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**SCUOLA SUPERIORE DELL'UNIVERSITA' DI UDINE**  
**ESAME DI AMMISSIONE - LINGUA INGLESE**  
**A.A. 2009-2010**

**Part A: Approaching the text**

**Exercise 1:** *In this text there are 7 physical paragraphs. Match each sub-heading with the physical paragraph(s) which is / are conceptually related to it. DO NOT INSERT THE SAME PARAGRAPH INTO MORE THAN ONE SUB-HEADING*

1. The standards of 'effective communication': past and present views (par. \_\_\_\_\_ )
2. Current trends towards 'global communication' (par. \_\_\_\_\_ )
3. 'Global communication' and English Language Teaching (par. \_\_\_\_\_ )

**Exercise 2:** *The text illustrates some recent changes in communication skills training which are aimed at imposing American English discourse norms. Read the list below and tick (  ) ONLY THE EXAMPLES WHICH ARE MENTIONED IN THE TEXT :*

1. The adoption of new managerial approaches \_\_\_\_\_
2. The use of some politeness formulae \_\_\_\_\_
3. The use of different grammar \_\_\_\_\_
4. The use of more informal language \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 3:** *Match each connective below with the function it performs in the text by filling the corresponding blank with either*

- a** (for Additive)  
**b** (for Concessive)  
**c** (for Causal)  
or **d** (for Contrastive).

*(PAY ATTENTION TO THE REFERENCE LINE IN BRACKETS AND WRITE ONLY ONE LETTER IN EACH BLANK)*

1. but (l. 5) \_\_\_\_\_
2. since (l. 8) \_\_\_\_\_
3. also (l. 12) \_\_\_\_\_
4. while (l. 21) \_\_\_\_\_
5. instead of (l. 37) \_\_\_\_\_

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### Part B: Intensive reading

**Exercise 3:** Read the text carefully and tick (✓) the appropriate answer(s):

1. What is the overall function of this text?

- to define the standards of 'effective communication'
- to explore the relationship between 'effective communication' and traditional rhetoric
- to explore the relationships between 'effective communication', culture and English language teaching

2. This text is just the final section of a long article by Deborah Cameron which appeared in the newsletter of the European Society for the study of English. Can you guess the title of the entire article?

- What makes talk good. American English influences.
- Good to talk? The cultural politics of 'communication'
- How to get more out of life through effective communication

3. Who is this article for?

- Psychologists and therapists
- English language students
- English language teachers and specialists

4. What is Cameron's main criticism against the New York-based therapist mentioned in ll. 42-51?

- that she maintains that all speakers in the global village should adopt the same discourse styles
- that she does not realize that obliterating cultural variation in discourse styles can lead to subservience
- that she is against international understanding

5. On the grounds of what is stated in the text, which of the following claims do you think the writer would subscribe to? (choose 2 answers among the following):

- grammar, vocabulary, style and elocution are no longer the only criteria against which effective communication should be assessed
- values like 'assertiveness' and 'openness' are not judged in the same way in all contexts and cultures
- we must sacrifice cultural diversity for the sake of efficiency

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the spread of communication skills training based on American English discourse norms should be stopped

**Exercise 4:** Making reference to the text, decide whether the following statements are TRUE (T), or FALSE (F), or INACCURATE (I) paraphrases of the information conveyed (N.B.: the various statements appear in the order in which the information is presented in the text):

- 1. Communication skills can be learned consciously, rather than simply acquired intuitively ( \_ )
- 2. Effective communication is still based on correct rules of usage ( \_ )
- 3. Writers influenced by psychology and therapy do not admit that the meaning of silence, politeness, directness etc. may vary across cultural contexts ( \_ )
- 4. Global norms of effective communication will certainly replace local ways of speaking ( \_ )
- 5. In a multinational business context Hungarians would prefer informal uses of language ( \_ )
- 6. Only recently has the (oral) communicative competence of native speakers begun to be investigated systematically ( \_ )

**Exercise 5:** The following is a list of synonyms for words/expressions which appear in the text in the physical paragraph indicated in brackets and in the order given on the list. Find the corresponding words/expressions and write them down, together with their respective line number:

