

大学英语综合应用能力选修课系列教材

跨文化交际技巧

——如何跟西方人打交道

(学生用书)

Encounters with Westerners:
Improving Skills in English
and Intercultural Communication
Don Snow

(Student Textbook)

 上海外语教育出版社
外教社 SHANGHAI FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRESS
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Don Snow
Hong Kong, 2003

To the Teacher :

Teaching Encounters with Westerners

I. General

The ultimate goal of English study is not just to learn a language for its own sake. Rather, the goal is to learn how to understand and effectively communicate with people from other nations and cultures. *Encounters with Westerners* is a textbook to help students not only improve their English, but also grow in their ability to interact effectively with people from other cultures, especially Westerners.

This integrated skills textbook provides students with practice in speaking, listening, reading and writing. It is appropriate for use in courses on Western culture or intercultural communication, but due to its heavy emphasis on discussion it is also appropriate for use in oral skills courses.

II. Goals of *Encounters with Westerners*

This textbook aims to achieve five different kinds of goals:

- 1) **Help students improve their English language skills.** *Encounters* allows students to build their English skills by reading about and discussing topics that are intellectually appropriate — and generally interesting — to adult learners in China. In particular, *Encounters* helps students:
 - Learn to explain ideas at ever greater levels of nuance.
 - Learn to share ideas effectively in discussion.
- 2) **Help students develop good intercultural communication habits and skills.** In particular, *Encounters* builds students' awareness of how they go about interpreting the behavior of foreigners. It also encourages them to develop the habit of pausing to consider alternative possible explanations of puzzling or problematic behavior on the part of foreigners, rather than jumping to (often ethnocentric) conclusions.
- 3) **Familiarize students with basic concepts of intercultural communication.** *Encounters* introduces students to many of the basic concepts of intercultural communication. The more students understand about the various factors that affect intercultural

tural communication, the more aware students will be of the role these factors play in how they interpret the behavior of foreigners.

- 4) **Teach students basic aspects of Western culture.** While *Encounters* addresses Western culture in general, special attention is given to American culture. In part this is because the US is the world's largest English-speaking nation in terms of both population and economy. Also, as one of the world's most strongly individualist cultures, it provides an especially sharp contrast with Chinese culture.
- 5) **Help teachers learn more about culture and intercultural communication.** Through teaching *Encounters*, it is hoped that teachers — both Western and Chinese — will grow in their understanding of intercultural communication, of their students' culture, and of their own culture.

III. Suggested Plan for Teaching Each Unit

By design, each unit in *Encounters* contains more material than you will probably need. This allows you a degree of flexibility in deciding which parts of each unit you want to cover and how much time to devote to each. The following suggested plan is intended to serve as a starting point for your planning, not as a straightjacket limiting your freedom of movement.

If you want to finish the book in one semester, and plan to cover each unit during two 2-hour class periods, you might cover the parts of each unit roughly as follows:

Class Meeting 1/Period 1: Begin by briefly going over the Language Tools, and also reviewing material from previous lessons. Then devote most of the period to the Encounter exercise; i. e. presentation of the situation, group discussion, group reports and any follow-up discussion.

Class Meeting 1/Period 2: Devote most of this period to the Intercultural Communication Reading and follow-up activities (Usage, Discussion Activities).

Class Meeting 2/Period 1: Cover the Letter to Fran and Fran's Response, and follow-up discussion.

Class Meeting 2/Period 2: Cover the Culture Difference Reading and follow-up discussion.

IV. Teaching the Parts of Each Unit

A. Teaching "Language Tools"

Each unit begins with “Language Tools,” i. e. phrases students can use to achieve a particular communication goal, either explaining something (usually related to culture) or discussing ideas with others. Most of these words and phrases will probably already be familiar to students, but students may not yet be accustomed to using them when they speak, and may not fully understand how these phrases should be used.

Students should be required to study the Language Tools as part of their homework, and it is probably also useful to discuss these briefly in class before doing the Encounter exercises in each unit. However, the main thing is to ensure that students practice using the Language Tools in conversation, both in the Encounter exercises and elsewhere as appropriate through the unit.

B. Teaching “Encounters”

The Encounter exercises are “critical incident” exercises, a type of exercise frequently used for intercultural training. Critical incident exercises start with presentation of a short story describing a problematic encounter between people from two different cultures, an encounter in which there is some kind of cultural misunderstanding. Students are then asked to think about different possible explanations for what went wrong and why. These activities make students more aware of the interpretation process that is such an important part of intercultural communication; they also encourage students to develop the habit of considering a broad range of possibilities when interpreting the behavior of people from other cultures, rather than interpreting from only a narrow ethnocentric basis. Finally, these exercises are useful for illustrating cultural differences.

