



中西文化 之鉴

跨文化交际教程

Linell Davis[美]

DOING CULTURE

CROSS-CULTURAL
COMMUNICATION IN ACTION



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外语教学与研究出版社

FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS

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Preface

Many things happened during my sabbatical leave in 1998-1999. Among those of enduring significance is the completion of the book *Doing Culture: Cross-cultural Communication in Action* by my long-time friend, Professor Linell Davis. Few people, I think, can be as qualified as she is for writing a book on such a topic. She did her graduate study in sociology, social work, and anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh and American University in Cairo respectively. Before her first visit to China in 1987, Professor Davis had been an associate professor and chair of the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Seton Hill College in Pennsylvania for many years. She taught courses in intercultural communication and social work for over a decade and a half. Her education and teaching experience endowed her with a perspective rarely found in people trained in other fields.

China holds a special fascination for many Americans just as the United States does for many Chinese. Professor Davis' visit to Nanjing University on an exchange program that year turned out to be only one of many of her subsequent visits. Leaving her tenured position at Seton Hill, she spent nine years out of the past twelve in China, teaching at Nanjing University and Sichuan University as a "foreign expert". Her passion for Chinese culture, landscape, and most significantly, the Chinese students is genuine, profound and affecting. For her outstanding service, she received "Friendship Award for Foreign Experts" from Jiangsu Provincial Government in 1997. In Nanjing and Chengdu, she taught a variety of courses, among which were cross-cultural communication, American films and American culture to undergraduates and graduates alike. She also cooper-

ated with her Chinese colleagues in Nanjing University in designing a cohesive 4-year English writing curriculum and editing four writing textbooks. To further expand her cross-cultural experience, Professor Davis undertook cross-cultural training and consultation, during holidays and vacation, for international and local organizations, such as Software Center Motorola China, Nanjing Ericsson Communication Co. She also did media consultation for various Chinese organizations such as Jiangsu TV, Yixing Special Development Zone, Jiangsu Tourism Agency, Jiangning Economic Development Area, etc. Her book *Doing Culture: Cross-cultural Communication in Action* undoubtedly draws heavily on all these teaching, training and consultation experiences in China.

I found the book title itself interesting. The phrase “Doing Culture” which is meant to be a contrast to learning “about” culture underscores the idea that communicating across cultures is a process of making meaning, of people understanding one another so they can get to know one another, build relationships, and solve problems together. It should not be words on paper, but ideas in practice.

The whole book is well designed. The first three chapters are concerned with attitudes. These chapters include opinion surveys and other activities to give the students a chance to explore and perhaps change attitudes so they are better prepared to communicate with people across cultures. The next three chapters are about what usually happens when Chinese and westerners first meet. It covers guest/host relationships, the fears and uncertainties that accompany the first contact, and some differences in the meaning of friendship.

The seventh, eighth and ninth chapters are about non-verbal aspects of communication such as cross-cultural differences in sensory perception, interaction distance differences, environmental design and basic cultural patterns of the grid, the star and the inside/outside contrast. Chapter Ten deals with the rela-

tionship between thinking, language and culture.

Chapters Eleven through Fifteen focus on cross-cultural communication in the work place. In Chapter Eleven students are encouraged to explore their home culture values and put them in comparative perspective. In Chapter Twelve the implications of value differences for work are covered. Chapter Thirteen covers the entirely new and important topic of teambuilding across cultures, which is a topic worth developing further and making it a book of its own. Chapter Fourteen looks at how national cultures influence the culture of organizations, and Chapter Fifteen considers how people need to alter their communication behavior in writing, interviewing and negotiating to be effective cross-culturally. The final chapter explores what occurs when people move from their home culture to another one. The focus is on adopting strategies that ease adjustment.

I am fully convinced that a wide range of readers both in China and abroad will benefit from this theoretically sound, experience laden, culturally rich and user-friendly book. For this we need to thank its author, Professor Davis, for her hard work and broad heart.

