



What Are They Really Trying to Say?

—The Encounter of East and West in EFL
Team Teaching Classes in Taiwan

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You are too nice!

Outline

Introduction & Literature Review

Methodology

Findings

Discussion

Limitation

Introduction
&
Literature Review

EFL Team teaching

Japan Exchange and Teaching (1987)

English Program in Korea (1996)

2001: LETs and FETs

Primary Native English-speaking teachers (1987)



East Asia



Team teaching in Taiwan—empirical study

1. Students
2. Students & teachers
3. Teachers

→ Problematic communication

- a. The scarcity of interaction
- b. Lack of clear communication
- c. Reasons

FETs → opinionated
LETs → too indirect

LETs' English proficiency, professional knowledge and experience of FETs, attitude, opaque roles of FETs and LETs, high attrition rate of FETs, **cultural differences between team teachers**

Language and culture

- **Communicative competence (Hymes, 1966)**

“some occasions call for being appropriately ungrammatical”

→ The norms of language use may vary from culture to culture

→ **Sociopragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983)**

- **Cross-cultural pragmatics (balanced status for both sides)**

American,
South African,
Canadian,
England,
Australian,
New Zealand
cultures...



FETs



Chinese/
Taiwanese
cultures

LETs



- Increasing chances of communication between LETs & FETs \neq successful communication.
- Not enough research discussed the communication.
- Few studies used real & natural discourse.

Q: What are the sociopragmatic failures that occur in the communication among FETs and LETs?



Methodology

Participants and sites
Data collection

Participants and sites

- Two teams from two schools:

FETs: Tom (South Africa), Jay (U.S.A.)
LETs: Phoebe, Tiffany

FETs: Leo (South Africa), Ben (U.S.A.)
LETs: Amy (the director), Ivy

Data collection

Observation types	Total number	Collecting methods
★ School meeting observation	3 times	Audio-tapped & transcribed
Class observation	12 times	Observation note
After-class observation	Random & 2 extracurricular events	Observation note
FETs training workshop	3 times	Observation note

Interview types	Total number	Collecting methods
★ Ethnographic-type / Quasi-formal interview	14 times	Audio-tapped & transcribed

Learning backgrounds, teaching backgrounds, cross-cultural experiences, process of developing lessons, collaboration with co-teachers, working conditions at school

Findings: Two cross-cultural miscommunication cases



Case 1: Giving suggestions

Case 2: Making requests
Giving refusals



Case 1

Giving Suggestions

You are too nice.

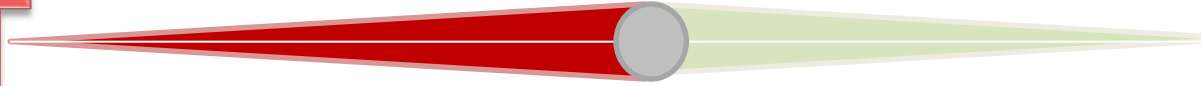
FETs: Tom (South Africa), Jay (U.S.A.)

LETs: Phoebe, Tiffany

It was something that she brought up to me a couple of times, but it wasn't, when she brought it up, she wasn't, **she didn't bring it up to me like, "I need to talk to you about this, I think this is a problem."** It was just like, **"Oh you're too nice, you're very nice."** And she would laugh it off. But then, so she said that like once or twice. One day I came to work, Phoebe was just like, "so I was talking to Kate yesterday, Kate says that you're too nice in the classroom." And then Phoebe started to give me suggestions of things that I can do.....**But what I came to realize is that it was a problem** that Kate, the fifth grade teacher, had come to Phoebe, without telling me, and that settle things down like, this is what going on, classroom, and what she did basically was had Phoebe talk to me for her. **So rather than sitting me down at the table like, "we need to talk about this," she played it off like it wasn't a big deal when really it was.** (Jay)

Giving Suggestions

LET



FET

The adoption of hinting strategy

Talk behind
the back.

Already told you.
Why didn't you
take my advice?



Case 2

Making Requests & Giving Refusals

In one of the weekly meetings, the topic was about the job allocation between 2 FETs, Leo and Ben, and 2 LETs, Amy and Ivy. Because Leo volunteered to take the responsibility of designing all of the comic strips for the new teaching material, he would not have time to write the pretest and posttest questions and put them into computer system. Thus, other teachers assumed that the other FET, Ben, had to take over the responsibility and design all the pretest and posttest questions since he did not have to do the comic strips. Bearing this in mind, Amy, as the director of the team, requested Ben to finish all of the pretest and posttest questions. However, Ben did not accept the request.

