following words mean to you: "later"?

Discuss this with your partner (s).
Use as many of the following phrases as possible.

Eine Meinung ausdrücken	I feel ... / I think ... / I b
Zustimmen	You are absolutely rig I absolutely agree. That's correct.
Andere Meinung sein, widersprechen	I see your point, but ... Sorry, I'm not sure I ag Maybe you're right, b Could it also be that,
Abeiwige, abggen, sich nicht entscheiden wollen	Perhaps we should at
Sich einigen	Do we all agree that So we all agree that .

HOW DO YOU SEE THE WO



What do you see in these

- How do the pictures make you feel?
- Why do different people see this sometimes?
- Does this apply to how we see the world in ge

Discuss this with your partner (s).
Use as many of the following phrases as possible.

Eine Meinung ausdrücken	I feel ... / I t
Zustimmen	You are ab I absolutel That's cor
Andere Meinung sein, widersprechen	Sorry, I'm n Maybe you Could it al
Abeiwige, abggen, sich nicht entscheiden wollen	Perhaps w
Sich einigen	Do we all a So we all a

ARE YOU A TOLERANT PERSON?

How do you feel about people who

- have pierced lips?
- have rings in their ears?
- eat animals you think of as pets?
- have more than six children?
- don't send their children to school?
- interrupt you all the time when you are talking?



Discuss this with your partner (s). Try to find an answer you all agree with.
Use as many of the following phrases as possible.

Expressing an opinion	I feel ... / I think ... / I believe ...
Agreeing	You are absolutely right. I absolutely agree. That's correct.
Disagreeing, expressing a different opinion	I see your point, but ... Sorry, I'm not sure I agree with you. Maybe you're right, but ... Could it also be that ...
Softening reasons, hedging	Perhaps we should also consider ...
Agreeing	Do we (all) agree that ... ? So we (all) agree that ...



INTERCULTURAL



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH 7



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH 4

Language Competence

COUNTRY SPECIFICS

- TRAINEE'S CHOICE OF TARGET CULTURE
- FOCUS ON INTERCULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT FACTS
- TRAINING OF PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES
- PRACTICAL PRESENTATION EXERCISES

COUNTRY SPECIFICS

DO'S AND DON'TS

What you should know when going to the USA

Decide whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE.



First encounters T. Americans like a firm handshake and firm eye-contact.

TRUE FALSE

34. Saudi Arabia is the world's largest exporter of
- mineral coal.
 - pure gold.
 - crude oil.



35. Makkah and Medina are
- trade places in Saudi Arabia.
 - historic battle sites.
 - Islam's holiest cities.



26. Modern India has been an independent nation since

- 1965.
- 1989.
- 1947.



28. India's currency is called
- Baht.
 - Rial.

WHAT FOREIGN VISITORS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR HOME:

programme for a one-week visit from your country abroad.



It's like for someone who doesn't know your town or country.

There are many other important things a foreign visitor needs to know.

Food & eating out Entertainment

Money Festivals appropriate behaviour

Proof opening / closing times clothing

General local or regional customs world of work

Remember you know or have heard about who have

notes in groups

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH

GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTERS

note

show your confidence, enthusiasm, clarity, fluency

keep your audience interested

use appropriate language and style

use appropriate body language

use appropriate eye contact

use appropriate facial expressions

use appropriate tone of voice

use appropriate pace

use appropriate volume

use appropriate intonation

use appropriate stress

use appropriate rhythm

use appropriate fluency

use appropriate accuracy

use appropriate range of vocabulary

use appropriate grammar

use appropriate pronunciation

use appropriate accent

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COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

POLITE RESPONSES

- Can you tell me the time, please?
- Certainly, it's quarter past three.
- Just stay if at least.
- Sorry, but I think someone's sitting.
- Do you mind? (borrow your pen)
- I'm afraid I can't help you.
- Would you mind looking after my bag?
- Of course not.
- Just alright if you put the news on for me.
- Sure, go ahead.
- Could you possibly change this for me?
- I'm afraid I haven't got any change.
- Do you think you could pass me that?
- Sure—here you are.
- Excuse me, can I get past, please?
- Yes, of course.

TIME TO THINK

If someone asks a difficult question, on answer. This can be done in different ways.

- That's a good question.
- That's a difficult question!
- Let me think a bit about it.
- I'm not really sure any more.
- I don't know. Let me see.

Can you think of any more ways to answer a difficult question?

- Why did you decide to wear it?
- How did you choose your chair?
- Do you like the English language?
- Do you think English is easy to learn?
- How do you choose your holidays?
- How did you meet your partner?
- How did your parents meet?

How think of more difficult questions using phrases to gain time below.

BAD EMAILS

These are all important emails but they are not perfect. There are 6 errors. Find a good subject line for these emails and rewrite them.

1. Hello,
We have overbooked our hotel so there is no room for you next week. You must stay in the Region the next time. It is not nice.
Sue Day

2. Hi Brian,
I cannot come to the meeting tomorrow. I will come next time. If I can, when is the next meeting?
Dor

3. I am on holiday now. Ring 1874 093 if you want anything.

4. To all Business Partners,
Here is the agenda for the meeting next week. Please come on time.
With best wishes

5. Our conference branch party is next week and we want to invite you. Let us know if you can come. The party is on Tuesday 24th at 8 p.m. in our office.

6. Colin,
Our meeting next week is at 10 o'clock in my office. I hope you come on time because I can see your boss and have the next meeting at 12.30.
See you there.
Helen

TELEPHONE PHRASES A

Being able to make and take phone calls politely and effectively can be extremely important in intercultural. Are you comfortable with the following phrases? It might be a good idea to keep this sheet in a separate file used to refer to it when necessary.



