

## Some important points:

- Neither communication style is inherently better, more effective, or morally superior.
- It is a continuum, not a binary – everyone uses both to some extent, but at different frequencies and in different situations.
- There is cross-cultural variation in directness, with some cultures preferring one or the other style in general.
- There is also a lot of intracultural variation, affected by gender, age, personality and many other factors.

## More Indirect speaking strategies (adapted from Storti's *Figuring Foreigners Out*):

- Understatement
- Changing the subject
- Saying yes
- Saying nothing
- Telling a seemingly unrelated story
- Asking a question in response to a question
- Returning to a previously agreed upon point
- Asking what the other person thinks when asked for an opinion
- Qualifying language (probably, perhaps, I think so, almost, maybe, etc.)
- Answering a previous question later in a conversation

## Misinterpretation can happen both ways:

- Example: "There might be a little problem with your plan."
- If both speakers are direct or both are indirect, miscommunication is unlikely to occur, BUT...
- A person from a more direct culture listening to a more indirect speaker will hear: "I don't have any strong objections," when really the opposite was conveyed.
- A person from a more indirect culture listening to more direct speaker will hear: "I am very concerned and have an important critique for you to consider," when that was not the intended message at all.

**Let's practice "code-switching," or moving back and forth between different styles.**

For each of the statements below, decide if it is more direct or more indirect, and then rewrite it on the other side of the continuum:

1. It is cold in here.
  - a. More direct or more indirect (circle one)
  - b. Code-switch \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. We understand your proposal very well.
  - a. More direct or more indirect (circle one)
  - b. Code-switch \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. I will try my best to get that done on time.
  - a. More direct or more indirect (circle one)
  - b. Code-switch \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. I'd like to make one small suggestion.
  - a. More direct or more indirect (circle one)
  - b. Code-switch \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Does anyone have any other ideas?
  - a. More direct or more indirect (circle one)
  - b. Code-switch \_\_\_\_\_

**It's all about context and perspective:** Whether statements are perceived as direct or indirect, in the end, depends upon the speaker and the listener in any given situation!