FETs: Leo (South Africa), Ben (U.S.A)
LETs: Amy (the director), Ivy

(1) (transcription 2-1) (A: Amy, I: Ivy, L: Leo, B: Ben)

1 A: What about then pretest and posttest? Because we're going to develop these
2 four new, uh four new topics, so pretest and posttest, but three topics is
3 yours. Are yours. (Talked to Leo)

4 L: Okay, I think

5 A: So maybe Ben

6 L: Ben and I discuss that. You know if you take my PowerPoint, you can see
7 what it's about, and the lesson plan. So what if I do the comics and Ben or
8 someone do the pre and posttest.

9 A: What do you think, Ben? Is it okay?

10 B: We should probably all share it.

11 A: Pardon?

12 B: We should probably all share (not clear) the pre and posttest.

13 A: What do you mean here?

14 B: Like you don't know how to use design the comics, you can design each of
15 us a pretest and posttest.

16 I: You mean uh one of us take a pretest topic?

17 B: Yeah.

(long pause, 4 sec)

18 I: But we're not the one design the lesson plan, and

19 B: I'm not the one design it either.

LET (Amy)

Explain the legitimacy of her making the first request

(2) (transcription 2-1)

1 A: Okay. Actually okay now I have to say that, so go back to, how to say, the
2 uh uh the, alright, go back to the one actually design it, how to say, the text
3 we share it here, alright, basically Ivy and I you know are doing
4 administration work, that is what we're told by the school, we have to do
5 this. And then uh uh we're willing to help with the, how to say, the lesson
6 plan and everything, but it is, how to say, ... it is... how to say, you're the
7 two or the teacher are will be the two who who do the lessons and
8 everything, alright, but now, it's like I'm asking Leo to, because he wants to
9 you know, for like, he wants, he has to

10 L: Okay let me say this.

11 A: Alright.

LET (Amy)'s request again

(3) (transcription 2-1)

1 A: Okay, doesn't, okay, let me do it, okay, now I decide Ben, you do pretest
2 and posttest. That's it. Okay? You do pretest and posttest. That's it. And
3 then, if you got any questions, and Leo we provide you the idea because I
4 don't want you to you know to work on every little thing, but we all provide
5 you the the the idea about this. And also Ben, we provide you the ideas
6 about it, alright, and then, please do the pretest and posttest and Leo please
7 do the passport, and Ivy and I will you know, go, and. That means that
8 somebody, I mean, for example, teaching, or the passport, or the pretest and
9 posttest, that is, to be honest, your duty as a teacher. Alright? I'm sorry to
10 say this, but that is, that is it. But as a team here, I don't want to put too
11 much loading on one person. So that one I think, we want to share it. Okay,
12 that's it. Okay? Ya. And the um... let's do it, okay, so Ivy, you uh you
13 prepare um uh how to say...

LET (Amy)'s request again

(4) (transcription 2-1)

1 A: Yes that's it. And that's very quickly. Is it okay? So Ivy could you
2 please, when are you going...? Uh I'm going to finish the questionnaire, uh
3 the questions not the questionnaire, questions today and I'm going to send it
4 to you. And also if possible, it, you got the the the, how to say, the um the
5 pictures at hands, please provide, please provide it.

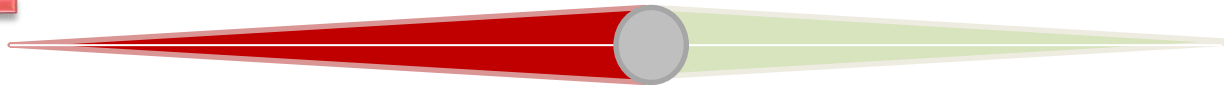
6 I: I know. Ya ya.

7 A: Alright, and me too. And uh Leo, so I think Ben, you can do your pretest
8 and, your own pretest and posttest first, and wait for ours, is it okay?

9 B: Ya.

Making Requests

LET



FET

1. The usage of interrogative sentences
2. The necessity of providing justifications
3. The uneasiness of making a request

LET

1. The usage of interrogative sentences

(5) (transcription 0416: Amy requested Leo to do the comic strips.)

