

Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- Applications to reduce cultural misunderstandings when training with allies from the Middle East
- Care to be taken when critiquing work of Middle Eastern allies
- Tact, gentleness, rapport and politeness required in training with Middle East trainees
- Implications of failed coursework for a Middle East trainee

Identify

- Principles to apply when training Middle East allies
- Indirectness, direct orders, drill, reprimand
- Public reprimand
- Rote memory
- Loss of face

Realize

- Steps to take when dealing with Middle East trainee mistakes
- Importance of memorization as a teaching strategy in much of the Middle East
- Importance of "I" messages when dealing with Middle East Allies
- Differing American/Middle Eastern perspectives on personal responsibility
- Respect given instructors in Middle East circles

Appendix: Interview With a Middle Easterner

The student from the Middle East who has trained with U.S. technicians has proven extremely apt at mechanics and extremely quick. His intelligence and attitude are a credit to his country. There have been times, however, when American instructors have had difficulty understanding the different ways of doing things in the Middle East and the Americans have unintentionally offended their guests, or the reverse.



Usually the misunderstandings occur because the people involved are unaware of the differences between the cultures. What may not insult an American student might offend a Middle Easterner.

To reduce some of these areas of misunderstanding, the following questions were asked of a Middle Easterner pinpointing the situations which most commonly occur. This is not meant as a criticism of either Americans or Middle Easterners, but simply an explanation of situations where one side or the other misunderstands what is happening because of the different ways of life.



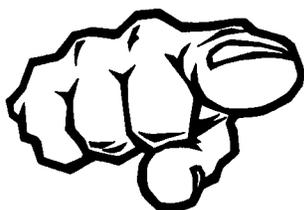
This indirectness is also tied somewhat to the question of taking orders. There is a feeling of uncertainty, sometimes resentment, between cultures. Obviously the Muslim, like all believers, feels his religion and his culture is better than anyone else's.

Yet, on the other hand he is in the West learning technology. So when a Westerner comes and gives him a direct order it seems a put down, a superior saying you are

inferior, even when it is not intended so. Between equals, you ask.

Q: I can see the similarity to our military structure where the ideal leader needs only to ask, the order underlying it is understood by both parties, but it's crude to say, "I order you to do that."

A: *Very similar, yes. There are different ways to do the same thing.*



Q: Are there any other implications to giving a direct order?

A: *Yes, when you add to it the implications of direct orders during their experience with colonialism...there is an emotional reaction. Give direct orders, instead of suggestions, and he is not going to take it and like it. He is not going to accept it, which blocks his learning. It reminds him of the days when everything "Western" was a superior to inferior relationship.*

Q: So, in more than one way, a direct order, a direct criticism, or a direct accusation is a put down.

A: *Definitely. And when a person reacts emotionally to the way you treat him, his learning ability is upset. My suggestion is to try to find an indirect way of suggesting what you want your student to do. Eventually, by the way, this becomes second nature. And never reprimand him in public--I can't stress this enough.*

Take him aside over a soda, coffee, or what have you and gradually lead up to the subject. Put him at ease and then indirectly make your point. "Okay, I understand..for instance..that your button wasn't functioning and that is why you didn't push it. So, next time before we fly, why don't we check it?" or try, "Keep looking at it as you fly..or work..to make sure it doesn't malfunction again." Give him an out..he understands what you mean.

Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

Q: But what if the student or trainee makes the same mistake again and again?

A: *If he keeps doing it and it is a critical procedure, then I think you face a dilemma. Possibly the man shouldn't be a pilot or a technician. Then, you can go to his superior and say, "Somehow I don't seem able to teach..(blame yourself)..so-and-so," and his superior will understand what you mean. Or you can go to your own superior and let him handle it at his level... "One of my instructors doesn't seem to be able to teach so-and-so.."*

But if you go to the student's superior, you say, "You know, I've been training Mohammed and I just don't seem to be able to train him. I don't know what I am doing wrong, but I just don't seem to be able to get him to follow my instructions. So perhaps you should remove me or we should find another instructor." His superior will quickly understand the problem is not with you but with the student and will take the appropriate steps.



Q: Are the American methods of teaching compatible to the Middle East?