Liu Haiping
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June 28, 1999

Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| Preface | 1 |
| Chapter 1: Thinking Globally | 5 |
| Chapter 2: Becoming Aware | 18 |
| Chapter 3: Making Generalizations | 34 |
| Chapter 4: Using Codes to Communicate | 50 |
| Chapter 5: Starting to Talk | 76 |
| Chapter 6: Building Relationships | 98 |
| Chapter 7: Perceiving Cultural | 116 |
| Chapter 8: Moving to the Rhythms of Culture | 137 |
| Chapter 9: Building Culture into the Landscape | 153 |
| Chapter 10: Thinking Culturally | 170 |
| Chapter 11: Comparing Cultural Values | 187 |
| Chapter 12: Taking Cultural Values to Work | 218 |
| Chapter 13: Working in Groups | 239 |
| Chapter 14: Managing in Organizations | 272 |
| Chapter 15: Persuading across Cultures | 288 |
| Chapter 16: Adapting to a New Culture | 308 |

LIST OF CASE STUDIES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Case 1 Dinner with Friends | 71 |
| Case 2 Where's the Bus? | 73 |
| Case 3 Finding an Interested Buyer | 84 |
| Case 4 Can We Talk about It? | 94 |
| Case 5 What is True Friendship? | 103 |
| Case 6 Are You Mad at Me? | 104 |
| Case 7 Who Are You Trying to Fool? | 114 |
| Case 8 Too Close for Comfort | 145 |
| Case 9 Too Much Red Tape? | 162 |
| Case 10 How Do Students Learn? | 168 |
| Case 11 When Is the Film Festival? | 179 |
| Case 12 How Much Is Hard Work? | 203 |
| Case 13 Four Secretaries and Their Jobs | 225 |
| Case 14 A Question of Safety | 228 |
| Case 15 Sharing the Wealth | 234 |
| Case 16 The Entrepreneur | 236 |
| Case 17 Work Performance Review | 294 |
| Case 18 Whose Car Is It? | 303 |
| Case 19 The Job Interview | 306 |
| Case 20 Off to a Bad Start | 329 |
| Case 21 Practicing English | 330 |
| Case 22 Fair Price? | 331 |
| Case 23 The Homecoming | 337 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1 Levels of cross-cultural awareness | 31 |
| Figure 2 A nineteenth century way of ranking cultures | 47 |
| Figure 3 Sources of meaning in high and low context communi- cation | 58 |
| Figure 4 Formality rankings for Asia-Pacific regions and coun- tries | 77 |
| Figure 5 Tables for Ladies | 125 |
| Figure 6 Tugged Away from the Bustling City | 126 |
| Figure 7 The British House of Commons and the US House of Representatives | 165 |
| Figure 8 Categories for comparing values across cultures ... | 188 |
| Figure 9 Social attitudes as expressions of basic values | 189 |
| Figure 10 Comparison of Chinese values and Western values | 191 |
| Figure 11 Power Distance Index for selected countries and regions | 224 |
| Figure 12 Contrasts between individualism and collectivism | 233 |
| Figure 13 Individualism Index scores for selected countries and regions | 234 |
| Figure 14 Masculinity Index for selected countries and regions | 276 |
| Figure 15 Uncertainty Avoidance Index for selected countries and regions | 279 |
| Figure 16 Management styles | 280 |
| Figure 17 The culture of organizations | 285 |
| Figure 18 Stages of adaptation to a new culture | 316 |

Introduction

When I first came to China in 1987 on a faculty exchange program, I thought I would stay for a year. It would be exciting, I thought, to see something of China and get to know Chinese teachers and students. Maybe the experience would enrich my life and teaching back home. That was all I expected. What happened in the following years, however, was that I exchanged my life in the US for an extended period of teaching in China. It has been a most rewarding and challenging life.

This book is the fruit of that life. Even before I came to China I had spent my long summer holidays from university teaching traveling abroad. I had also extended my professional interest in sociology to include cultural anthropology and was already teaching a course in cross-cultural communication to my American students. In my travels and academic work, little by little, I moved beyond the usual tourist experiences and easy generalizations about cultural differences to a deeper curiosity about the ways in which the peoples of the world live their lives. An equally powerful motivation to learn about China has often come from the simple, practical need to understand my work situation, Chinese friends, and students better.