1 A: Uh Leo I'm asking you, I mean, **would you like to draw all the comics by**
2 **yourself? Or it will be like... too much loading?** Because I personally I say
3 maybe we can share that, **so what do you think?**

4 L: Okay, remember some of that is already done. So I think you can just give
5 that to me and I'll do it. Because then it's the same sense of humor, the same
6 type of the previous passport.

7 A: Alright.

(6) (transcription 0430: Amy asked Leo to sit at another seat when doing the pretest)

1 A: **Would you like to sit back here?** Excuse me, Leo, **would you like to sit**
2 **here?** So, you know, we can have different distance.

3 L: Ok with the glasses I suppose to see there.

LET

1. The usage of interrogative sentences

(7) (transcription 0430: Ivy asked if Ben can modify his pretest question)

1 I: Uh, sorry, could you go back to number two?

2 A: Ok we can...

3 I: Ya...

4 A: Let's...

5 I: Is it possible that you just zoom in some part?

6 B: This is the best picture that I can find.

7 L: I think, for the kids, that was (not clear) information about that must be C

8 I: They just delete delete delete, alright.

LET

2. The necessity of providing justifications

(8) (transcription 0430: Amy in the meeting requested the FETs to hand in the lesson plans before Wednesday)

1 A: Ya ya, that's why I'm worried. You know now that's why I'm worried. I'm
2 also, **because** I want to make sure everything is ready before we start the
3 new lesson. I don't want to be very rush, and if you guys go to Daliao and
4 come back without anything, nothing, and everybody will be like worried
5 and panicked. So this time I decide that I will try, you know keep contacting
6 Mr. Chang, and I hope that he can give us the material by tomorrow. I'm
7 going to contact him later. But for, you know, due to this situation for the
8 whole school, I think I'll, you know, suggest you to give me your own view
9 and teaching material list by next Wednesday. And so you start much
10 earlier, so it takes, I just, maybe three weeks is better, you know, for the
11 whole procedure. So if you don't have to buy anything, then you don't have
12 to care, like in June, we have the tea, but please go check everything, you
13 know. Otherwise, you know, I found it'll be a little bit too late for us. So my
14 suggestion is that next Wednesday, so you may if you got time, you can
15 start to write, start your overview and think about exactly what you need for
16 next month.

2. The necessity of providing justifications

(9) (transcription 0430: Amy made three quests during a meeting)

- 1 A: So, and then please give me your at least your teaching material for
2 September, before you go on your vacation, **so** you know when you come
3 back, I hope everything is ready. So when you come back you'll feel
4 comfortable, and then you can easily teach. And Ben also please you know
5 do this part, **because** errr, that is you know this part the the the actually the
6 teacher now we should prepare something for next semester, so Ben please
7 help this part. I know that you're going to change your place, you know,
8 different places to teach but please help with this one, thank you. (Ben
9 smiled). And so that is the second one. And then the third one is I found that
10 it will help me a lot if I sent you any email to please reply to me like ok, just
11 very quickly ok or got it, like this, and I will know that my message,
12 **because** sometimes the message I just got message you know like... }
13 I: You will be refused by some...
14 A: Yes, sometimes...
15 L: Ya I did not receive some...

LET

2. The necessity of providing justifications

Kirkpatrick's (1991) study: request letters written by 40 Mandarin Chinese speakers



Polite or not?

1. Information sequencing
 - X: request + reason
 - X: no facework
2. Imposition
 - X: ask too much

LET

3. The uneasiness of making a request

- How to say (x5)...
- I'm sorry to ask...

(10) (transcription 0430: Amy requested the FETs to hand in the lesson plans by summer vacation)

1 A: ...And so, so, concerning about your vacation during the summer vacation,
2 so I suggest that please finish your overview, what I ask is only overview
3 here. Okay, the first one, overview, by July 21, Monday, and then your
4 lesson plans for grade 5 and 6, **I'm sorry to ask**, because I think we'll
5 probably be asked to show the lesson plan next semester too, so that's, I
6 suggest you know, lesson 4 or 5 you know, by the end of July...

LET

3. The uneasiness of making a request

(11) (transcription 0430: A grateful speech made by Amy)

1 A: So actually, I would like to thank you all, really, to thank you all, and I'm
2 sorry, from, actually Leo's cartoon yesterday I know that I put a lot of
3 pressure on you all, really, put a lot

4 L: We want to run away you see it

5 A: Ya, I know that (everybody laughed)...

6 ...