A: *Here again, we have to remember that we teach students in the United States to understand things. In the Middle East, as in many places in the world, they teach by rote memorization. If your student forgets once, twice, three times, you have to keep repeating in different ways until he gets it down pat.*

Q: Until he has memorized it almost mechanically, step-by-step.

A: *Right! That is the way he learned in school and he is used to learning that way. If you expect him to learn in our pattern, react the way you react, then you are making a mistake. You have to presume that you must repeat yourself many times. You have to keep insisting*

on a point and go over it with him every time before you operate the machine or fly the plane.

Say, "Hey, let's look at this now. What do we have to do?" Not just him. "We have to take off, and upon take-off we have to..." But time and time again until he does it almost by reflex.

Q: I know of one group of instructor pilots who have set up a system where they debrief as a group, saying something like, "The formation could have been better and needs more effort." But they don't point out anyone in particular, even if only one student was primarily at fault. Then they add, "Such-and-such a part was very good." After this the instructor takes his student aside and privately discusses his performance.

A: Again, never give direct criticism. Find a way, I would insist..and certainly not in front of anyone else..never in front of their superiors or inferiors.



Q: So you would never say, "Hey, you didn't..."

A: I would not. You turn him off. And when you turn him off, his learning drops and your effectiveness drops. It puts a barrier between you. There are gentle ways of saying it. I mean, even in this country when we are talking to a superior we say, "Well, I'm sure you know.." or "As you know.." It's a tactful way of telling the boss he really doesn't know or should have known and you are going to tell him.

You're being tactful, gentle. It's the same with the Middle Easterner..only it's his whole way of life. An indirect way is honestly the best approach.

Q: Can you ever be somewhat direct?

A: *If you develop a really close friend that you feel is open, and you are having a soda together, no one else is around, then you can tell him, "Hey, Mohammed, I think you forgot to do such-and-such!" You say this on the side during the conversation, then add, "It would be nice to do next time."*

But again, NEVER IN PUBLIC, NEVER in front of anyone else, including officers of higher or lower rank in his service.



Q: *Suppose you are recommending a proposal to someone. I understand that if you say, "What do you think of my idea or plan?" or "I put this together, what do you think?" you will usually get a polite reply, "Everything is fine," even if your plan or idea is a disaster.*

A: *The required, polite answer is that it's great! Otherwise you would be criticizing someone personally or implying the instructor or advisor doesn't know what he is doing.*

Q: *Then how do you present a proposal, and get a critique?*

A: *I think first you have to find out if the man knows the subject area. If you give him something he knows nothing or little about he cannot judge from his experience, he will give you a polite answer and tell you it is good.*

Secondly, I think rather than say it is your plan or proposal, because he doesn't want to be rude or criticize you, you should say something like, "You know I have this proposal I came across and find it interesting. I'm thinking of using it and could you give me your opinion on it? It's not mine I just came across it.."

This way if he wants to criticize you, it doesn't appear he is doing it directly. He is criticizing some other fellow who wrote it or thought of it and he knows you won't be offended. He will probably adjust the plan rather than say, "Such-and-such is wrong." Of course he knows what is really happening..but it's a game you must play. Again, don't tell him you want criticism.

Q: What do you tell him?

A: *"What's your opinion?" or "Give me your ideas." or "How can this be improved?" or all of these. Generally I would approach with, "How can this be improved?"*

Q: Suppose he comes back to you with a suggestion which you believe, based on your technical knowledge, just won't work.

A: *I'd never tell him, that. I would say, "Ah, this is very interesting. I didn't think about that. Let me see how I can rearrange this."*

Q: How about, "This is very interesting. Let me see if there's anything I might add?"

A: *Right. Take his idea if you must and rephrase it. Then take the paper to him and say, "Here it is. I put your idea right in here." He will accept that you "rephrased" it because you are the expert. He won't mind when you say, "I've reworded it because, you know, it's English and not Arabic or Farsi" or something like that. "But here is your idea and here is where I put it in."*



Q: Another area where I have noticed instructors having difficulty is when they say to a student, "Mohammed, can you tell him what you do in close formation?" or "Can you see the other aircraft from the back seat in fingertip formation?" The answer should be, "No, I can't see from the back seat." But Mohammed hedges around and finally says, "Yes, I can see." How do you correct him according to his code of courtesy?