Making a call

Say who you are	My name is speaking.
Say who you want to speak to	Could I speak to ...? Could you put me through to ...?
Say why you are calling	I'm calling about ... The reason for calling ... Could I have a word with you about ...?
Request help	Could you tell me / show me ...? Could I have a hand? Could you help me / show me ...?
Check details	Let me just repeat that.
Please action	I'll do that. I'll get back to you as soon as possible.
Confirm action	Would you like me to confirm that meeting? Could you check that an email has been sent?
Thank your partner for the call	Thank you for the call. Thank you for the call.
Thank your interlocutor	Thank you very much.
Close politely	Have a good evening. Have a good week. See you tomorrow.

META-COMMUNICATION

- **FOCUS ON USE OF LANGUAGE:** negotiation techniques, politeness conventions ...
- **FOCUS ON COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS:** face-saving strategies ...
- **PRACTICAL COMMUNICATION EXERCISES:** role plays, simulations, scenarios ...

META-COMMUNICATION

META-LANGUAGE

What do you say?

1. A visitor to your home starts to take his shoes off.
2. You are just about to introduce a young man from Delhi to your boss and want to make sure the visitor knows how to greet your boss properly.
3. In Pakistan, you have noticed that everyone starts eating without saying anything.
4. A Chinese guest asks if it is okay to drop food on the table at a meal.
5. A guest from Helsinki asks if you drink tea with milk.
6. You want to find out what it means when Chinese business partners don't react to a suggestion.
7. Someone asks you what to do in Germany on a colleague's birthday.
8. Someone asks you how important Easter days are in Germany.

WHAT TO DO IN INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS



Which of the following strategies would you use for dealing with intercultural problems?

- a. Be yourself and everything will turn out fine.
- b. Try to behave in the way your partner expects.
- c. Talk about your own conventions and expectations so that your partner can behave as you do.
- d. Explain your own conventions and expectations and ask your partner to accept them and behave in the same way as you do.
- e. Point out the differences in your conventions and expectations and come to a consensus with your partner as to how you both proceed.
- f. Do nothing but assume that because you know about the causes of intercultural misunderstanding and are aware of different conventions and expectations, you will be able to deal with any difficult situations, and avoid or clear up misunderstandings.

**Make notes. Give reasons for your answers.
Discuss your answers with your partner (s).**

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Things that seem perfectly normal in some cultures are not at all normal in others. It's a good idea to establish common ground before problems arise. Here are some ways of doing this. When could you use them?

- A. Should I come a bit before 10 if the meeting starts at 10?
- B. No, we don't usually start exactly at 10 here. Everyone will probably be here at about a quarter past.
- A. I've been invited for coffee. What time should I go?
- B. Coffee here usually means morning coffee so at about 10 I would think.
- A. Ring me any time in the afternoons. I'll be in my office.
- B. Ok. I'll call you at 2 o'clock.

Now read the following situations and discuss them with your partner. Decide what you should do and say. You want to be polite.

- In Copenhagen you are invited to dinner at the home of a Danish colleague. You don't know exactly when he wants you to come.
- You are on a business trip in London and have an important meeting at 10 o'clock. The traffic is heavy and you realise you will be about 20 minutes late.
- After a long day with a business partner in Tokyo he invites you to a Karaoke night. You don't want to stay up too late because you have a lot of work to do tomorrow.

Have you ever been in a situation like one of these?



CRITICAL INCIDENTS

- **FOCUS ON COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS:** politeness conventions, building rapport ...
- **PRACTICAL COMMUNICATION EXERCISES:** role plays, simulations, scenarios ...

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Beethovenplatz 1-3
D – 60325 Frankfurt am Main
Bahnhofstrasse 28
D – 66111 Saarbrücken
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Federal Institute for Vocational Training (BIBB)



Intercultural Competence in English (ICE)

Intercultural Competences im
Rahmen der Schulformen der Sekundarstufe I und II des
Saarlandes (2007 bis 2008).



Austrian Chambers of Commerce: **Intercultural Competence in English (ICE)**



Intercultural Competence in English (ICE)



Train-the-trainer sessions



Assessment Tests and training sessions

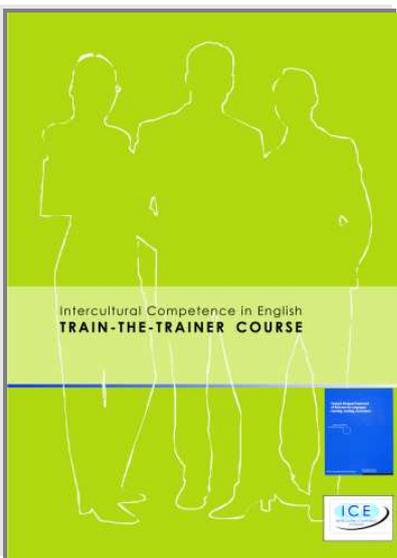


Teaching & Testing Material



Teaching & Testing Material

**TEACHER TRAINING COURSES
in SAARLAND, NRW and HESSEN**



TRAIN-THE-TRAINER COURSES

BERLIN

8 / 9 / 15 / 16 June 2013

BERGAMO

29 / 30 June / 6 / 7 July 2013

MÜNCHEN

13 / 14 / 20 / 21 July 2013



THANK YOU!

elc – European Language Competence

Beethovenplatz 1-3
D – 60325 Frankfurt am Main
Bahnhofstrasse 28
D – 66111 Saarbrücken
Tel. + 49 (0)69 – 53 05 59 67
Fax.+ 49 (0)69 – 53 05 65 27
www.elc-consult.com
R.Camerer@elc-consult.com