7 A: So actually I'm sorry, when we're working I know there're a lot of pressure,
8 but there's you know that feedback, all your credit, really, and like passport
9 we have to exam, because you know before we go like 3000 copies, it's
10 really hard to change anything once we decide to print, so I want to make
11 sure everything every detail, so...

12 L: Ya I understand that

13 A: Ya also the pretest I'm sorry to (not clear) this, but other English teachers
14 come here too...

Making Requests

LET

FET

1. The usage of interrogative sentences
2. The necessity of providing justifications
3. The uneasiness of making a request

Not clear,
confusing,
too gentle

I think sometimes Amy will **not make a point very clear** with Ben. All the **nice words**, and **all the explaining**, it can be so much easier if she can say this is what I want. (Leo)

you know the Asian way, it takes a **long explanation** when I'll go quicker to get to a certain thing. So you must be very patient to listen to all those explanation first.....I think I learned a lot to say things a lot **softer, in a nicer way**. (Leo)

Making Requests

LET

FET

1. The usage of interrogative sentences
2. The necessity of providing justifications
3. The uneasiness of making a request

He hoped that people can just command him directly; he hoped that I can just cut to the chase with him, “Ben, do this, Ben, do that.” But to me, that is like teaching animals. **Giving direct command is like teaching animals.** And then I think, how to say, I didn’t expect him to read my mind, but the problem is, he relies too much on what people actually said. (Amy)

Too robotic,
not flexible,
not polite

(1) (transcription 2-1) (A: Amy, I: Ivy, L: Leo, B: Ben)

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2 four new, uh four new topics, so pretest and posttest, but three topics is
3 yours. Are yours. (Talked to Leo)

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6 L: Ben and I discuss that. You know if you take my PowerPoint, you can see
7 what it's about, and the lesson plan. So what if I do the comics and Ben or
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15 us a pretest and posttest.

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17 B: Yeah.

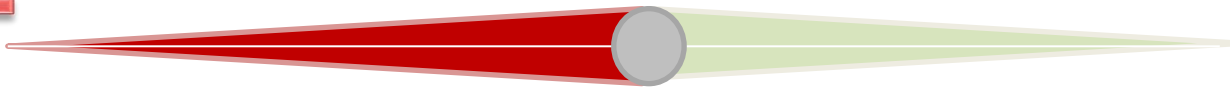
(long pause, 4 sec)

18 I: But we're not the one design the lesson plan, and

19 B: I'm not the one design it either.

Giving Refusals

LET



FET

1. The delay of providing justifications
2. The persistence of refusing

1. The delay of providing justifications

FET

After 4 minutes 27 seconds, FET (Ben) explained his reason of refusal

(14) (transcription 0416: Ben provided his reason for not accepting the request)

1 (long pause, 12 sec)

2 I: Okay, or, because you never taught martial art right, or I can help you to, to
3 to uh make the question for martial art, but I just give you the word, and
4 then you put it into the system, is that alright? Is that help you? I make
5 questions for martial art, this topic, I give you the question, and maybe
6 some pictures, and then you put it into the smart board system.

7 B: Yeah that's the main problem, it's, I don't know the the I don't know the
8 lesson. So even if I read the lesson plan, how do I know how to make an
9 accurate...

10 I: So I mean I can I help you for martial art.

11 B: So I say if you can do that, that would be helpful.

1. The delay of providing justifications

FET

FET (Ben) explained his reason of refusal again

(15) (transcription 0416: Ben restated his reasons in detail for the third time)

1 I: And uh, so you will take part, take charge for currency exchange and hotel
2 check in. Although currency exchange you never taught it right, but it's
3 really easy to have an idea. Because currency exchange is not for the culture
4 part something like that. Something like martial art or devil stick that so
5 complicated something like that.

6 B: My point is not that I could make questions for the lesson, it's just that, okay
7 for example, when I teach how to order, I have specific things that I target
8 in my lesson, that I say, okay, this is what I'm gonna teach them, the
9 genuine differences between a waiter and waitress, what is a waiter and
10 what is a waitress, so I made that a priority in my question. If I can't see the
11 lesson, then I don't know what should be the priority...