A: *Don't say, "That's wrong!" Rather, give him a hint first while he's hedging. Obviously, he is not sure of himself. He is in training, and if you ask him a question like this, he starts to hedge. He doesn't want to appear as if he didn't know...especially if you ask in front of other people.*



Before he replies, then, and while he is still hedging, you step in and say something like, "Normally, I have problems seeing from the back seat and in some cases I cannot see at all. What has been your experience, Mohammed, or Lt. Kadafi?"

Then he will realize you cannot see from the back seat and it is not bad for him to say, "I can't see from the back seat." But if you come up with a situation which is fairly new or not totally learned yet and say, "Can you see?" he doesn't want to admit he doesn't know. He may not be able to see, but he may think others can see and worries about admitting it for it would reflect badly against him. So he hedges. "Maybe.. sometimes..not really." and watches you for clues.

Q: *In a sense you are still teaching your point but in a different way.*

A: *Yes.*

Q: *Sometimes, also, the teacher will say to the student, "Mohammed, we are taking off at such-and-such a time. Let's go through what we're going to do. When we take off we call the tower and say..what?" Normally, we do not feed the students the answers step-by-step. If he hesitates, is there a way we can slide the information in to remind him without "putting him down" as he would see it?*

A: *Use a joint approach and do it privately. Take him aside and say, "We fly this morning..or tomorrow..what do we need to do? I'll do this and you do that" might be the first approach. Then, "Now, if you want to do it all by yourself, fine! I'll go along for the ride. After all, you're the pilot."*

If you know he is not quite ready, you suggest, "Okay, I'll do this and you do that." This is one way of going over a checklist. "Is that okay?" you ask. He may say, "I think I'd like to do this, instead." Then you say, "Fine!" and repeat what you are agreeing with.



Gradually, until you can develop a close rapport, you do it this way...but never in front of others. And never appear to be giving orders.

Q: Student pilots are taught to brief as part of the technical system they are here to learn. This means a lieutenant must brief a flight which will include his senior officers. Can this procedure be effectively taught when their rules are more strict between the ranks?

A: *If he has to brief I think it creates greater cooperation and friendship if the instructor takes him aside and says, "I know you are going to do a great job. Don't be afraid. You're a hot shot pilot. Let me tell you how we do it here (in the U.S.), how I do it for my superiors."*

This way you are telling him by describing the way you do it, how he can conduct his briefing. Then he is much more secure. "My instructor tells me this and therefore it's okay to do. You'll find he adopts ideas this way."

But first reassure him. He needs a lot of reassurance as he absorbs all the new things while his superiors are looking at him. If you go to him first, when the new procedure or checkout comes up, and say, "You are doing a great job. You are a good pilot. There's nothing to worry about..but let me tell you a

Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

bit about how we do it here." This is how I would do it. I'm sure there are other ways, but don't forget repetition.

Q: In the U.S. there is almost a code of roughness in training, a pride in "taking" rough treatment- especially in basic training programs. I can see how that would turn off people who emphasize courtesy first.



A: *It is very hard for those outside the U.S. to understand your system. I cannot emphasize too much the consequences of "loss of face."*



If you put a student in a position where he can "lose face" it means he loses power to influence those below him in rank, looks the fool to his friends, his superiors are less apt to help him, and it damages the whole network of human relationships he depends on to survive in his world.

So, please, never put him in any situation where he looks ignorant or foolish or is criticized or give him a direct order which evokes the implication that he is inferior...don't do it publicly or even privately.

Q: What about in an emergency?

A: *If lives depend on it, do it! If it is an emergency. But don't go tell his superiors or speak of it where any of his fellow officers or friends can hear.*

Q: You mentioned the different way of learning in the Mid-East. One implication I get is when it comes to something like flight safety procedures, don't worry about rationales, just simply say, "These procedures MUST be done with an aircraft if you want it to perform well." Then teach the procedure by rote.

