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## Cultural Influences in a multicultural academic workplace

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### Abstract

This study investigates if there are any cultural influences on language teaching staff in a multicultural British university language centre operating overseas. Language teaching staff who work at British universities in the UK usually involve only two cultures (British and their mother tongue culture). If non-native nationals are involved in two cultures, it is expected that they would conform to the host country's culture. Language teaching staff in this study involve at least three cultures, that is, British, their mother tongue culture and the host country's culture. In the case of the involvement of the three cultures, where do the majority of non-native nationals conform to in a multicultural workplace in the host country? Is it the institution's country's culture where they are based in their educational operation or the host country's culture? This study looks at individual value orientation in decision-making and problem-solving. Discourse analysis of e-mails between 20/10/2013 and 20/01/2014 was used to focus on two main language staff (French and Japanese). The results showed that teaching staff in the multicultural workplace seemed to alter and replace their own value orientations on a mix and match basis, which may affect their preferred culture. It is also suggested that cultural acquisition could occur regardless of the establishment of one's cultural preference.

### Keywords

British culture, French culture, Japanese culture, multicultural workplace

### Introduction

"Three (gardens, bouquets and flowers) are related and part of the same social reality" (Hofstede *et al.*, 2005, p. 286). The metaphor of gardens, bouquets and flowers represents society, organisations and individuals respectively. Individuals are under the influence of organisations which are also under the influence of society. It is hypothesised that an individual's value orientation and actions are influenced by the organisations and society. This metaphor also explains why those who were born, educated and work in a particular culture usually conform to their country's value orientations. Value orientation is defined as the "preferred and shared ways of perceiving the individual's role in relation to the group, relating to each other, conceding and managing time, approaching risk-taking, and understanding tasks and relationships" (Christopher, 2012, p. 192). Value orientation usually becomes a basis for their actions of problem-solving and decision-making.

Organisations and society have become increasingly more globalised and multicultural. It is common that the workplace involves more than one culture. Language centres at universities have always been a multicultural working environment. In the context of the language centres in British institutions, the non-native language teaching staff (who were *not* born and brought up in the UK) in the UK usually involve British and their mother tongue culture and they readily conform to British culture. However, what is the case for the non-native individuals who work in a multicultural workplace involving three cultures, which is the case of this study? The paper is concerned with the multicultural workplace at a British university's language centre operating overseas. The majority of the language teaching staff in this study are *not* born and brought up in the host country and involve three cultures (British, the hosted country's and their mother tongue's). If it is a British university and its working language is English, it seems reasonable to consider that there are influences from British culture. It is also sensible

to consider that there are influences from the host country's educational culture as the majority of students and staffs are native to the country.

The paper starts with the theoretical framework, research methods, data analysis, conclusions and implications.

### **Theoretical framework for British, French and Japanese culture**

Since this study involves British, French and Japanese nationalities, the three cultures are selected as the focus. Hofstede *et al.*'s (2010) quantitative data for individualism–collectivism dimension were used as the framework for the study with regard to whether these countries are on individualism or collectivism side of the individualism–collectivism pole. Hofstede's model has been criticised as "essentialism" (Godwin-Jones, 2013, p. 3) and the use of his cultural categorisation as too stereotypical and simplified, since the reality may be more complex, with various types of people with various perspectives and belief regardless of where they live in the world. However, GLOBE Cultural Taxonomy is still built on Hofstede's work (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 112) and this categorisation is considered relevant for this study. He defined individualism and collectivism as follows: "individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, 1991, p. 51).

According to Hofstede (2005), Britain and France are ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> places respectively among 74 countries (Hofstede, 2005, p. 78), which indicates that they are on an individualist pole. However, although France is considered individualist, the French and the British are dissimilar in this dimension as "the French teams also are based on 'social, professional and family tie' as well as on interpersonal similarity, whereas British negotiators do put much stock in interpersonal similarity" (Lumsden & Lumsden, 2000, p. 61). In contrast, Japan is ranked 33<sup>rd</sup>–35<sup>th</sup> place among 74 countries (Hofstede, 2005, p. 78), with an in-between position. Lustig & Koester (2010, p. 123) also label various countries using two categories, high and low. According to them, UK, France and Japan's scores are +191 (high), +116 (high) and –97 (low) respectively. "A large positive score means that the culture is high on the dimension. A large negative score means that the culture is low on the dimension. The average score is zero" (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 123). According to Lustig & Koester's (2010) model, Japan stands on a collectivist pole. Therefore, this study also considers Japan as a collectivist country.