By intent, the Encounter activities are open-ended — no “right” explanation of the situation is provided. This underlines the reality that in actual intercultural encounters, people often never know what the “right answer” was, and have to tolerate a degree of uncertainty and ambiguity.

Procedure suggestions:

Step #1: Presenting the situation

- 1) Before presenting the situation to your class, you may want to change the setting or details of the encounter to make it seem a little closer to your students’ lives, or to make it more comfortable for them to discuss. For lower level classes, you may also want to simplify the vocabulary and sentence structure; for more advanced groups you may wish to enrich the language.
- 2) In general it is best to present the situation to students orally (though you can also have them read it from the book).
 - For lower level classes:

- First introduce new vocabulary as necessary.
 - Then tell the situation as a story, speaking clearly and using short sentences with ample pauses in between.
 - Repeat the presentation if necessary.
 - For more advanced classes:
 - Present the situation more rapidly, using natural speech.
 - Rely on students to ask about unfamiliar vocabulary or details of the situation that they didn't understand.
- 3) After presenting the situation, check students' comprehension by quickly asking the whole class a few questions about the key points of the situation.

Step #2: Small group discussion of interpretations: This step provides students with practice in explaining ideas succinctly and clearly in English. It also provides practice in thinking broadly and flexibly about intercultural encounters. (In this step your students' natural instincts will probably be to cut through the fuss and just decide what is the "right" thing to do. One goal is therefore to help students see that how they interpret a situation is vitally important precisely because it is the foundation for deciding what to do. Another goal is to help students develop the habit of considering alternative interpretations of unclear situations rather than simply jumping to the first conclusion that suggests itself.)

- 1) Have each student individually write down several possible interpretations of the situation. Each idea should make sense as an interpretation of the situation; in other words, in a relevant way it should address what needs to be explained about the situation. Each interpretation should also be explained clearly enough that other students will understand the idea, and also see how it differs from other possible interpretations.
- 2) Have students divide into groups of three or four to share their ideas and generate a group list of possible interpretations of the situation.
 - Ask for at least five possible interpretations.
 - Encourage students to brainstorm — i. e. to consider any idea, no matter how wild, and put it on the list. Only after they have generated as many ideas as possible should they look back at their list to decide which interpretations seem especially likely.
- 3) Have each group choose one member to serve as recorder (note-taker). Having a single set of notes encourages the group to work together as a team and discuss their ideas. It also forces them to explain their ideas clearly enough that the recorder can write them down.
- 4) Encourage students to consider both nice and nasty interpretations of a situation. It is

very easy for these exercises to degenerate into a search for nice ways to interpret potentially nasty encounters, and unless the possibility of both bad and good intentions are considered these exercises will seem divorced from the real world.

- 5) While students discuss, circulate to offer help with language, suggestions for groups that have stalled, and advice on culture. This is also a good opportunity to deal with interpretations which are simply ridiculous, thus sparing students from embarrassment later — and sparing you from the need to publicly shoot down the interpretation in front of the whole class.

Step #3: Reports and large group discussion: This step allows students to see other options they did not think of, and gives them a chance to check their ideas against your perspective.

- 1) First have groups volunteer suggestions while you note them on the board.
 - Ask each group to suggest just one idea and then move on quickly to the next group. This keeps things moving and ensures that each group has a chance to contribute.
 - Groups should try to add new ideas to the list on the board (so they need to pay attention to what is being said by other groups).
 - After each group has made a contribution, open the floor to anybody who wishes to volunteer additional ideas.
- 2) Then have students look at the list on the board and decide which of the suggested interpretations they think are most likely, and which they think are least likely. (Take care not to indicate your own thoughts at this point in the exercise.)
- 3) Finally, go over the suggested interpretations and provide a Western perspective by indicating which you think are most and least likely.
 - When your judgment differs from the students', take the opportunity to give additional information about the "target culture" (American culture, Western culture, or whichever foreign culture you are teaching about), explaining relevant cultural points which the students may not be aware of.
 - Try not to make it seem that you are coming in as the final judge with the one and only right answer. Point out interpretations which you feel are especially probable, but also give credit to others which are not very likely but possible. (This allows you to affirm more of the ideas students have suggested, and also reminds everyone that the world is a place of great variety in which the improbable sometimes does happen.)
- 4) Finally, ask students which of the relatively likely/reasonable interpretations give the most benefit of the doubt to the foreigner in the situation, and which are least gener-

OUS.