A: *Right. And continually check your student and repeat until he's learned. You'll find the Middle Eastern student is very intelligent.*



Q: What about time? When you tell a student he should be in a certain place within one minute of time and then he goes along and misses it by three minutes and seems unconcerned, what do you do? This is very important for them to learn if they are going to have the kind of air force they want. How do you impress the importance of minutes, even seconds, for technology when they are used to looser time frames?

A: *By rote..rote..rote. Drilling. A method used in many places in the world. I've heard even the U.S. is returning to it in the schools.*

Q: You would also say privately, over soft drinks later, "It looks like something went wrong because the aircraft reached point X three minutes late," or "because the machine wasn't oiled on the last check up."

A: *Yes. Don't blame him.*

Q: And then something like, "We've got to check this next time."



A: Right. Remember too, that with safety and many other ideas, despite your saying, "This can save your life," there is an undercurrent in him that tells him, "If my number is up, it's up!" Or as we say in the Middle East, "If the oil is finished, my lamp will go out."

Any reasoning which runs against this doesn't make much of an impression. Ultimately, you don't have to do a thing and anything you do is not significant because God will determine in the end whether you will survive or not.. "Thy will be done."

This is why they won't pay as much attention to safety devices as an American who believes he has some input in life, some cause and effect impact. The Muslim believes that while the human being can do anything, if God decides he is going to live, he will--if not he won't.

Q: What about the sense of personal responsibility?

A: There is none in the sense an American learns it. That's why if you say to the Middle Eastern student, "You broke it," he will say, "I didn't." Partly to protect himself from your accusation and partly because if it broke it was meant to break, but he, personally, did not "cause" it to happen.

Q: I recall a close friend of mine who gave up quickly on a project and said, "It must be Buddha's will." In private, and in a teasing way, I replied, "Let's not assume we know what Buddha wants. Let's try everything we can think of and if it still won't work, then it must be Buddha's will."

A: Not a bad approach if you have that close camaraderie, that close friendship. Once you become friends you can light-heartedly comment like that. You didn't come down strong with, "Dammit! What do you mean Buddha! All the time it's Buddha!" If you did that you

would lose your student. But if you tease lightly and say, "Come on now, let's not test Buddha or assume we know his will," in private, it may work. Never in public though. In public you have to say and do certain things regardless of your opinions.

Q: How can the American instructor tell he has been "turned off" by his student?

A: A very stiff formal thing comes between the instructor and student. You'll find his frozen smile and nothing else. No more touching. The Middle Easterner is one of many cultures where touch is very big...body language...touching a friend, someone he likes...that disappears.



Q: He won't touch you at all then?

A: No more touching. No more, "Come on, let's smoke a cigarette together." No invitations for a soda or coffee. No invitations to lunch or dinner. He avoids you as much as he can.

Q: That reminds me, I've heard that if you are smoking and you take out cigarettes you should offer them around or leave them out, not put them back in your pocket as we do when we're informal.

A: Offer everyone there a cigarette. Leave them out of your pocket.

Q: And if they offer you one and you smoke, take it.

A: Yes..otherwise you are not making contact.

Q: Our instructors report that often when they come in from a flight the student will go and get soft drinks for the instructor and himself. If the student doesn't have enough money to get drinks for everyone, he won't get any. Suppose the instructor notices his student always buys the drinks, does the student feel it's his

Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

place to do it or can they switch back and forth in buying?

A: *The student feels he should. At first he wants to do it to thank you, to get on your good side, to get your friendship and avoid criticism.*

Q: Can the instructor buy?

A: *Definitely. But you should choose a day when the student has done something perfect and say, "We had such a great flight...I'm so pleased...happy...would you allow me to buy you a soft drink?" That cements the rapport. You have promoted him in the eyes of his people, he's done a great thing, and you returned the gesture. It's a good thing to do.*



Q: Suppose you get a turn-off signal, what do you do? You may not even know why he is upset or angry.

A: *I would ignore the turn-off. Even if you are not sure, continue as before, keeping in mind the body touching, the smiling, putting your arm around his shoulders, reducing your criticism for a while, and maybe sometimes increase your praise, say how great he did in front of his fellow officers, reinforce him and he'll come back. Then he will realize, "Now, he really didn't mean it that way last time."*

Don't react formally, too, for the minute you do, you allow that barrier to stay and you lose him.