Learning about Chinese culture

In learning about China, Chinese people have been my best teachers. Sometimes I learn when students and friends answer my questions. Often I learn because I fail to understand something and end up confused or in the middle of a cross-cultural misunderstanding. Sometimes I learn when I completely fail in what I am trying to do and express my frustration by putting the blame on others. I appreciate the patience and kindness of many people who have forgiven me my outbursts and mistakes and, in

ways they did not even recognize, helped me to understand them better. Another way that I learn is to put forth an idea or principle to test it out. Again, my students and friends have been most helpful. They listen politely and then show their respect and affection by gently correcting my mistaken ideas.

Using this book in university English courses

Because I am a teacher and originally developed the materials that grew into this book for my course in cross-cultural communication, I wrote it as a textbook. Chinese English teachers are encouraged to use it for advanced English courses, specifically for courses they teach to students who have passed the Band Four English Examination. Students at this level in their English learning need to add cultural skills to their language skills. We are already living in an information age global village. In such a world, cultural skills are essential.

Some Chinese teachers of English may doubt that they are qualified to teach cultural skills. Please do not worry about that. Learning cultural skills is something like learning how to swim or how to ride a bicycle. After some brief instruction, the learner has to practice. The book is designed to give brief instruction and then give students an opportunity to practice. The teacher is expected to be a guide and helper rather than an expert. There are few experts in this field, and even if expert knowledge were more plentiful, we would still have to personalize our learning by applying it to our own lives. The assignments and student activities are called "Exploring Ideas", because I think at this stage of our cross-cultural understanding that is what we all need to do. I learn many new things every time I teach the course.

Using case studies to learn culture

Not many Chinese people have yet had much experience communicating directly with people from other cultures. At the same time personal experience is the best way to learn cultural

skills. To bridge the gap between need and opportunity, I have included case studies to simulate, as far as possible, the cross-cultural experience in class. About half of these cases were written by two friends and former colleagues, Mary Knapp Wang and Wang Weizhong, when they were at the East West Center at the University of Hawaii. I also thank Dr. Richard Brislin of the University of Hawaii for his permission to use the case studies that were written there. Other case studies I wrote myself based on my own experience or on the experiences of people I know.

All of the case studies ask the question “what is going on here?” or “what went wrong?” Often there are several possible answers and one student’s opinion may not be the same as another’s. That uncertainty is realistic and it motivates students and teachers to discuss the cases further. This stimulates their active English learning and helps them to learn cultural skills at the same time.

Using this book to increase cross-cultural skills on the job

While writing this book I have had two additional audiences in mind:

- **Chinese professionals** in any field may want to read this book for what it can contribute to their professional work. As I teach my Chinese students I know they will live and work in an increasingly multi-cultural world in which they will need increasingly sophisticated cultural skills. As English majors, they have a good start on learning those skills, but most Chinese learn English in addition to another specialty. They also need cross-cultural skills, and once they leave the university they have to learn on their own. I hope this book will help them.
- **Chinese and international companies** often face cultural problems in their work. I welcome training managers and staffs to use this book to increase the cross-cultural compe-

tence of their organizations as a whole. A wholly Chinese organization may not have any foreign employees, but it may have foreign customers. This book can help the staff become more knowledgeable about their customers' needs and expectations. It can also be used to prepare Chinese personnel for business trips abroad. I also invite training staffs to use the material in the book to increase the mutual understanding and effectiveness of expatriate and Chinese staff who work together.

Readers may think it unusual that a foreigner has written a book that in some sense describes Chinese culture for a Chinese audience. I can only say that I tried to write the book in a way that expresses my affection and respect for the people of China. It is my attempt to contribute something of value in appreciation for all that China has given to me. My understanding of Chinese culture is limited, so I have certainly misinterpreted or failed to recognize many things. I hope the readers of this book will let me know when they discover my errors, so that I can continue to learn.

Chapter 1: Thinking Globally

Thirty years ago the Canadian writer Marshall McLuhan introduced the term global village to express the idea that the world seems to be getting smaller. The planet Earth is not shrinking, but time and space are.

In a village residents communicate with other residents face to face. They usually meet formally from time to time to share information and make decisions, but most of the time information and opinions flow from person to person informally in talk between neighbors and family members. They know when other residents have suffered a disaster or are celebrating good fortune. They help one another, quarrel, work together and against one another as feelings and circumstances require them to do so. They share each other's lives for better or for worse. Now the whole world is like a village.

