SECTION 4: COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES

In intercultural communication politeness is the core competence. Politeness conventions, however, may vary considerably, as what may be considered polite or acceptable in one culture may at the same time be considered impolite or completely inacceptable in another. When English is used as a lingua franca, i.e. when two or more non-native speakers use English as their means of communication, politeness can become a critical aspect for all concerned. 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.

The following worksheets take this into account by focussing on polite discourse strategies, both in oral and in written communication. A "middle corridor" of politeness is to be achieved, i.e. avoiding both explicitly indirect communication styles, as might be found in British English, and very direct communication styles, which may be typical for many other cultures, among them German.

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65	PRACTISING SMALL TALK	Strategies for starting small talk and keeping it going	1
68	KEEPING A CONVERSATION GOING	Strategies for keeping small talk going	1 & 2
70	ASKING INDIRECTLY	Strategies for avoiding direct questions	1 & 2
74	TIME TO THINK	Strategies for gaining time	1 & 2
76	DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS	Strategies for polite communication	2
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85	GIVING ADVICE	Giving advice, criticising	2
87	ANGLO-AMERICAN POLITENESS CONVENTIONS	Identifying appropriate language	1 & 2
89	ANGLO-SAXONS SAY IT INDIRECTLY	Identifying appropriate language	1 & 2
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SECTION 4: COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES

No.	Title	Aims	Level
95	TELEPHONING TIPS	Reference sheet	1 & 2
97	TELEPHONING ROLE PLAY	Practising telephone language	1 & 2
99	EMAIL TIPS	Reference sheet	1 & 2
100	GETTING IN TOUCH	Writing emails	1
102	A DIFFICULT EMAIL	Learning general guidelines for potentially difficult emails	1 & 2
104	EMAIL WRITING EXERCISES	Writing appropriate emails for potentially difficult subjects	2
106	THE GAME OF INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE	Repetition, revision: country specifics	1 & 2
108	THE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION GAME	Repetition, revision: What do you say?	1 & 2

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BUILDING RAPPORT

1. Be the first to introduce yourself. Give your name and say something about yourself.

2. Try to remember the name of the person you are speaking to.

3. Ask open questions (avoid questions which only allow yes/no answers).

4. Look for things you have in common (family, interests etc.).

5. Keep eye contact and smile.

6. Be tolerant if the person you are talking to doesn't share your opinions on all things.

Can you do these things?

What do you say?

Fill in this information about yourself and decide how you would give it:
- Name
- Work
- Home town
- Where you live
- How long you have lived there
- Family
- Pets
- Interests
- Favourite food
- Favourite music

This information will probably always be useful, but you may not need all of it!

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BUILDING RAPPORT

TRAINER'S NOTES

BUILDING RAPPORT

1. Be the first to introduce yourself. Give your name and say something about yourself.
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INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH
58

AIM
To introduce the subject of building rapport, i.e. a good relationship. It is assumed that the relationship is not, and will not necessarily become, a very personal one but may be important for business reasons.

LEAD-IN
Ask learners if they know what the word *rapport* means. Elicit ideas (synonyms could be *understanding, a good relationship* and similar). Ask learners for their ideas on how to build rapport.

WORKSHEET
Make sure learners understand what is meant by each tip. The following points can be elaborated on:
1. Which name? First name or full name? This will depend on the situation, but in general the full name is best. Only giving the surname is typical for German speakers, but is becoming less common.

2. There are techniques for this, such as repeating the name, asking something about it (Is that a very common name in your country?), saying something nice about it (That's an unusual/nice name) or trying to associate it with something. Each learner in the class can be asked to explain his/her name. This is a good activity for learning names at the beginning of a course, but can be done at any time. The explanations may be of the meaning, the individual syllables, the history, or famous people who have the same name.

3. Give learners some examples of yes/no questions and ask them to transform them. (Are you staying long? Is your hotel nice? Do you like this country?)

4. In groups of 3, learners can be asked to find three things they have in common, the more unusual the better.

5. It may not always be appropriate to keep eye contact at all times, i.e. stare at the other person, but it is always important to have some eye contact and not to look around as though for an escape.

6. Learners should be encouraged to accept controversial views without necessarily arguing. Communication strategies like winning time etc. will be introduced at a later stage.

In pairs or groups, learners answer the questions. Learners fill in the information about themselves and make sure they can say it appropriately.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES
Divide the class into two groups. In each group learners invent a second set of information about themselves, individually or collectively. The two groups then meet and practise encounters using the tips given.

BACKGROUND
Learners may not always appreciate the need for small talk, although it is becoming something not only confined to Anglo-Saxon cultures. Many of the techniques mentioned above are taught in first language courses. However, depending on the learners' language level, attitude and experience, practice of these using appropriate English will be necessary.

INTRODUCING YOURSELF IN ENGLISH

Make a short presentation about yourself in English as if you were at an international meeting.

This should be no longer than **one minute** and can include the following information:

- personal details
- your work
- the company you work for
- your hobbies and interests.

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Plan what you are going to say and how you are going to begin and end.

Remember:

Grammar mistakes are much less important than
- not knowing what you want to say,
- jumping from one thing to another,
- not knowing how to finish,
- not giving understandable information,
- forgetting important information,
- giving unnecessary information,
- going on for too long.

You can prepare a very short presentation like this and learn it off by heart so that you can use it on many different occasions.

While you are listening to what the others are saying, think of **two questions** you can ask. Don't make long notes, but it is okay to write down a word or two so you can remember your question!

Are your questions public or private questions?
When would you ask them?

_____

INTRODUCING YOURSELF IN ENGLISH

TRAINER'S NOTES

AIM

To learn to give a brief introduction, e.g. at an international meeting or conference.