Q: How about using first names?

A: *Generally the military is very formal. Sir...Captain this...Lt. Even in the business world until you know someone well.*

Q: Call him Lt. Kadafi or Mr. Such-and-such, if he's a civilian?

A: Yes. First call him Lieutenant when you meet him. Later, if you become friends, call him "Mohammed" in front of his superiors. With his superiors around it elevates him though they may not like it, it still raises him.

Don't call him "Mohammed" in front of the lower ranks. After all, his rank means a lot to him.

Q: That rule applies, more or less, in our system too, when you stop to think about it.

A: Right.

Q: What about this body touching? Where should you touch? Is there any place you shouldn't touch?

A: Put an arm around his shoulders...very important. If you don't object because of your learning, holding hands, hugging, even kissing when you meet, are signals of friendship--similar to the French. I know Americans learn to connect sex with almost any kind of touching, but in the Mid-East it simply means friendship.

Q: On meetings is the cheek or mouth kissed?

A: Well, again, initially on the cheek but if the friendship becomes so close you are "blood brothers," so to speak, it moves toward the mouth. You are part of the family then, but few people will become that close.

Q: You know, about nine times out of ten the American will be very uncomfortable about this touching--except for an arm around the shoulder once in a while. Will the Americans uneasiness turn off the student?

A: First of all, you don't move to kissing upon greeting that quickly. It takes a long time and involves lifetime friendship ties. You begin rather



formally, then some touching, then holding hands and maybe kissing the cheek, and so on. I think in the process you can begin to mention casually that culturally, in your country, men don't do it because they are thought of as being lesser men, homosexual. He will get the idea that it isn't done in public and won't go that far.

Q: Exactly how is the greeting usually done?

A: *Generally, if you watch two Middle Easterners meeting ... here let me show you ... they may shake hands - both hands go out to the other person. Then both hands move to the other person's shoulders and there is a brief or enthusiastic hug, depending on how well you know each other. Then you make the first move towards kissing or you don't. If you don't, or if you pull back, he will stop.*

Q: Both hands go out?

A: *Oh, yes. Always both hands. This is to show your intentions are peaceful, that there's no dagger in the other hand...similar to using the right hand to greet in Europe and the U.S. which was originally for the same purpose.*



Q: What about the strength of the handshake?

A: *It depends. Don't use too much strength...less than you normally would in this country or else you come across as hostile or crude.*

Q: A few of the Americans seem to feel threatened by the social life of their students, all the dating.

A: *Look, the student is probably playing this up. He's saying, in effect, "Okay you may be a better pilot, but I get around more." He's just the same but he is educated as a matter of course in intimacy. There should be no feeling of threat.*

Q: Do the Middle Eastern men "socialize" as much at home or is it similar to our troops when they are away from home?



A: *The more women a man can be seen with, whether or not there is actually intimacy, the more it reassures him and tells others he has not gone stale, he still has his looks, he's still attractive.*

Also, in the Middle East the woman states clearly how far she wishes to go in any relationship. The man who does not abide by her wishes is not considered a man in control of himself. American women who don't say it clearly are very confusing.

Q: What is the general rule as far as the dating or marriage age in the Mid-East?

A: *While the age is rising in the cities, the legal age, basically girls seem to mature more quickly in the Middle-East. The legal age in Islam is 15--Islamic years. Of course, she is taught from the moment she can understand to refuse a man until she marries. If she says yes, though, she is assumed to understand the implications.*

Q: There have been some difficulties with convincing students they must take out auto insurance as well as obey laws on paper and learn that the laws apply to everyone, regardless of status. In the Mid-East a person of high status has extra privileges ... is above the law in some ways ... rather like the peers of England were once.



Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

A: Yes. The higher the status of rank the more privileges, and in some ways, the more the responsibilities. Now a sergeant just doesn't give an officer a ticket, nor does he stop him or jail him. Another officer might, but not someone of lower rank or status. The president's wife in the U.S. might get a speeding ticket, but that would never happen in the Mid-East...never.

Q: We have tried to explain our driving customs but cannot seem to do it correctly. The Security Police have tried to keep a violation from a student's record because he is a guest, have often offered to drive him home.