The next section discusses the three values associated with individualism–collectivism, that is, i) time commitment, ii) guilt and shame, and iii) high- and low-context communications.

### **Time commitment**

Two opposing values associated with a collectivist society on time commitment are "time commitments theoretically desirable but not essential" (Christopher, 2012, p. 52) and "schedule and deadlines are very important" (Christopher, 2012, p. 52). Collectivist countries including Japan consider "time commitments theoretically desirable but not essential" (Christopher, 2012, p. 52). In contrast, individualist societies such as France and the UK consider "schedule and deadlines very important" (Christopher, 2012, p. 52). The use of these two values in multicultural workplaces enables us to identify the influence of opposing culture. For example, if there are the French and British who do not show that "schedules and deadlines are very important" (Christopher: 2012: 52) in their problem-solving or decision-making actions, the collectivist culture may have influenced them to take their action differently.

However, the current globalised teaching, learning and workplace environments should be taken into consideration. The preference for either "time commitments theoretically desirable but not essential" (Christopher, 2012, p. 52) or "schedule and deadlines very important" (Christopher, 2012, p. 52) may not simply be assumed by one's nationality or visual appearance, for ethnicity and heritage may be the influencing factors. Ethnicity is usually decided by one's mother tongue. Majority of people's

ethnicity and mother tongue matches. For example, somebody who speaks Chinese is more likely to be of Chinese nationality, etc. However, ethnicity and nationality do not match in the following case.

People who are involved in two nationalities can have the word “heritage” to describe their nationality such as “Japanese heritage Chinese”. To explain the example of Japanese heritage Chinese, let us take an example of Lauren. She was born and brought up in the Taiwanese education and her name is Chinese. However, she was also educated in the British higher education for 10 years. She was also told to speak Japanese at home with her father who was Japanese and her mother was Chinese. Her nationality (Taiwanese-Japanese) implies that she has been influenced by two cultures (Chinese and Japanese), but she has also been influenced by British culture, which is, then, possible to say that she has been influenced by three cultures. Although other people can easily guess that this Japanese heritage Chinese person behaves similar to either Chinese or Japanese, people may not be able to notice that she has been influenced by British culture unless she tells about her previous cultural experience.

### **Guilt vs. shame**

The concept of guilt vs. shame also relates to individualism–collectivism. It is claimed that “individualist societies have been described as guilt cultures... collectivist societies on the contrary, are shame cultures” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 89). In the collectivist “shame” culture, people expect others to apologise whereas they would not apologise and justify their actions in the individualist and “guilt” culture.

Lustig & Koester (2010) maintain that “the Japanese prefer to... provide an appropriate apology. They want to repair the damage, if possible, but without providing reasons that explain or justify their original error” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 262). “The Japanese hate to hear someone make excuses for his or her mistakes or failures. They do not like long and complicated explanations” (Klopf, 1991, p. 181). On the other hand, the Americans prefer to justify their actions instead of apologising: “Americans would prefer to... provide verbal justifications for their initial actions. They may use humor to divert attention from their actions, but do not apologize for their original error” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 262).

It should be noted that whether the person prefers either “guilt” or “shame” may not simply be assumed by one’s nationality or visual features as other factors, not only ethnicity and heritage (mentioned in “time commitment”), but also previous cultural experiences may be related. Even though it is generally assumed that people with the same nationality think and behave similarly, this assumption is now being challenged, especially in collectivist countries, by the increasing number of people who were born and educated in one country, but have also lived and immersed in another country’s culture for a long period of time. These people may behave and think differently from people of the same nationality and visual features. They may also encounter cultural misunderstandings and problems from people of the same nationality and visual features.

### **High-context – low-context communication**

A high-context culture has the characteristics of “distinct in-groups and out-groups” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 112) and “strong interpersonal bonds” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 112) which relates to collectivism. In contrast, a low-context culture has “flexible in-groups and out-groups” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 112) and “fragile interpersonal bonds” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 112), which relates to individualism.

A high-context communication is

“one in which little has to be said or written because most of the information is either in the physical environment or supposed to be known by the persons involved, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message. This type of communication is frequent in collectivist culture...

