

How do we become better intercultural communicators?

Challenges for language teachers



- Who is the person being interviewed?

- Who is the person getting the kids out of the room?

- In a multilingual (largely western) class a Chinese student stands to give a presentation and announces it will be about Chinese democracy
- What was the reaction of the classmates?
- How could the teacher mediate this?

Intercultural Communication

- What challenges do we face as teachers?
- How interculturally competent are we?
- Do we need to improve?
- What can we do?



- How much knowledge do we have of the cultural backgrounds of our students?
- If we ask them to talk about their culture what do we believe?
- What features of student behaviour do we normally notice?
- How much of what we see could be cultural and how much individual?

Listening to what people say about themselves

- While respecting whatever people say about their own culture, take what they say as evidence of what they wish to project rather than as information about where they come from
- Take what people say about their own culture as a personal observation which should not be generalized to other people who come from the same background

Holliday et al (2010)

I am constantly ready for situations and encounters in which I will exercise my knowledge, judgement and skills and have a large repertoire of strategies for dealing with differences in values, customs and practices among members of the intercultural group.

I not only accept that people can see things from widely varying perspectives and are entitled to do so, but am able to put myself in their place and avoid behaviour I sense would be hurtful or offensive.

I am able to intercede when difficulties arise and tactfully support other members of the group in understanding each other.

I am confident enough of my position to take a polite stand over issues despite my respect for the viewpoint of others.

Assumptions in use of language

Generally what you have written here is good, I really like the way you set out the story and the characters are well described. There's just a couple of things. You should look at the way you link sentences together and you need to revise how to use commas. But I really enjoyed reading this and you should write more.

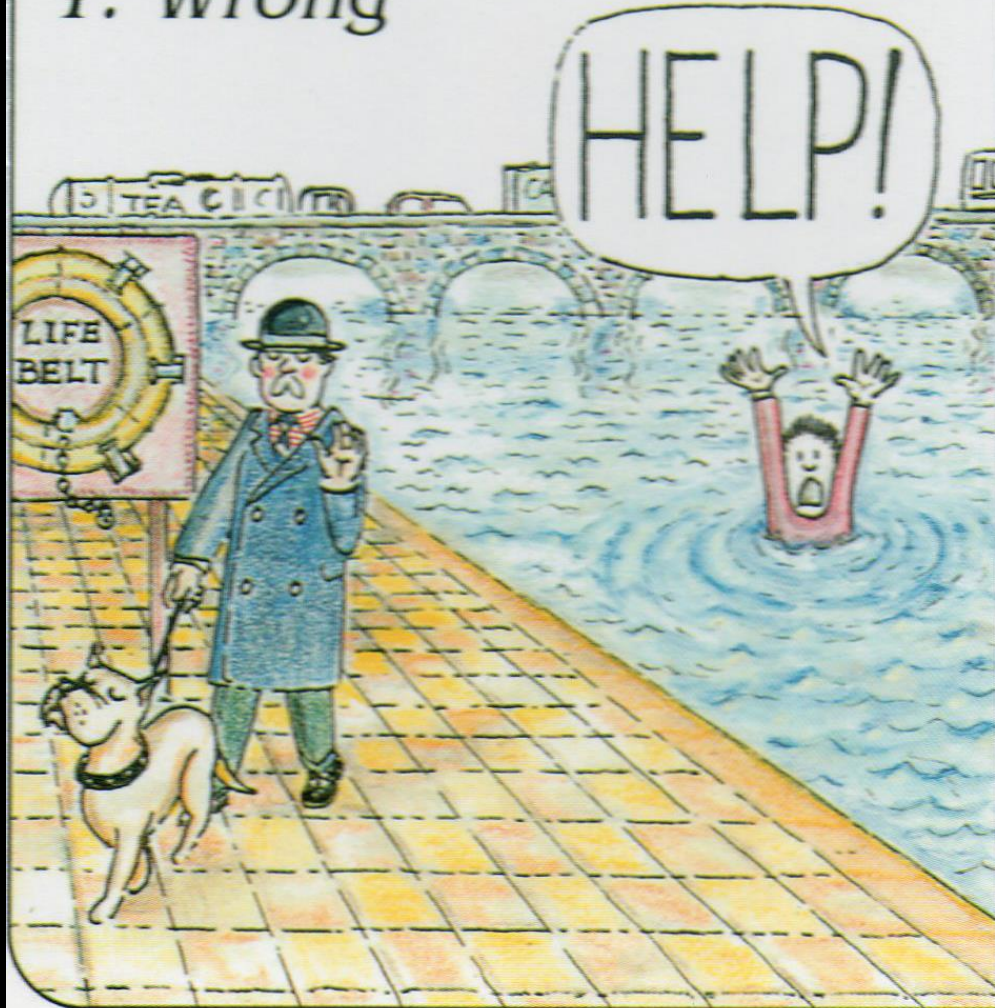
- Why don't the English say what they mean?