12 I: We have a very clearly lesson plan. Ya. I put lesson plan over there, so you
13 can, anytime you like, go, and have a look. Currency exchange, airport, ya.
14 (Ben walked to the binders)

2. The persistence of refusing

(16) (transcription 0416: Amy expressed her bewilderment about Ben's constantly rejection)

1 A: And then you ya you use the Photoshop, so I mean that is a teamwork.

2 B: That's what I'm saying. Teamwork. It's not all one person doing it.

3 A: Ya, so that's what I'm saying too.

4 L: Just try and we share and change. And I try and we share and change

5 A: So you see, Ben, like I don't want to you know, like everybody, to you
6 know, like, Leo only writes a comic and create comics and all the ideas he
7 has to think about, no, I don't want it that like, so that's why I say we draw
8 the draft this one first, and then give it to to Leo

9 L: And if I come to certain things I tried and I ask you if this is acceptable or
10 not.

11 A: Ya. And also ask you to... So I mean also if I say Ben, please do it, again, I
12 would not put all of the loading on you too. So that's why I would like to
13 ask you know somebody even I myself have to provide those certain things.
14 Alright? Is that ok?

15 B: Okay that's ya... That's a lot different than what you said before.

16 A: No! You have always misunderstood what we're talking about. We always,
17 we usually, we always share, right? I don't know why, just like I don't why
18 sometimes you misunderstood. If you say yes, and then, so like, Leo, I say,
19 Leo, are you willing to do this, yes, and then I say Ivy and everybody
20 could you provide something. That I always say, **but like you, you always,**
21 **"Amy, no," and then what should I do?**

Giving Refusals

LET

FET

- 
1. The delay of providing justifications
 2. The persistence of refusing

Making excuses

It sounds like excusing, the way he sequences his messages when communicating. Amy and I tried to beat around the bush so we said, “If you have any questions, you can tell us.” We can’t bring ourselves to ask him why he always said no to our requests, because it’s not good to be too direct. (Ivy)

Giving Refusals

LET

FET

1. The delay of providing justifications
2. The persistence of refusing

The FET had passive attitude toward his work

Usually when he faces a problem, he would directly say, “No, no, I won’t take this one.” **He would just reject it directly, without telling us his difficulty first. If he can tell us first, we can be more empathetic.** But he often says no, and usually when we hear it, **it feels like he’s escaping from his responsibilities.** (Ivy)

Giving Refusals

LET

FET

1. The delay of providing justifications
2. The persistence of refusing

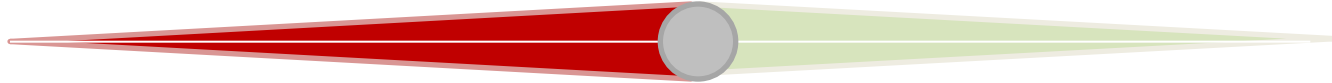
The FET had passive attitude toward his work

What people felt uncomfortable today was **his attitude, whether he's willing to do it or not**. People could feel it keenly.... And then that day I thought, ah, forget it if he couldn't understand many things.... He often picks up the opposite side. For example, we shared this task, actually didn't I say it to him that day, **if you have said yes first, it would have been fine that we compromised a bit later**. But he didn't know that if he's willing to do a bit more, the whole group will see him differently.... So that day **if he had said, "ok I'll try, but I have difficulties blablabla," and I believe others would feel better**. (Amy)

Speech acts	Features	Perceptions
Suggestion (LET)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The adoption of hinting strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FETs' thoughts: not serious about the suggestion, talk behind one's back, sneaky
Request (LET)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The usage of interrogative sentences 2. The necessity of providing justifications 3. The uneasiness of making a request 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FETs' thoughts: not clear, confusing, too many nice words • LETs' thoughts: too robotic, like teaching animals, not flexible, not polite
Refusal (FET)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The delay of providing justification 2. The persistence of refusing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LETs' thoughts: making excuses, having passive attitude toward the work

Discussion

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W

Hall, 1976

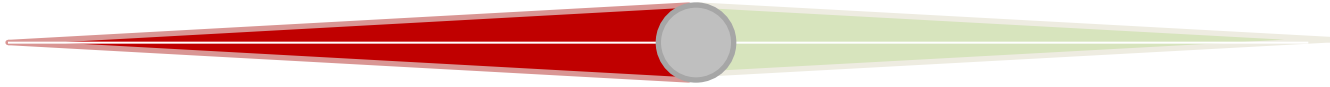
High-context culture vs. Low-context culture



Covert and implicit
Messages internalized
Much nonverbal coding
Reactions reserved
Distinct ingroups/outgroups
Strong interpersonal bonds
Commitment high
Time open and flexible

Overt and explicit
Messages plainly coded
Details verbalized
Reactions on the surface
Flexible ingroups/outgroups
Fragile interpersonal bonds
Commitment low
Time highly organized