A low-context communication is one in which the mass of information is vested in the explicit

code, which is typical for individualist culture. Many things that are self-evident in collectivist cultures must be said explicitly in individualist culture.” (Hofstede, 2005, p. 89)

Generally, “by and large, Eastern societies are considered high-context cultures and Western ones, low-context cultures” (Lim, 2002). Ambiguity and indirection are examples of the Japanese style of communication, which is the opposite of English-speaking countries which value explicitness as English language “uses almost solely logical arguments” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 231).

High-context and low-context communication also relates to “speaker-responsible language” and “listener-responsible language” (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 226). One example of “speaker-responsible languages” is English (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 226), which is expected to provide the structure and specific meaning of the statement (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 226). In other words, speakers are expected to be responsible for delivering their opinions. On the other hand, an example of a “listener-responsible language” is Japanese (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p. 226) which has indirectness and vagueness. “Listener-responsible languages” expect listeners to be responsible for the constructing of speaker’s meaning.

When people from high- and low-context culture communicate, a person who prefers high-context communication and listener-responsible language may wonder why the speaker provides an unnecessary explanation of the evident facts and may get frustrated why the listener does not understand the speaker’s indirect implications. A person who prefers low-context communication and speaker-responsible language may also get frustrated talking with a person who prefers high-context communication and listener-responsible language as the other person does not say things directly and clearly which does not assist in getting to the point. To avoid problems arising from the different communication styles in the current globalised teaching and learning and workplace environments, the best communication mode between high- and low-context communication and the speaker-responsible language and listener-responsible language seems to be to adopt the high-context communication and the speaker responsible language.

Reviewing the current globalised learning and workplace environments, the preference for either high- or low-context culture as well as their preferred communication styles may not simply be assumed by one’s nationality or visual appearances as there are factors which influence one’s preferences not only ethnicity, heritage (mentioned in the “time commitment” section) and previous cultural experience (mentioned in the “guilt and shame” section), but also previously received education. For example, people who were born and educated even in the same country, but of a different generation, may also encounter misunderstandings and problems between the high- or low-context culture as well as communication style due to the different educational policy they received even within the same country.

To summarise, if individuals prefer the values “time commitment desirable but not essential”, “shame”, “speaker responsible language”, “high-context communication”, he/she has a collectivist background. Similarly, if one prefers the values “schedule and deadline important”, “guilt”, “listener responsible language”, and “low-context communication”, he/she has an individualist background.

However, in current globalised learning and workplace environments, the preference for either an individualist or collectivist culture may not simply be assumed by one’s nationality or visual appearances as there are various factors which influence one’s preferences such as ethnicity, heritage, previously received education and previous cultural experience. It should also be noted that people who are born and educated in one country but have lived and immersed in another country’s culture for a long period of time, or people of the same nationality but from a different generation, may also encounter cultural misunderstandings and problems related to the differences of culture from people of the same culture or visual appearances.

## Research methods

The discourse analysis of e-mails was chosen to investigate if there were any impact of cultural influences in a multicultural workplace, as discourse analysis is claimed to be one of the “approaches to the study of organizational discourse that focus on language in use [seek] to provide a detailed examination of talk and text as instances of social practice...” (Grant *et al.*, 2004, p. 9). Furthermore, e-mails were appropriate as data, as there were common understandings among the staff at the Language Centre that e-mails are the most preferred, appropriate and common practice to solve problems over face-to-face or telephone communication. Despite this Language Centre’s common practice among the language staff, Human Resources in the University stipulate electronic mail policy as follows: “...staff in receipt of an e-mail that causes offence or concern should check, where they feel comfortable doing so, with the sender whether the message was misunderstood, preferably face-to-face or over the phone rather than via further e-mail exchange... e-mails should not necessarily overtake written priorities or phone calls... try not to overload people with too many e-mails...”.

More than 100 e-mails were collected related to the problem solving and decision making for the duration of 14 months. Relevant e-mails were selected and the content analysis was carried out in relation to the following two research questions(RQ):

- RQ1. Does a multicultural workplace affect teaching staff’s value orientation on problem-solving and decision-making as well as the attitude in dealing with problems?  
 RQ2. Does a multicultural workplace affect the staff’s preferred culture?