Get
around in

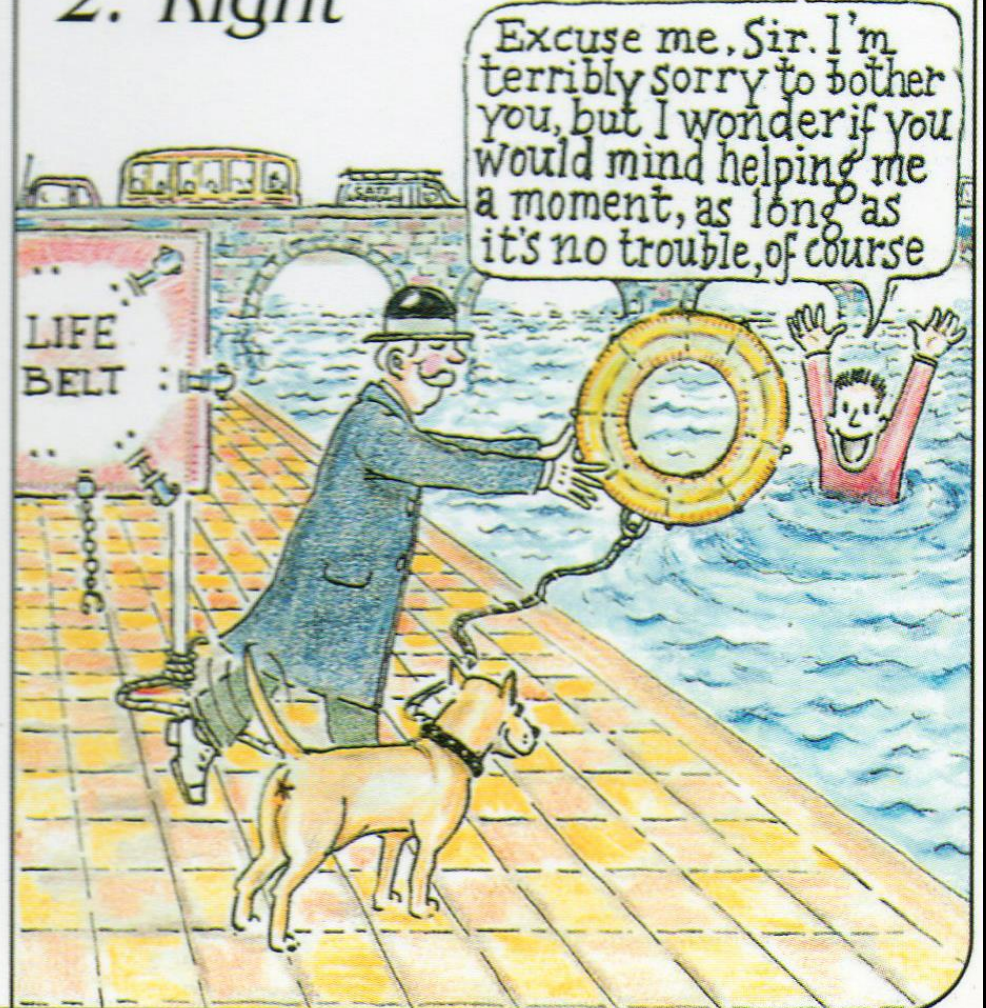
ENGLISH

Lesson Twenty Five
How to be Polite

1. Wrong



2. Right



- . **Ascribed identity:** How others perceive and communicate a person's identity

- . **Achieved or avowed identity:** How a person perceives himself/herself

- . Collier M (1997)

- A student was not satisfied with her new class. She wanted to move to a higher class. First, she consulted the student advisor who said that she could not move up at this time. The student, still unsatisfied with this answer, asked the other student advisor. The second student advisor gave her the same answer. Next, she made an appointment to see the coordinator of the Language Training Program.
- The coordinator consulted the student's teacher and the student's test scores and explained to the student that, according to the guidelines, she was unable to move to the next level at that time.
- The student was still not satisfied and made an appointment to see the dean and then intended to talk to the president of the college. Meanwhile, the teacher couldn't understand why the student did not just accept her decision.
- She also could not understand why the student could not see that there were policies in place so that no matter how high up she went in the college hierarchy, it would not change the outcome for her.

- ◆ Sandra gave her students a grammar test. During the test, a student was looking at another student's answers and writing them on his paper. The teacher asked him to do the test on his own. The student continued to look at the other student's answers. The teacher took his paper away and threw it into the garbage in full view of all the other students to make the point that the student's answers were not an indication of his understanding of the grammar and that it was pointless to write the test if he was just going to cheat. The student was very upset and went to the office to complain.

- ◆ A class discussion starts talking about politics. One student says that good governance is more important than democratic systems and giving every citizen a vote. Three other students react very strongly and accuse the first one of being in favour of dictatorships and a police state. The first student is very offended and a heated argument follows. Different students start taking sides.
- ◆ Later some of the students refuse to work with the first one in pair or group work.

- Juan liked using group work in class. Most of his lessons had students practising language in pairs or working in groups on tasks which they reported back to the class. His classrooms were always very active. He also believed in students as co-creators of learning. He asked them for feedback. 'Did you like the lesson?' They would always answer 'yes'. He spent time with them planning what would come next in the programme. At the end of the first month half of his students went to the Director of Studies and asked to transfer to another class. The Director of Studies told Juan to change his teaching style.

Notice more

About our learners

About what we say/do

Avoid stereotyping