- You do not need to argue or even imply that students should choose the most generous interpretation, but by asking the question you call to their attention the fact that there is a choice to be made about whether or not to give the benefit of the doubt.

Step #4: Follow-up: Follow up by doing one or more of the Discussion Activities. (See below: Suggested Procedures for Teaching Discussion Activities .)

Step #5: Commenting on students' work: You may wish to collect the interpretations that students wrote individually at the beginning of the exercise and go over them. This gives you an opportunity to help students improve the clarity with which they express and explain their ideas. It also allows you to comment on how reasonable and likely the ideas they suggest would seem from a Western perspective. Over time, work toward improvement in these two areas.

C. Teaching “Intercultural Communication Reading”

The purpose of this reading passage is to introduce basic concepts of intercultural communication.

Procedure suggestions

Step #1: Reading the passage

- 1) The passage can either be read in class or assigned as homework.
- 2) Before reading, students should look at the Before You Read questions, not least because this provides a “road map” that should make it easier to read the text.
- 3) Suggest that students read the passage according to the following procedures:
 - First look over the Before You Read questions.
 - Read the passage one time quickly for the main ideas, marking unfamiliar words or questions, but not stopping to look them all up.
 - Check comprehension using the Before You Read questions.
 - Study the Usage section.
 - Re-read the passage, paying special attention to the Usage word combinations, and also noting any questions.

Step #2: Discussing the passage

- 1) In class, discuss any problems students have with the content or language of the Reading. (If your students tend to be reluctant to ask questions, you might require

them to each have at least one question prepared in advance.)

- 2) You might also choose to elaborate further on one or more points in the passage, based either on your personal knowledge and experiences or additional material from Notes in the teacher's book.

Step #3: Follow-up

- 1) Go over Usage.
- 2) As time allows, do one or more of the Discussion Activities. (See below: Suggested Procedures for Teaching Discussion Activities .)

D. Teaching “Letter to Fran and Fran’s Response”

The Letter to Fran exercise in each unit is essentially another kind of critical incident exercise. It differs from the Encounter exercises mainly in that it is not entirely open ended — an “answer” of sorts is provided by Fran’s Response. The interpretation task is also subtly different; in the Letter to Fran exercise the students’ task is to try to see things from Fran’s perspective and guess how she will view them.

Procedure suggestions

Step #1: Reading Letter to Fran

- 1) First, have students read the Letter in class. Because the Letters are fairly short and probably not too difficult, you might use this as an opportunity to build students’ reading speed by only allowing them a few minutes to read.
- 2) When time is up, check students’ comprehension by asking them to quickly summarize the situation in the Letter to Fran.

Step #2: Answering the Questions

- 1) Once students understand the situation, go to the Questions. If time allows, have them discuss the Questions in pairs or small groups. If time is short, ask them to quickly think about the Questions and come up with one or more answers. Have students write their answers down, and be sure to save their answers.
 - It is best to do this in class rather than at home because students are likely to skip this step if it is assigned as homework.
 - Ensuring that students make guesses before they read the Response will help them build active reading skills.
- 2) Close this phase of the activity by asking a few volunteers what they predict Fran’s response will be (but don’t tell them if they are right or wrong).

Step #3: Reading Fran's Response

1) Have students read Fran's Response in class.

- Have students remind themselves of their answers to the Questions.
- Have students read Fran's Response quickly, checking to see whether or not their guesses were correct.
 - Over time you can help students build their reading speed and active reading skills by only giving them a limited — and ever decreasing — amount of time in which to read.
 - Encourage them to read for main ideas, not 100% comprehension of every word. (They can re-read the letter more carefully later.)

Step #4: Discussing Fran's Response

1) Among options for discussing Fran's Response are the following:

- Ask students how accurate their predictions of Fran's Response were. Which parts did they guess correctly? Which parts surprised them?
- Check students' comprehension of the Response.
- Answer questions or comment on the content of Fran's Response.
- Give students a chance to ask about other possible explanations they may have for the situation in Letter to Fran. (When you tell students how likely you think these additional explanations are, give as much credit to each guess as possible.)

2) Go over the phrases in Usage.