E



W

Hofstede, 1991

Collectivism vs. Individualism

Taiwan

Singapore

South
Africa

Canada

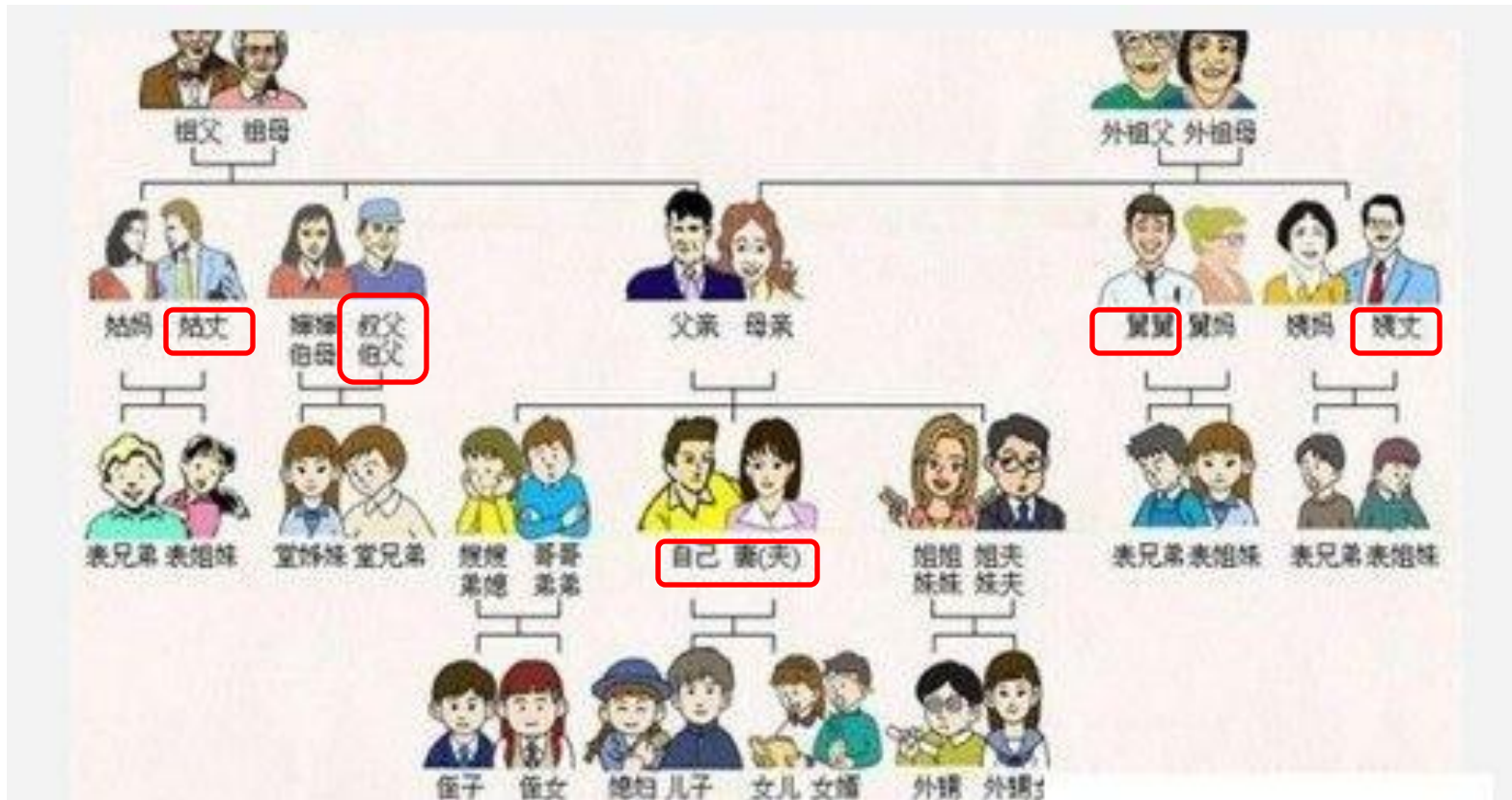
U.S.A.



South
Korea

New
Zealand

Australia



- Kinship terms
- Group harmony (nice words, soft ways) vs. direct

Limitation

- Gender effect
- Individual difference
- FETs' differed cultural backgrounds

Thank you!

Communication styles vs. Stereotypes

No culture is superior than another.

Be understanding, and do not block the communication.