Although the sample of the teaching staff concerns only two nationalities (Japanese and French), all members of the language Centre staff are immersed in the host educational culture and British educational culture as well as other multicultural including Italian, Polish, German and Spanish. It should also be noted that no British language teaching staff were present at this British university’s language centre, which may have an impact on problem-solving and decision-making. However, individuals’ cultural influence on problem-solving and decision-making may be well explored without the direct influence of a British national. The total number of language staff is 20 and 85% of the language Centre were female. The study is demanding as for the generalization of its findings, since it may be difficult to arrive at general conclusions in a British university language centre context or any other country which usually involves only two cultures, let alone a multicultural workplace which involves three cultures, as is the case in this study.

## Data analysis

The e-mails were analysed using the framework of the following three headings: i) time commitment, ii) guilt and shame, and iii) high- and low-context communication.

### i) Time commitment

A French staff showed her collectivist trait in her e-mail: “The start of the examination can always be delayed without compromising the validity of the process.” Her preference was shown by “time commitments theoretically desirable but not essential”. Considering that the French prefers individualism, it seems that she was influenced by the collectivist culture.

### ii) Guilt vs. shame

“Guilt vs. shame” was analysed through a way in which the Japanese and French staff dealt with the problem via e-mails substituting fictional names. In the analysis of ii) guilt and shame and iii) high- and low-context communication, two Japanese and two French staff are involved. Naomi and Lisa are the two Japanese staff. Naomi is Lisa’s line manager. Julie and Marie are the other two French staff. Marie is the exam officer and Julie is the language centre manager.

Naomi sent an e-mail to Julie and Marie reporting Lisa's mistake, which was also copied onto Lisa. Lisa had two options to reply to Naomi, Julie and Marie. The first opinion is to apologise without making an excuse which is Japanese preferred strategy: 'The Japanese hate to hear someone make excuses for his or her mistakes or failures. They do not like long and complicated explanations' (Klopf, 1991, p. 181). The second option is to justify her action which is the American preferred strategy.

Although Lisa is Japanese, she responded with the American (individualist) strategy to Naomi who is also Japanese: "I did not know how long I should have waited for the co-invigilator as the exam was due to start at 9:00 am and students to be seated at 8:50. So I took the initiative to collect the enough squared papers as there was insufficient for the number of students. I realize the serious consequences that could have arose and will not make the same mistake again." Lisa's reply contained justification of her action, but did not include an apology.

In response to Lisa's e-mail, Naomi (Japanese), Marie (French), and Julie (French) responded using either guilt or shame strategy in a combination of "enhancement", which is one of the strategies commonly used in organizational/institutional messages, that is, stressing the importance of an issue (Grant *et al.*, 2004, p. 96). Their responses are explained under the headings of "shame" and "guilt" below:

#### *Shame*

Naomi, who is Japanese, used the concept of "shame" in her e-mail, which is collectivist. Naomi's enhancement is combined with shame through the word "sad" which was used in her e-mail: "it is very sad there are some people who cannot be flexible under the condition that we have variety of nationalities and personalities in this university after some years of study in abroad or to understand what we are saying exactly in any languages." Naomi's use of the word "sad" includes a meaning of "sorry". The meaning of "sorry" is also included in "ashamed".

#### *Guilt*

Marie and Julie, who are both French, used the concept of "guilt". Enhancement was observed by the word "you made a mistake" (guilt), "you should have...". Marie's e-mail included that "you made a mistake", using the word "should" once. Julie's e-mail is also similar to Marie's, but stronger: the use of guilt "[T]his is a very serious professional breach" and the more frequent use, four times, of the word "should".

### **iii) High-context and low-context communication**

#### *Listener-responsible language*

Naomi sent two e-mails asking Lisa to prepare for the course. In Naomi's first e-mail, she ended her e-mail by saying that "it is totally up to you how to use them". Lisa surmised that Naomi made suggestions but not request. Although Lisa is also Japanese, she was unable to read what Naomi really meant because of: a) Naomi's last sentence "totally up to you" and b) Naomi did not specifically write what action she wanted Lisa to take. Lisa found that she misunderstood Naomi when Lisa received Naomi's angry second e-mail. In Naomi's second e-mail, she asked why Lisa did not follow Naomi's instruction: "would you explain what happened and why you did so (i.e. why Lisa did not follow what Naomi told her to do) as a professional language teacher please?" The use of "listener-responsible language" is observed from Naomi's two e-mails. Naomi's logic is based on listener-responsible language and the expectation of Lisa to be responsible for reading Naomi's true intention, although Naomi wrote these e-mails in English which is a speaker-responsible language.