- For students at the intermediate and advanced levels, accurate usage of word combinations, especially verb + preposition combinations, tends to be a common problem. To address this problem it is necessary for students to develop the habit of learning word combinations rather than single isolated vocabulary items.
- To check, ask students in class to make sentences using the Usage combinations.
- With verb + preposition combinations, make special note of where the object can come. Ex: "to clear (something) up" and "to clear up (something)" are both possible.

Step #5: Follow-up: Follow up by doing one or more of the Discussion Activities. (See below: Suggested Procedures for Teaching Discussion Activities .)

E. Teaching "Culture Difference Reading"

The purpose of this passage is to teach students about basic aspects of Western culture, in particular, areas in which Western culture differs from Chinese culture. Because the focus of this book is more on the process of intercultural communication than on specific points of culture difference between China and the West, these passages are fairly short and do not by any means provide an exhaustive picture of Western culture. However,

they suggest a few ideas which may be new to students, ideas which they can draw on as they attempt to explain the behavior of Westerners in later Encounter and Letter to Fran activities.

Procedure suggestions (See suggestions for Intercultural Communication Reading above.)

V. Suggested Procedures for Teaching “Discussion Activities”

Various kinds of discussion activities are found throughout each *Encounters* unit, but most fall into several basic kinds. Suggestions for teaching each kind of discussion activity are presented below, in alphabetical order.

Interviews: These are especially good for intermediate or advanced oral skills classes because they allow in-depth exploration of a topic and provide students with practice in explaining opinions.

Procedures:

- 1) Decide what topic(s) you want students to interview each other on.
- 2) Give directions for the interviews. Students need to know the suggested topic and approximately how much time they will have. If you want students to write up their own list of questions they will also need a few minutes to do this.
- 3) Pair students. Often it is good to find a way to pair students with someone other than the person sitting next to them (who they probably already know fairly well).
- 4) Have students carry out interviews. Once student A finishes interviewing student B, you can ask them to switch roles, or even switch partners. You may want to set a time limit, and call out when partners should switch roles.
- 5) To close, ask a few students to report some of the more interesting things they learned from their partner during the interview.

Tips:

- 1) Topics which involve opinions or information that is not shared by everyone in the class are best because they make interviews more genuinely communicative.
- 2) Role-playing and interviews mix nicely; for example, one person might be a reporter and the other a famous person.

Ping-Pong Debate: The main advantage of debates is that they tend to be a lively way to

conduct large group discussion. However, since a large group debate only allows one student to speak at a time, most of the speaking and listening practice in the activity actually occurs during the preparation time when students are working in smaller groups.

Procedures:

- 1) Present the topic and place students in small groups that are assigned either the affirmative or negative role.
- 2) Allow groups time to prepare their arguments, explanations and supporting evidence or examples.
- 3) The debate itself is carried out as follows:
 - First one affirmative team is allowed to state *one* of its arguments (with explanation and support).
 - One negative team is then allowed to respond to the affirmative team's argument with either questions or a counter-argument. They must respond directly to the argument raised by the affirmative team — they cannot begin a new line of argument.
 - An affirmative team responds to the point raised by the negative team. And so on, following the line of argument until development ceases and repetition sets in.
 - Then one negative team begins a new line of argument ...
- 4) As the teams develop a line of argument, keep a flow chart on the board, roughly keeping track of the flow of the arguments.
- 5) Close the debate by praising especially good points made by various teams.

Role Plays: These are a form of pair practice which allow students freedom to play, improvise and create. They are useful as a way to practice not only language, but also culturally appropriate behavior.

Procedures:

- 1) Create situations and roles for students. You may want to base these on a dialogue or something else you have studied in class.
- 2) Pair students, give them the situation and their roles, and have them carry out the role play. While students should practice material they have studied, also encourage them to be creative and improvise.
- 3) Close by having one or two pairs do their role play for the whole class. This serves primarily to give a sense of closure and need not go on long. (If each pair performs, too much time is taken and other students spend too long sitting and waiting. Listen-

ing to classmates stumble through dialogues is not very good listening practice.)

Tips:

- 1) Encourage creativity. If students make an effort to entertain, role plays are more fun to do and much more fun to watch. Be realistic, however, about the fact that not all students are hams, and not all will be great public performers.

Small Group Tasks: Small group tasks are good for speaking practice because many students have a chance to speak. Shy or nervous students are under less pressure in small groups because they can choose not to speak, but still find it relatively easy to speak up when they choose to.