- 1. colleagues (par. 1) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 2. normative / directive (adj.) (par. 2) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 3. central / crucial (par.2) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 4. claims to be / gives the impression of being (par. 2) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 5. desirable / needed (par. 3) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 6. predominantly / greatly (par. 3) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 7. continually / repeatedly (par. 3) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 8. remarkable / amazing / surprising (par. 5) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 9. apparently (par. 5) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 10. involve absorbing (par. 6) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 11. impose (par. 6) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 12. caused / aroused (par. 7) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 13. intended for / directed at (par. 7) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )
- 14. agree / accept (par. 7) \_\_\_\_\_ (line \_ )

**Part C: Guided writing**

**Exercise 6:** Re-read the lines indicated in brackets and then complete the following paraphrases by circling ONE word/expression for each missing item:

- (ll. 15-17) (Although / Whereas) issues of grammar, vocabulary, style and elocution are (yet / still) important in other kinds of discourse, they have almost disappeared from contemporary discourse on 'effective communication'.

- (ll.29-32) In the future, allegedly transcontextual and transcultural ideals (might / would) acquire in practice the universal status they (sometimes enjoy / enjoy sometimes) in theory..
- (ll. 63-65) Many second language learners (know / have known) for a long time that teaching people how to talk is also a way of telling them who to be.

**Exercise 7:** *What follows is an extract from the introduction to the article by Deborah Cameron from which the text you have been working on so far was taken. Complete the text by circling one letter for each item from the list below:*

The English word *communication* has a considerable range of reference, (1) whatever it refers to, it is generally felt to denote (2) *good*. Positive attitudes to 'communication' pervade academic discourse, including that of English Studies. In language teaching for instance we have embraced the 'communicative approach', whereby instruction (3) second/foreign languages aims to develop the practical (4) to communicate. Even where English is the first language of (5) English students, (6) in Britain, many English departments now stress that enhancing (7) 'communication skills' is something they are particularly well placed to do: the status of 'communication' as a 'transferable' skill (8) be invoked to counter utilitarian doubts about the value of an English degree. (9) years ago I became interested (10) the burgeoning of discourse about 'communication' and the 'skills' it (11) demand. (12) struck me particularly was the massive cultural tendency to define all kinds of problems as 'communication problems'. [...] Concern was expressed that (13) could not find jobs because they lacked the communication skills required by the new service industries. (14) seemed as if inadequate communication lay at the root of every problem, and (15) as if every problem could be solved by (16) communication.

- |      |                    |                     |                      |
|------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| (1)  | a. so              | b. but              | c. because           |
| (2)  | a. some thing      | b. something of     | c. something         |
| (3)  | a. of              | b. in               | c. on                |
| (4)  | a. ability         | b. possibility      | c. opportunity       |
| (5)  | a. the most        | b. the most of      | c. most              |
| (6)  | a. such            | b. as               | c. so                |
| (7)  | a. student         | b. students'        | c. student's         |
| (8)  | a. can             | b. needs to         | c. ought to          |
| (9)  | a. Long            | b. Few              | c. A few             |
| (10) | a. in              | b. on               | c. at                |
| (11) | a. thought to      | b. is thought to    | c. is thought that   |
| (12) | a. What that       | b. What which       | c. What              |
| (13) | a. young people    | b. the young people | c. the young peoples |
| (14) | a. They            | b. It               | c. ---               |
| (15) | a. Similarly       | b. Differently      | c. Conversely        |
| (16) | a. more and better | b. most and best    | c. more and best     |

**Exercise 8:** *Write ONE paragraph (approx. 200 words) arguing for or against the statement contained in ll. 45-46: "We must sacrifice (cultural) diversity for the sake of efficiency and subordinate national differences in the cause of international understanding"*

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## *Learning to communicate in English*

Whether in the workplace or in private life, 'communication' is now widely seen as a form of behaviour requiring special skills, which people can not just acquire through experience but need guidance or even normal instruction to develop. In the past, this view applied only to some kinds of spoken language—typically the kinds of formal oratory, including for instance courtroom advocacy and debating—that were traditionally taught under the heading of 'rhetoric'. But most contemporary communication skills training is decidedly (and deliberately) non-rhetorical: its prototypical object is 'ordinary' conversation, the sort of informal interaction with family, friends and workmates that is heard on British Telecom's Freefone lines. Even in business contexts, since training to focus on formal public speaking techniques is nowadays the exception rather than the rule.