A: That would enrage him because it implies he's not man enough to handle his liquor and drive, if he's been drinking. Or it would imply he lacks skill at driving.

Q: Could we somehow bring it up indirectly with their senior officer.

A: That is one way. Tell him that insurance and obeying our traffic laws is for the protection of his people. Now, if you could have a U.S. general give the first briefings and mention this requirement, it would be law.



Q: Perhaps explain it is a custom observed by officers and people of status, even though it is sometimes broken by the outcasts or outlaws or those who don't behave the way an officer should?

A: Yes, that kind of approach.

Q: Another technique I've used where indirectness is involved is to set up a conversation with another American where I know we will be overheard, then say

something like, "I'm quite worried about..." etc. The other person cooperates with the conversation, and we are not directly talking to anyone. This was used occasionally ... not often.

A: *Beautiful! There is an Arab proverb which says, "I'm talking to you, my neighbor, so that my daughter-in-law will hear what I am saying."*



Q: Where you have a person in your employ overseas and he or she is not doing what you expect, what do you do?

A: *It may be you have not repeated the instructions clearly or often enough. Remember, repetition is the comfortable pattern of learning. When that doesn't work, however, then you say, "You know, I'm going to have to talk to your mother - or your father." Begin with the mother. That carries weight.*

Q: What if you believe a servant has stolen something? In the U.S. if you were quite sure you would approach the servant directly.

A: *No. If it is not a sizable amount, consider it a loss. Otherwise, a technique I've used is to gather the family or everyone there along with the servants and say, "I have misplaced a hundred dollars, and I want you all to look for it with me. I know it's somewhere around here and the person who finds it gets a reward"--perhaps \$5 or \$10. Its not usually lost and it turns up. "I just found it in the trash can."*

Q: If you used our approach and said, "I'm sure you took it," what would happen?

A: *You had better find the money on their body or they will not only say, whether they are innocent or guilty, "I did not touch it," leaving you stuck, but also may add, "Who are you to accuse me! Just because you're an American you think you can come here and attack or accuse me."*



Q: Then proof is...

A: *...catching them with the money on their body. If it is in their room or among their possessions, anyone could have put it there.*

Q: Some of the American instructors feel they are being manipulated.

A: *Probably true, in a way. The man comes in knowing less about flying or whatever it is than you do. This bothers him. Also, his whole future depends upon how well he does, how well he finishes.*

So at the same time he is trying to get an edge, to make you like him. It can be difficult to tell when he is genuine and when he is not. But, at first, he may buy you a soft drink, cater to you, try to get an edge on passing. We do it in the U.S. with our teachers, try to get them to look favorably our way.

Q: This might anger the instructor, if he suspected it.

A: *He's probably done the same thing in his life. And he had to understand this is their way of life, the normal procedure. It's who you know as much as, if not more than, what you know.*

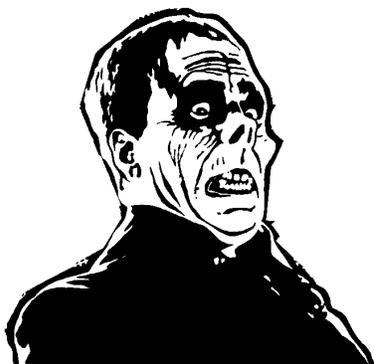


Q: What other factors are involved in the teaching situation? For instance saying, "I don't understand."

A: A student will usually not say that unless he has become very accustomed to U.S. techniques of learning.

Now, there are times when he may not have understood what you said...language, you spoke too fast, you skipped something...whatever. He will be too ashamed to say, "I didn't understand," even if you ask him. He'll never stand up in class or before others and say it. So he may do nothing even though he has said he understands.

Q: He could receive a poor grade because the instructor in the U.S. expects a student to signal if he doesn't understand.



A: He prefers not to do anything and be punished rather than to stand up and say, "I didn't understand." That is public shame. He can justify doing nothing easier ... he didn't explain it right, he insulted me, he doesn't like me... rather than say, "I'm no good. I didn't understand how to do it."

After all, to say you do not understand also implies the instructor, the expert, failed to explain properly.