#### *High-context communication*

Naomi prefers high context communication, which means that "most of the information is either in the physical environment or supposed to be known by the persons involved, while very little is in the coded, explicit part of the message." Naomi's ambiguous and contradicting style of communication may



be better explained using Argyris and Schön's theories of action (1974). According to Argyris and Schön (1974), theories on action consist of "theory in use" and "espoused theories". "Espoused theories are those that an individual claims to follow! (Argyris, 1982, p. 81-82) whereas "theories-in-use are those that can be inferred from action" (p. 82). For example, "when someone is asked how he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer he usually gives is his espoused theory of action for that situation. This is the theory of action to which he gives allegiance, and which, upon request, he communicates to others. However, the theory that actually governs his actions is this theory-in-use" (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 6-7)

Based on these definitions, Naomi's "espoused theory" is observed in her first e-mail: "I just reminded that you don't teach until wed, but the exam is this wed afternoon. Therefore I think it would help students if you put them on Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and send them an email to do it by themselves, but it is totally up to you how to use them." In short, Naomi's "espoused theory" is expressed by "totally up to you how to use them". On the other hand, Naomi's "theory-in-use" (Argyris & Schön, p. 1974) can be observed by her second e-mail: "I don't see any mock exam materials there, even oral sample on VLE. Would you explain what happened and why you did so as a professional language teacher please?" Naomi was angry with Lisa as she did not follow her request. Naomi's "theory-in-use" is "why didn't you follow my request? You should have done what I told you to do".

Culture may be one of the reasons behind Naomi's two contradicting e-mails. Christopher (2012) points out that: "culture also influences individual's thinking and cognitive patterns, which in turn influence the way they relate to and interact with one another. Therefore, individual reasoning and problem-solving are culturally dependent and at times result in different ways in learning, understanding and doing things" (Christopher, 2012, p. 86).

Another possible reason behind this misunderstanding and problem may be the difference of previously accumulated cultural experience between Lisa and Naomi. Naomi's style of communication and her e-mails may work with people who prefer high-context and listener-responsible language. It is claimed that "the Japanese style of communication can work only in a rather homogeneous society in which people actually can anticipate each other's needs, wants and reactions. Japanese society is, in fact, extremely homogeneous and more group-oriented than American society" (Clancy, 1986, p. 216). In fact, anticipating each other's needs can be observed between adults and children: "Children are perpetually surrounded by adults who... do everything in their power to understand them, who even anticipate their thoughts and their desires... children do not take the trouble to express themselves clearly..." (Piaget, 2014, p. 61). However, it should not have been assumed that Lisa had a similar communication style just because of her being of the same nationality.

## Conclusions

Reviewing the research questions will enable us to summarise the key conclusions of this study.

RQ1. Does multicultural workplace at the Language Centre affect teaching staff's value orientation on problem-solving and decision-making as well as the attitude dealing with problems?

Data analysis of i) time commitment showed that multicultural workplace affects teaching staff's value orientation on problem-solving and decision-making as well as the attitude in dealing with problems. Julie (French) seemed to alter her value orientations from individualist to collectivist on the time commitment. This suggests that multicultural work environments may include staff from both collectivist and individualist cultures, and the managers of the multicultural workplace may be under pressure to meet the staff's expectations opposite from their own. It is possible to conclude that multicultural workplace affects staff's value orientation on problem-solving and interaction patterns.

From the analysis of ii) guilt and shame, it was possible to observe the French staff's value orientation on problem-solving and decision-making as well as attitude in dealing with problems. Both French staff responded similarly. Japanese staff's value orientation on problem-solving and decision-making as well as the attitude in dealing with problems were observed from the analysis of both ii) guilt

and shame and iii) high- and low-context communication. However, the value orientations of the two Japanese staff were different. Naomi assumed and expected Lisa, who is also Japanese, to think and behave similar to her ("it was my second big mistake to think that you would have same sense" and "we have very different understanding of teaching"). Although both Naomi and Lisa are Japanese, they do not necessarily have to think and behave exactly the same as no one experiences exactly the same cultural experiences in life.