Procedures:

- 1) Place students in groups of three or four. (This small size gives everyone a chance to talk, and gives each student a sense of ownership in the group, so that even students who say little tend to remain engaged by listening and mentally formulating language.)
- 2) Have each group appoint a recorder to write down what the group decides.
- 3) Give groups instructions, including what their task is and how long they have to complete it. It is important that instructions include a clear task so that groups know exactly what they are supposed to do. (Vague instructions such as “Talk about _____” make it harder for groups to get started.) Good examples of tasks include:
 - **“Make a list”**: (Ex: Make a list of ten reasons why middle school children should — or shouldn’t — study a foreign language.)
 - **“Prepare directions”** (Ex: Prepare a list of suggestions on how to choose a good bicycle).
 - **“Decide whether or not”** (Ex: Decide whether or not middle school students should be allowed to date.)
 - **“Rank/prioritize”** (Ex: In order of importance, rank China’s ten greatest heroes.)
 - **“Make a plan”** (Ex: Plan the ideal three-day local vacation trip for your English teacher.)
 - **“Solve a problem”** (Ex: Your foreign teacher is interested in world news but can’t understand TV news programs in China. What suggestions do you have as to how she/he can find out about world news while in China?)
- 4) While groups discuss, wander from group to group, listening in and looking at what they have written. As you look at their lists, help with language difficulties or comment on their ideas.
- 5) To close, have each group briefly report their conclusions as you take notes on the

board.

- It is better to ask each group to report just *one* comment/idea at a time rather than having one group give a long report while others sit and wait. (If one group reports everything first, the others are often left with not much to say.)

Surveys: Surveys involve asking the same few questions several times to different people, so they are a good way for students to repeatedly practice questions and answers in a format which encourages genuine communication. For lower level students, this is one of the easiest formats for relatively free communicative interaction.

Procedures:

- 1) Decide on a topic or list of questions.
 - This activity works better when you are genuinely curious about the results of the survey, and when students are too.
- 2) Tell students what the purpose/topic of the survey is. Either list the questions you want them to ask or give them a general topic and have them write down their own questions.
 - Variation: Have students work in groups to prepare questions, and then each member of the group asks the same questions. Later they can then get back together to compare notes and report results.
- 3) Tell students how many classmates they are expected to survey, and approximately how long they have to do it in. Alternatively, assign a time limit for each interview.
- 4) Have students conduct the survey.
 - You may need to occasionally encourage them to move on to a new partner.
 - You can either join in or wander and eavesdrop.
- 5) Close the activity by having a few students (or groups) report their findings.

Tips:

- 1) Having students move around the class as they conduct their interviews makes things more lively and keeps everyone awake.

Talks and Lectures are useful for helping students improve their listening and note-taking skills, especially for improving their ability to guess when listening to longer stretches of discourse in which it is not possible to catch every word. They are also useful for teaching culture.

Procedures:

- 1) Locate information and prepare the talk.
- 2) Tell students what you are going to talk about, and ask them to take notes — taking

notes forces them to listen more carefully. (Students may need some instruction in note-taking.)

3) Give the talk.

- If students' listening skills are not strong, it is *quite* easy to lose your audience, so keep an eye out for the glazed-over look that says your audience has been left behind.

4) After the talk there are a number of ways to check comprehension:

- ask questions
- have students write a summary of your talk
- give a short quiz
- have students write (and ask) follow-up questions based on what you talked about
- have students talk or write about corresponding aspects of their own culture
- based on your talk, have students work in groups to list similarities and differences between Chinese culture and the target culture.

Tips:

- 1) The target country and culture are especially good topics, but other topics such as your experiences, language learning, and so forth can also be useful. (Students are often especially interested in stories about you, especially when supported with pictures or other realia.)
- 2) For maximum benefit, pitch the level of difficulty so that students can follow much of what you are saying, but still have to guess some of the time.
- 3) It will be easier for students to follow your talk — and guess when they don't understand — if they have some idea where it will go. There are several ways you can make it easier for students to follow your talk:
 - Write a simple outline of the talk on the blackboard.
 - Give students a list of questions, the answers of which they should listen to in your talk.
 - Write down key new vocabulary words that you will use in the talk. (This not only helps them learn vocabulary, but also guess the contents of the talk.)
 - Use visual aids.
- 4) Most Talk topics also lend themselves well to Teacher Interviews (below), a format which allows more interaction.

Teacher Interview: A good speaking activity is having your students interview you about a topic, often after they have prepared questions in groups. This is good for