Q: Couldn't we explain that when they are with our instructors, it is proper here to raise your hand and ask a question, ask for clarification, or say he didn't understand?

A: Yes and no. I wouldn't put it that way, though. Again, the instructor is superior - in charge. I think, instead, you have to plan your first lecture, keeping in mind about half of it will be missed because they are learning in a second language as well as entering a new area of expertise without a background of tinkering with machines as most Americans have throughout their childhood. The next lecture which would repeat a great

deal...they might miss a third. Eventually, perhaps only 10 percent will be lost - if the instructor remembers to speak more slowly.

So rather than expecting 100 percent comprehension from students learning in their second, third, or fourth language, the lectures and presentations should be planned with a great deal of repetition. Again, rote learning ... repeat and repeat.



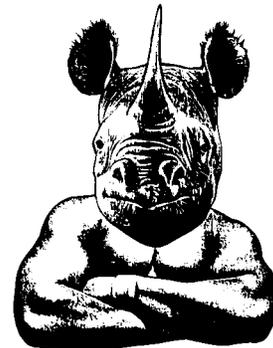
Q: Then how does the instructor find out if the student understood?

A: *Ask the student questions. "Tell me about...." or "How would you describe ... ?" If he hesitates in replying, it may be he is translating in his mind back and forth or he is unsure. If he's unsure, give him a hint until he can reply with confidence.*

Where it is possible, it helps to begin building a rapport by first sharing experience. "Did you have a good trip coming over?" Put him at ease and begin building a common ground between you.

Q: When you are an instructor, you're pretty high up, aren't you?

A: *Very high. You don't make mistakes. And that's something an instructor must keep in mind. The Mid-Eastern student does not understand the American who says, in order to be humble, "I don't know but I'll find out."*



Q: We have tried to explain to our instructors that this will be misinterpreted, to never reply, "I don't know...etc." We advise them to say, "Let me show you

where to look that up so next time you will know." Or, "I'm busy right now, can you return in an hour."

A: *Exactly! If you say you don't know, he won't listen to you after that. You've lost "face"...your status and power to influence him. If you are an expert, you know.*

Q: What do you think of our current program of integrating foreign students, despite the language differences and customs differences, into one class with the American students? No changes are made at all for the foreign student.

A: *My experience has been that despite the difficulties, the foreign students tend to resent it. They usually don't realize that cultural differences make learning more difficult. Instead, they see it as a put down.*

Q: At one of our training bases many of the enlisted instructors resent the extra effort involved in teaching someone who isn't a fellow countryman at the cost of time for American students. They also resent our policy of doing everything possible, more than for an American student, to let the foreign student pass.



A: *If you fail an American student, he is reassigned without any really terrible result. If you fail a foreign student, you make an enemy. They were not raised in the American system and they cannot be expected to act like Americans. It is a problem in some ways on the American side for there seems to be a belief that almost any officer or sergeant has the special skills needed to teach - especially for teaching students who are not "mainstream" Americans.*

Q: Then you agree there is a special skill involved for working with or teaching people who are not from your culture?

A: Yes, definitely. Whatever country you go to, some people have this skill and others don't. I think it would help in this case if your instructors were more aware of cultural differences ... explain why people act differently, believe differently... that they don't mean to appear arrogant in your country or insult you ... and vice versa.

Q: Our experience has been that some of the instructors seem to have personalities which make it impossible to work with people who are different... they just see them as bad or stupid. The whole situation becomes emotional as they misinterpret things and their duty effectiveness drops.



A: Where the person cannot adjust, even after retraining, he should be reassigned. It happens everywhere. Sometimes it is with just one group of people--the Englishman who cannot "stand" Italians but gets along fine with other nationalities.

Q: Do you think it might be of interest to students for the Middle East to learn about what is different about our ways, our systems?

A: As long as you don't appear to be criticizing them.

Q: There is no need to do that for we would speak of differences between two cultures, not judge them.

A: You might mention the contributions towards Western culture which come from the Middle East.

Q: Such as "admiral" from Arabic, "emir al-bahr?" Or that astronomy as well as algebra come from the Middle East?