Trains, planes, telephones, televisions, the Internet, and other forms of modern transportation and communication reduce the time and distance that once kept the peoples of the world apart. Even people who do not travel far from home live in the global village. People who live in small towns watch television reports of wars and disasters half a world away and work in factories making goods for export to distant markets. Now a Chinese leader can meet with American students and journalists in a contemporary version of the village meeting, and the rest of the world will listen in by means of a television signal carried by a satellite orbiting the earth.

In the metaphor of the global village, nations are like families and continents are like neighborhoods. People feel most at home in their own families, but they go out of the house regularly to do some business and to buy what they need in the market. Now markets and businesses are global. If a neighbor's house

burns down, it affects everyone. Others may be expected to give shelter to the victims. The smoke and flames may threaten someone else's home and family. If someone dumps garbage into the village well, the neighbors can't say it is his own business, because they also get their water from that well.

Residents want to stay on good terms with their neighbors. They may simply think that is the proper and civilized way to live. They may consider their neighbors to be a lot like them and therefore understand them and like them. They may remember that some neighbors helped them when they had some trouble. Perhaps they have just learned that life is better when people cooperate with one another. If some residents of the village have had trouble with their neighbors in the past or think they are strange or inferior, they may be suspicious and on guard to protect themselves from harm in the future.

As in a village the nations (families) of the world are dependent on one another. Time and space no longer isolate or protect nations and groups from each other. As global environmental problems become more serious, people realize that the rivers of the world flow and the winds of the planet blow without regard to national boundaries. The economic, political and military actions of other nations are the actions of our neighbors. We might wish we could treat them as distant events that do not concern us, but in the global village that is not possible.

Uneasiness with the global village image

Not everyone welcomes this image of the global village. To some it seems like an image of post-colonial dominance of the world by the West. They prefer to see the world in terms of their own family, their own nation. They may say, "We do not want to live in a village that someone else makes for us and controls." They worry that the global economy will force everyone to become like the families of the world that have the most eco-

conomic and political power. They do not want to be second class citizens in the village, and they do not want to give up their own treasured ways of life.

Others worry that conflict will increase as time and distance shrink. From news reports everyone can see that religious, ethnic, economic, and political differences continue to divide people. They rightly ask, "How can I and the members of my family get along with members of that other family who seem so different from me?" They see troubles in other families and wonder why they can't solve their problems. Above all, every family wants to protect itself. No one wants the problems of another family to spread to their family.

Whatever anxiety people have about the global village, they can see that contact among the peoples of the world is increasing. If the world is becoming more like a village, as its residents we want it to be a good place to live. Everyone wants to benefit from global trade and advanced technology, and they want to live among people who respect and appreciate one another. They want to protect themselves from danger and live at peace with their neighbors. But most people do not want peace imposed on them by the power of another family. They want to live in their own way.

These are some of the challenges of living in a global village. To meet those challenges people everywhere need to learn about other cultures. They need to know their neighbors. They need to do more than know about them. They need to know how to get along with them and how to solve problems that inevitably arise. To do this it is necessary to learn how to communicate across cultures, or in the words of the title of this book, how to do culture. That means residents of the global village need to learn to think, feel and behave in new ways. The reality of the global village challenges all its residents to develop a broader worldview, a more global psychology, and the cultural skills necessary for building relationships and solving problems

across cultures.

Exploring Ideas

Study the following list of developments that experts cite to convince us that the world is becoming a global village:

- A. Satellite transmission of telephone, radio and television signals;
 - B. International computer networks such as the Internet;
 - C. Increased speed and availability of air travel;
 - D. International economic relationships such as multi-national corporations and foreign trade;
 - E. Economic cooperation through organizations such as the European Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations;
 - F. Economic regulation through global organizations such as the World Trade Organization;
 - G. The movement of people from rural areas to cities and from developing to developed countries;
 - H. More intense political, military, and diplomatic relationships among nations;
 - I. Environmental issues such as over-fishing of the oceans, global warming, deforestation, endangered species of plants and animals, waste disposal, and air and water pollution;
 - J. Higher standards of living that give more people the chance to travel and enjoy their leisure, thus stimulating the growth of the international tourism industry.
1. In small group discussions, describe how each development influences your personal life and the life of your nation. In what ways do these developments also effect people whose lives appear to be more traditional than your life? Think of specific changes these developments are creating in the lives