It is commonly assumed that people of the same nationality and physical features think and behave similarly, but this assumption was violated in the data. When a problem occurs among the Japanese staff, Naomi found it difficult to accept the differences. In the non-native country workplace context, some may interpret the differences as personality clashes within the same culture for convenient reasons. This is highlighted as one of new emerging challenges accompanying working in multicultural workplace.

RQ2. Does a multicultural workplace at the Language Centre affect the staff's preferred culture?

In this study, Julie's preferred cultural value was influenced from individualist to collectivist on time commitment. This suggests that the multicultural workplace affects the staff's preferred culture. It also confirms that cultural acquisition could occur after the establishment of one's preferred culture. A multicultural working environment offers numerous opportunities to choose the different cultural values on a mix and match basis as it may include staff from both individualist and collectivist cultures. Individuals have more opportunities to alter and replace the opposite culture, which may lead to the change of one's preferred culture. Behaving and thinking differently from their mother culture may be a superficial act at the beginning, but once they find the experience successful, they may continue to behave in the new way and it may eventually change their preferred culture.

Globalization has allowed people who were brought up in a collectivist society to work in an individualist multicultural workplace environment and *vice versa*. Some people from the collectivist society who work in an individualist culture may still retain their collectivist value orientations while some may adopt individualist values, or some may adopt a mixture of both values, etc. For those who grew up in a collectivist society, the cultural norms of the society are more consistently molded into the individual's value orientations and behaviour through group concepts, with a combination of the family and workplace. It is difficult to change one's acquired culture as it equates to change individual's value orientation and behaviour which accumulated over time. "Over the years, people who are brought up in a certain culture are 'committed' to their culture and to deny any part of it is to deny something within their own being" (Hinkel, 1999, p. 7).

### **Implications**

Those who work in institutions which involve three or more cultures seem to encounter more complicated cultural influences than those which involve two cultures. Although multicultural workplaces could bring different perspectives, creativity and innovation allowing better solutions to the problem, truly multicultural workplace environment of more or less equal number of various multicultural staff may encounter a weakness, that is, difficulty in getting consensus of opinions and misunderstandings could easily arise. Therefore, more caution is advised for those who are involved in more than three cultures to maintain harmony in their organisational culture. If institutions that consist of three cultures recruit the majority of multicultural staff from the country which the institution originally comes from, it equates with the creating of the workplace environment of two cultures. Hence, the management of "multiculture" may be easier. This point may be worth taking into consideration for people at managerial positions in managing a multicultural workplace.



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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. Naomi, Marie, and Julie's responses to Lisa's e-mail

Naomi's e-mail to Marie, Julie and Lisa	Marie's e-mail to Lisa	Julie's e-mail to Lisa
<p>"It is very sad that there are some people who cannot be flexible under the conditions that we have variety of nationalities and personalities in this university after some years of study in abroad, or to understand what we are saying exactly in any languages. I hope all of us could have peaceful time and anniversary after 20th of January."</p>	<p>"you made a mistake. It can happen. However you should have read carefully the procedure that invigilators has to follow during an examination. This kind of mistake could have serious consequences...."</p>	<p>"you should be well placed to know quite how much work is involved in the production. This is a very serious professional breach .... You should have waited in the examinations room for your co-invigilator's arrival ... you should have sought to borrow one from a student or sent an email to the Faculty Office - but under no circumstances should you have left the room empty..."</p>

### Appendix 2. Interpreting Naomi's actions using Argyris and Schon's theory

Naomi's espoused theory:	Naomi's e-mail to Lisa
<p>Lisa would do what I meant although I wrote in the e-mail "it is totally up to you how to use them"</p> <p>Naomi's theory-in-use:</p> <p>Why Lisa didn't follow my request? Lisa should put the mock exam materials on VLE and send students an email to do it</p>	<p>"I just reminded that you don't teach until wed, but the exam is this wed afternoon. Therefore I think it would help students if you put them on VLE and send them an email to do it by themselves, but it is totally up to you how to use them(= mock exam materials)."</p>
	<p>"I don't see any mock exam materials there, even oral sample on VLE. Would you explain what happened and why you did so as a professional language teacher please?"</p>