A: Right...weave that in to show you are aware of their contributions to your civilization. The Arabic numbering system, the basic math sciences which are used in technology...things like that.

Q: What about gifts? We explain to students our instructors are not permitted to receive gifts. However, often when the student is finished with the course, a gift is presented at the last moment. "You are no longer my instructor" is what they say. What does this mean? If the instructor refused it, would they understand an insult was not meant?

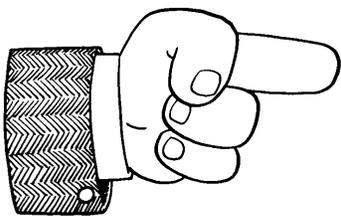


A: *I would never refuse a gift--and I know the regulations--even if you have to turn it in because of its value.*

Q: Must you return a gift then?

A: *Not in this situation--unless you have become friends... close friends. He has visited you in your home, spoken frankly with you in private, trusted you, touched you... and you did the same.*

Q: If there is not a friendship that close, how should you handle it?



A: *It means simply, "Thank you. I appreciated what you did." Thank him several times. There is no need to give him a gift in return.*

Q: And if there was a close friendship?

A: *You don't have to immediately present a return gift. You can wait until he's returned home and write him a nice letter saying, "I appreciated our friendship so much and I know while you were here you admired... (whatever it was)... and I send it as a token gift not worthy of your esteem. But I hope you will accept it in friendship." You do not say it is a gift in return, of course. You speak of friendship, the important thing.*

Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

Q: One of our instructors sent his students flying scarves after they returned home. They had presented him an unexpected gift on their departure.

A: *Something like that is good... something which reminds them of the squadron or school. Generally, despite the problem it creates in the U.S. system, you should accept the gift because of what it means on their part. You can always turn it in or ask for approval to keep it.*



"There is a statue of an American soldier on the battlefield of Antietam. Inscribed on that statue are the words, 'Not for themselves, but for their country.' That is what being an American [service person] is all about--then, now, and tomorrow. The essence of the American [Armed Forces] is selfless service to the nation."

General Gordon R. Sullivan

Review Quiz: Appendix--Interview with a Middle Easterner

Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct answer in the blank provided.

1. _____ As a teacher of Middle East allied counterparts, you should never
 - a. encourage teacher/student rapport and friendliness.
 - b. employ repetition and rote memorization.
 - c. put a student in a position to "lose face."

2. _____ When training Middle East allies, it is important to
 - a. never give public reprimands.
 - b. avoid friendly interactions as these confuse students.
 - c. be direct and assertive in your guidance.

3. _____ In the classroom setting, many Middle East allied trainees will
 - a. appreciate being called by their first names.
 - b. be used to formal, military rank address.
 - c. be unconcerned what manner of address is used.

4. _____ Before getting to know a Middle East allied trainee, it is best to
 - a. give direct, clear orders.
 - b. dialogue and share approaches--"I'll do this and you do that..."
 - c. use a question and answer approach, where all students are individually asked to give an answer.

5. _____ When two Middle Easterners--longtime friends--meet each other, they
 - a. may shake hands--both hands going out to the other person.
 - b. will embrace and touch each other on the top of the head.
 - c. act reserved and confident, maintaining a dignified formality throughout.

Appendix: Interview with a Middle Easterner

6. _____ The Middle East sense of personal responsibility
- is the same as that of most Americans.
 - differs significantly from that of most Americans.
 - does not exist.
7. _____ A good procedure to use in presenting a proposal to a Middle East ally is to
- act in an aloof and knowledgeable way.
 - take ownership of the proposal from the start.
 - ask "How can this be improved?...What are your ideas?"
8. _____ With a Middle East allied trainee, the rough "You can take it...suck it up and drive on" approach probably will
- enable the student to excel.
 - act as a deterrent to good learning.
 - be looked upon as a sign of good tact.
9. _____ Most Middle East students are most comfortable with the _____ teaching method.
- essay and discussion
 - rote memory and repetition
 - independent study
10. _____ A good procedure to follow when correcting a Middle East ally trainee is
- say "That's wrong."
 - give a hint to a problem you experience in the subject, then ask for insight from the student.
 - point to the field manual and say, "This is how it's done."