LEAD-IN

Ask learners if they can introduce themselves in 1 minute or less. Give them some examples of <u>poor introductions</u>, e.g.

- *My name is er, er, er*
- *Oh and I forgot to say …*
- *Er, what else can I say…? Oh yes! …*
- *It is in Rheinhessen not far from the Pfalz and Rheingau. My company is in the Siebenbür-gerring Industriegebiet.*
- *I am living in Hornsyld.*
- *I am working there for ten years.*
- *My name is Miller.*
- *I am fifty eight years old. I have been divorced for three years, I have two cats and my children's names are …*

Explain why these are inappropriate, make a bad impression and can easily be avoided.

WORKSHEET

Hand out the worksheet and make sure learners understand it all. If necessary, give them an example and ask them to time it.

Hello/good morning everybody, my name is Jeremy Malcolm. I come from England originally, but have lived in France for more than thirty years. I have three almost grown up children and live in a small village near Metz. I am a language consultant and English trainer. I work for elc - European Language Competence, a language consultancy company based in Saarbrücken, which runs training courses and develops materials for language training in many European languages. I am looking forward to working with you over the next three weeks.

Give an example of **one** public question, e.g. What's the name of the village you live in? / Do you like it? /What languages do you speak/work with?

Give an example of **one** personal/private question or conversation starter, e.g. How old are your children? / Have you lived near Metz, in … for some years? / Can you run a course in Japanese at our company?

Ask learners to prepare a short introduction and check it against the list.

Let them ask the questions they have prepared and explain the best time to ask them if necessary.

BACKGROUND

Introducing oneself briefly and concisely is something many people cannot do appropriately, even though a good introduction is easy to prepare, to learn and to practise and a bad introduction makes a poor first impression.

As far as questions are concerned, it may not be appropriate to ask questions during the introductions and some questions are better kept for later. They can make a good start to small talk in an informal part of a meeting or conference. There is a difference between public (general interest, not taking too long, not embarrassing …) and private (particular interest, leading to conversation or business, possibly personal …) questions.

SMALL TALK (1)

Foto: iStockphoto

The following phrases can be used to
1. start a conversation,
2. show that you are interested,
3. finish a conversation.

Write each phrase in the correct column.

START A CONVERSATION	SHOW THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED	FINISH A CONVERSATION
Hi there. Nice to see you.	That's very interesting.	Goodness! Is that really the time?

a. Goodness! Is that really the time?

b. Hi there. Nice to see you.

c. That's very interesting.

d. Well, it was nice meeting you.

e. Excuse me, aren't you … ?

f. I don't think we know each other. I'm …

g. Would you excuse me, please? I must just talk to … over there.

h. I'm afraid I have to leave now.

i. It's been nice meeting you.

j. You're … aren't you?

k. You must be …

l. How fascinating!

m. You must tell me more about …

n. I see.

SMALL TALK (2)

Foto: iStockphoto

Weather	Local sights to visit
The place you are in (conference, hotel, city, country)	Job
Food and drink	Where you come from
Sports	Films

_____

SMALL TALK (1) (2)

TRAINER'S NOTES

SMALL TALK (1)

The following phrases can be used to
1. start a conversation,
2. show that you are interested,
3. finish a conversation.

Write each phrase in the correct column.

START A CONVERSATION	SHOW THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED	FINISH A CONVERSATION
Hi there. Nice to see you.	That's very interesting.	Goodness! Is that really the time?

a. Goodness! Is that really the time?
b. Hi there. Nice to see you.
c. That's very interesting.
d. Well, it was nice meeting you.
e. Excuse me, aren't you … ?
f. I don't think we know each other. I'm …
g. Would you excuse me, please? I must just talk to … over there.
h. I'm afraid I have to leave now.
i. It's been nice meeting you.
j. You're … aren't you?
k. You must be …
l. How fascinating!
m. You must tell me more about …
n. I see.

AIM
Discourse strategies for starting, maintaining and finishing small talk in informal business encounters. Learning standard phrases for these strategies.

LEAD-IN
Ask learners why small talk is important and how conversations can be started. Depending on the group and how important they think small talk is, this may lead to some discussion. If necessary, learners may need to be convinced of the need for small talk in business in many cultures, not only Anglo-Saxon ones (see background below). Elicit phrases for beginning, maintaining and ending small talk. These can be written on the board. Make sure that they are all appropriate for starting informal conversations.

WORKSHEET
Learners fill the phrases on the sheet as well as those they have mentioned in the columns. Ask them to choose the ones they like best and learn to use these. Point out that this worksheet concentrates on these three aspects of small talk and the next worksheet will focus on keeping the conversation going.

FOLLOW-UP
Learners choose three phrases(one for each function) and use these in conversation. Elicit possible topics for small talk and write these on the board, or use the cards. Learners practise using the phrases they have chosen in conversations and move around changing partners and starting conversations on the topics.

BACKGROUND
The main difficulties with the topic of small talk are a) that learners fail to see its importance and want to get straight down to business, b) that learners lack strategies for starting conversations (both in their own language and in English) and c) that, similarly, they do not know how to end conversations politely. The discourse strategies given here are suitable for use in any encounters. An important learning strategy is that learners choose one or two phrases which suit them and learn to use these first before going on to learn more.

ANSWERS

START A CONVERSATION	SHOW THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED	FINISH A CONVERSATION
Hi there. Nice to see you.	That's very interesting.	Goodness! Is that really the time?
Excuse me, aren't you … ?	How fascinating!	Well, it was nice meeting you.
I don't think we know each other. I'm …	You must tell me more about …	Would you excuse me please? I must just talk to … over there.
You're … aren't you?	I see.	I'm afraid I have to leave now.
You must be …		It's been nice meeting you.