

## 生词与词组

psyche	n.	心灵, 精神
destiny	n.	命运
judicial	a.	司法的, 法庭的
instill	v.	灌输
righteousness	n.	正直
predominant	a.	主要的, 占优势的, 支配的
Descartes		笛卡儿 (法国数学家、哲学家)
assert	v.	维护, 宣称, 断言
counterpart	n.	相对应的人

reinforce	v.	增援, 加强
consensus	n.	一致
eloquence	n.	雄辩
conciliatory	a.	谋求好感的, 安抚的, 缓和的
adversarial	a.	敌对的
confrontational	a.	对抗的
disruptive	a.	引起分裂的, 破坏性的
provocation	n.	惹怒

## 阅读二

# The Role of Language in Intercultural Business Communication

## *The Language Barrier and Its Consequences: Real and Perceived*

Robert Breckenridge from the United States is meeting Klaus Hartmann from Germany. They are meeting for the first time, and they are going to discuss opportunities for cooperation between their two firms. Robert Breckenridge is 32; Klaus Hartmann, 55. Robert is excited about the opportunities and wants to come across as friendly and outgoing. He speaks German but has not dealt with Germans before, and Mr. Hartmann has not done business on an international level either. This is Mr. Hartmann's first trip to the United States; his English is limited.

As Mr. Hartmann walks into Robert Breckenridge's office, he is greeted with, "Hallo, wiegeht's? Ich bin Robert Breckenridge, aber alle nennen mich Bob. Ich freue mich, Sie zu treffen und bin sicher Klaus, daB wir gut zusammen arbeiten werden." (Hi, how're you doing. I'm Robert Breckenridge, but everybody calls me Bob. I'm excited to meet you, Klaus, and I'm sure we'll be able to work together well.) He offers his visitor a chair. Robert is comfortable and relaxes as they discuss the future. He puts his feet up on the table and puts another piece of chewing gum in his mouth. "This is going to be easy; doing business with someone from another country is

not going to be bad at all,” he thinks. “In fact, we’ll come to an agreement pretty fast here.” Mr. Hartmann seems to go along with his proposal. Robert is, therefore, very surprised when Mr. Hartmann informs him some time later that he is no longer interested in the deal. What happened?

### *The Relationship between Language and Culture*

In the above example, Robert Breckenridge spoke grammatically correct German. But he failed culturally. Mr. Hartmann, who is rather formal by United States standards, **resents** being called by his first name and resents the familiarity of the greeting. But he resents even more that Mr. Breckenridge put his feet on the table and chewed gum while talking. “How can one do serious business with someone like that?” he thinks.

As the example shows, culture and language are **intertwined** and are shaping each other. It is impossible to separate the two. Language is not **neutral** codes and grammatical rules. Each time we select words, form sentences, and send a message, either oral or written, we also make cultural choices. We all agree that language helps in communicating with people from different backgrounds. However, we may be less aware that cultural literacy is necessary in order to understand the language being used. If we select language without being aware of the cultural implications, we may at best not communicate well and at worst send the wrong message.

In our own environment we are aware of the implications of the choices. For example, if an American says, “How are you?” other Americans **register** the phrase as *Hello*, the equivalent of *Guten Tag*, *Bonjour*, or *ay Ohayo Gozayimasu*, rather than the literal meaning. A foreigner in the United States, who knows some English but is not familiar with the culture and usage of English, may **attribute** a very different meaning to the phrase and interpret it much more literally. Klaus Hartmann, for example, may

1. Consider the phrase as too personal and think that it is none of Robert’s business how he is.
2. Think that Robert literally means what he says and proceed to answer the question.
3. Consider Robert insincere because it becomes obvious that Robert is

not really interested in the answer.

The point is that words in themselves do not carry the meaning. The meaning comes out of the context, the cultural usage. For example, a German who has lived in the United States for many years will take on, often unknowingly, many American behavioral patterns. She may be more outgoing and enthusiastic, less formal, more optimistic. When she goes back to Germany, she speaks German but increasingly with an American frame of reference. At social functions, she will introduce herself by first and last name rather than by last name and professional title. “Ingrid Zerbe, erfreut Sie kennenzulernen” (Ingrid Zerbe, pleased to meet you) rather than “Dr. Zerbe, erfreut Sie kennenzulernen”. The Germans are at a loss; they don’t know how to address her. They could say “Frau Zerbe”, but if she has a professional title that would not be correct. In any case, nobody cares about her first name anyway. Ingrid Zerbe, on the other hand, finds those Germans getting stiffer all the time — with every visit they are becoming more reserved. It is getting more difficult to establish a connection and feel comfortable.

### *Language as a Reflection of the Environment*

Language reflects the environment in which we live. We label things that are around us. For example, in the Amazon area snow is not part of the environment; therefore, people in the region do not have a word for snow. It simply does not exist. In areas where it snows occasionally, people have a word for snow, but it may just be one word without any differentiations. Most Americans, for example, use terms such as *snow*, *power snow*, *sleet*, *slush*, *blizzard*, *ice*. That’s the extent of most people’s snow vocabulary. People who live in an environment where it snows during most months of the year may have a much more differentiated **terminology** for snow. If you go to a pub in the north of Germany and order wine, you may ask for “ein Glas Weißwein bitte” (a glass of white wine, please). You may specify *Moselwein* or *Rheinwein*, but that’s it. The north of Germany is beer country, and the knowledge of wine is much more limited. In Baden, the southwest of Germany, on the other hand, any waiter would just stare at you if you asked for a glass of white wine. Here you would specify the type of wine,

the **vineyard**, and the year. Wine is important in the region, and you are expected to know about wine.