Expert discourse on 'communication' has gradually become separated, not only from the long-lived rhetorical tradition, but also from the tradition of prescriptive commentary on 'correct' usage. This separation appears to be relatively recent. If one examines, say, a 1930s or 1950s correspondence course on 'effective communication', there is likely to be a very strong focus on issues of grammar, vocabulary, style and elocution. But while these issues continue to be salient in other kinds of discourse, they have more or less disappeared from contemporary guidance literature that purports to be about 'communication'. The standards that define a 'good communicator' have more to do with the ethics of interpersonal behaviour than with traditional linguistic value judgements: valued qualities include clarity, honesty, openness, directness and readiness to listen, but not (or not usually) correctness, elegance or wit.

While this definition of 'skill' in spoken language use might seem a welcome corrective to the pedantry of the past, it is not without its problems. Like all evaluative judgements on language-use, currently orthodox views on what makes talk 'good' are ideological, and the ideology they instantiate has arisen in particular cultural conditions. As I have already noted, the literature on 'communication skills' is overwhelmingly indebted to the expert discourses of psychology (mainly clinical and organizational) and of therapy. Writers trained in or influenced by these disciplines show little awareness that there is significant cultural variation in such areas as the meaning of silence, the expression of politeness, the uses of directness and indirectness, or the appropriateness of disclosing one's experiences and feelings to others in a given context. Values like 'assertiveness' and 'openness' are persistently presented as if they were transcontextual and transcultural ideals.

Depressingly (at least in my own view) it seems possible that in time these ideals will acquire in practice the universal status that is sometimes claimed for them in theory. Communication skills training based essentially on mainstream American English discourse norms is spreading around the

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35 world: while these 'global' norms are unlikely to supersede local ways of speaking entirely, more and more people are adding them to their repertoire for various specific purposes. In Britain, we notice this in small changes, such as the replacement of British by American politeness formulae in service encounters ('how may I help you' instead of 'can I help you', for instance).

40 Elsewhere the changes are more startling, and they do not have to involve the use (or the imposition) of the English language itself. Multinational corporations may require their employees to import the American English preference for informality into languages like Hungarian, where the distinction between formal and informal address is more strongly marked in the grammar (and where formal address would be the unmarked choice for the context). Last summer I took part in a BBC World Service programme on which I discussed this issue with a New York-based therapist. She argued that there was no place in the modern 'global village' for cultural variation in discourse styles: we must sacrifice diversity for the sake of efficiency and subordinate national differences in the cause of international understanding. She illustrated the point with reference to Japan, where she claimed that the existence of multiple levels of politeness/formality was problematic not only in communication between Japanese and foreigners, but also in communication between Japanese themselves! She seemingly did not notice that the 'sacrifice' she was advocating was essentially a matter of everyone else in the global village assimilating to the preferences of its richest and most powerful resident.

50 The point that 'global' communication is an asymmetrical form of exchange has of course been central in recent debates about the cultural politics of English Language Teaching. To what extent must learning/using a language entail taking on the values of a culture not one's own? If English is truly an international lingua franca, can experts from the Anglophone 'centre' assume the right to dictate to everyone else how it ought properly to be used? What (and whose) idea of 'communication' is embodied in the 'communicative approach' to language teaching? What (and whose) culture and lifestyle is represented in the teaching materials that are used all over the world?

60 These questions have occasioned controversy in ELT circles (for a recent discussion and critique see Canagarajah 1999); the growth of concern about 'communication skills' extends the same arguments into new domains. Training in communication skills is a form of language instruction, typically aimed at first language-users whose (oral) communicative competence was not previously an object of systematic attention. These speakers are now discovering what has long been evident to many second language learners: that teaching people how to talk is also, in some important sense, a way of telling them who to be. Will we all consent to become the caring, sharing, self-reflexive, emotionally literate communicators who are currently idealized in both expert and popular literature? Or might we have our own ideas about what makes it 'good to talk'?