The environment will influence the development of technology, products, and the appropriate vocabulary. For example, culture in tropical climates will not develop heating systems and, as a result, will not have any of the accompanying vocabulary, just as people in cold climates have no need for air conditioning.

### *Language as a Reflection of Values*

In addition to the environment, language also reflects cultural values. Hall, (1959: *The Silent Language*. New York, Doubleday and Co.) for example, points out that the Navajos do not have a word for *late*. Time, he tells us, does not play a role in Navajo life. There is a time to do everything, a natural time rather than the artificial clock time that industrial countries use. As a result, the Navajos do not have the differentiated vocabulary connected with time and clocks that Americans have. Time and the passing of time are things one can't control; therefore, one should not worry about wasting time and setting schedules. In Mandarin Chinese, one word (*qing*) represents various hues of blue and green. What might be called *green* in English will be called *qing*, and what could be called *blue* in English is also called *qing*. It isn't that Chinese speakers cannot distinguish the difference in **hues**; they simply use one word for a range of hues.

One of the problems in dealing with people from other cultures is that we translate concepts from foreign language and culture with words that fits our priorities. For example, businesspeople in the United States typically are frustrated with the *mañana* **mentality** of Spanish-speaking countries: "They said tomorrow, but they did not mean it." For Americans, *tomorrow* means midnight to midnight, a very precise time period. To Mexicans, on the other hand, *mañana* means in the future, soon. A Mexican businessman speaking with an American may use the word *tomorrow* but may not be aware of or may not intend the precise meaning of the word. This vague terminology is not precise enough for American emphasis on efficiency. The difficulties over the word *mañana* are at least as

much an American problem as a Mexican problem. Dictionaries do not help because they typically pretend that there are exact word **equivalencies** that have the same meanings. In order to communicate concepts effectively, cultural knowledge is as important as linguistic knowledge.

The Chinese, for example, do not have a word for *communication*, as in the term *business communication*. They use *letter exchange* or *transportation traffic* but not *communication*. The Chinese also do not have a concept of privacy in the western sense; as a result, there is no corresponding word in the Chinese language. Typically privacy is translated **reclusiveness**, which brings up very different connotations in English than the word *privacy*. The word *privacy* has a positive connotation for people in the United States. They think of the privacy of their homes, the right to private property. The word *reclusiveness*, on the other hand, indicates that a person withdraws from society, is a loner, or does not fit in. In the U.S. context, a reclusive person is considered somewhat strange. In China a reclusive person is much more negatively viewed.

### *Implications of the Language Barrier*

As the previous examples show, communication across cultures and languages is difficult and full of **hurdles** and **pitfalls**. Even if two people from different cultures can speak a common language, they may misinterpret the cultural signals. The result is confusion and misunderstanding. Many people have difficulty identifying the root of the problem. For example, American students often complain that they can't understand their foreign professors. In some cases the professors may actually have a poor command of the English language; however, in most cases the problem is not the language itself but different intonation patterns and different cultural signals. English-speaking students listen to their instructors with certain expectations. For example, if the instructor's voice drops to a low pitch, the students take that as a signal of a rhetorical topic boundary — "I'm finished with this idea" — whereas the instructor may actually mean no such thing. Students adjust their interpretation of the lecture according to those intonation signals, thereby **misconstruing** the instructor's intent. A professor who comes from a culture where the

professor is **almighty** and never challenged, Korea or India, for example, may send signals to that effect to his students. If the students are not aware of the cultural issues, they will in all likelihood identify the problem as a language problem rather than a cultural problem.

In this context the phrase, *I don't understand you*, can mean any of the following:

1. I don't understand the words you use.
2. My interpretation of what you say raises a flag and makes me wonder if this is actually what you want to say.
3. In my perception, your words and nonverbal behavior do not complement each other, and I am puzzled.

(*Intercultural Communication in the Global Workplace* by Linda Beamer and Iris Varner, McGraw-Hill, 2001)

## 生词与词组

resent <i>v.</i>	感到气愤	mentality <i>n.</i>	心态
intertwine <i>v.</i>	缠绕在一起	equivalency <i>n.</i>	相等
neutral <i>a.</i>	中立的	reclusiveness <i>n.</i>	隐居
register <i>v.</i>	登记, 表达, 理解	hurdle <i>n.</i>	障碍
attribute <i>v.</i>	把……归因于	pitfall <i>n.</i>	陷阱, 隐患
terminology <i>n.</i>	术语	misconstrue <i>v.</i>	曲解, 误解
vineyard <i>n.</i>	葡萄园	almighty <i>a.</i>	全能的
hue <i>n.</i>	色彩, 色调, 颜色		

## 自我测试与分析

根据要求, 从下面框内选择适当的词或词组完成下列句子, 并作相应的词形变化。

<i>play down</i>	<i>hurdle</i>	<i>controversial</i>	<i>results-oriented</i>
<i>confront</i>	<i>intertwined</i>	<i>fit into</i>	<i>interrelate</i>
<i>equivalent</i>	<i>instill</i>		

1. Businesspeople from relationship-oriented cultures may have a very different view of what is ethical than people from \_\_\_\_\_ cultures.