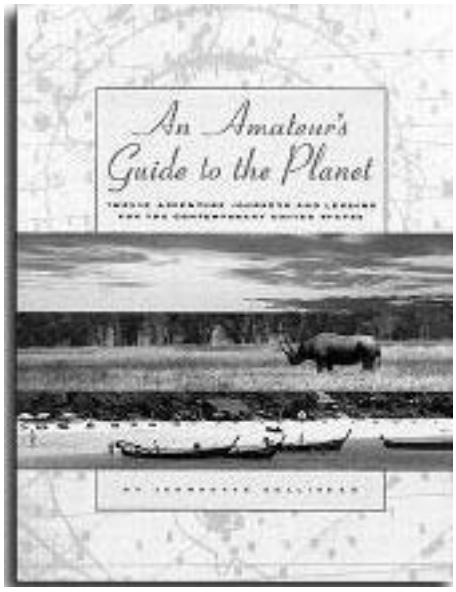
Missiology and intercultural communication

Professors' study guide

Based on ***An Amateur's Guide to the Planet***

By Jeannette Belliveau



What could be more fun for your students than learning about missiology and intercultural communication from adventure tales? Here are lessons based on the world's most exotic places.

12 intercultural communication units
Each with 3 to 7 discussion questions

Missiology study guide
THEMES:

An Amateur's Guide to the Planet 's smorgasbord of adventures are fun, informative and motivational. They provide a basis for cross-cultural understanding. From these brief, intense forays across the globe we begin to sense the connections between culture and history, climate, diet, religion, social and economic systems, and child rearing. Communication in foreign cultures is likewise affected by the options a culture provides to meet universal human needs.

OBJECTIVES

- To obtain an overview of the real-world experiences of missionaries.
- To contrast American culture and communication patterns with other world cultures.
- To identify fundamental dynamics of cultural conflict and miscommunication.
- To understand what skills can make a person a skilled cultural explorer.

(1) The role of modern missionaries.

Based on the third chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Borneo.

Students will be able:

- To recognize how the role of missionaries has evolved considerably in the 20th century.
- To debate the effects of effects of missionaries on isolated societies compared to the interactions with backpackers, anthropologists and Peace Corps volunteers.

Directions:

Read pp. 56-60, on pilot Emile Borne, a missionary in Borneo, and "Borneo and the big lesson: the role of modern missionaries," pp. 69-72.

Discussion points:

- How has the role of modern missionaries changed? (Missionaries are more likely to be tending the sick, educating children and providing air transportation than to be attempting direct conversions to Christianity. Also, now many missionaries are Third World nationals.)
- Do you think it is important for missionaries to respect the local cultures they work with? How have Roman Catholic missionaries attempted to do this? (By incorporating local customs into religious ceremonies.) Why does the Roman Catholic Church take this approach? (Because it values the

institution of the family, and the family transmits cultural values, so these are considered worthy of respect.)

• What admirable qualities does University of Amsterdam professor Sjaak van der Geest see in many missionaries? (They acquire vast knowledge through their long time commitments to an area; they are open to transcendent religious experience in a way often shared by the local population; they believe that the fate of the souls of the local people are important.)

• Do you agree with van der Geest that, if one accepts change as a normal part of life, "it will be agreed that the prevention of change in indeed 'change' in another more complex sense of the term." His implication is that the change wrought by traders, logging personnel, missionaries, anthropologists, Peace Corps volunteers and tourists to isolated societies is inevitable.

(2) Cultural maps of Heaven

Based on the 11th chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* "Earthly paradises: Java and Bali and how we view Heaven."

Students will be able:

• To recognize how scholars have traditionally depicted Heaven and how this image jibes with many tropical vacation destinations.

• To understand that many people--including Americans--look at Heaven as being like their homes.

Directions:

Read "Viewing the mirrorlike paddies," p. 212.

Read "Java and Bali and the big lesson: How we view Heaven," pp. 215-18, including "Heaven as a place to resolve premature passings," box, p. 218.

Discussion points:

• What themes have been central to images of paradise or Heaven? (The garden or oasis.) How did early writers envision the earthly paradise? (A peaceful, well-watered place with a springtime climate, perfumed breezes, fruit trees and long-lived inhabitants with no need to work.)

• Where do modern travelers go to satisfy ancient human longings for an earthly paradise? (To Bali, the South Pacific islands, and the Caribbean, Mexico, Florida and Hawaii.)

• What peoples regard their homes as Heaven? (The Balinese, Polynesians, and to an extent even Americans.)

• What aspect of unfinished business on Earth preoccupies many people about an afterlife in Heaven? (The prospect of reunion with family members.)

(3) Two kinds of Buddhism: Burma vs. Thailand.

Based on the 7th and 10th chapters of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Thailand and Burma.

Students will be able:

• To recognize how two neighboring countries nominally of the same religion can have vastly different cultures and influences.

Directions:

Read "Yin and yang, Burma and Thailand," box, p. 192, and "Flash forward: the political deterioration since 1988," box, p. 194. If time permits, read the full chapters on Thailand, pp. 135-46, and Burma, pp. 183-202.

Discussion points:

• How are Thailand and Burma similar? (They are adjoining nations, both nominally Buddhist, sharing the Indochinese and Malay peninsulas.)

• How are they different? (Thailand is far more affluent, Burma is still more unmaterialistically spiritual. More precisely, Thailand was the world's fastest-growing economy from 1985-94, while Burma is the world's poorest non-African nation.)

• What are some explanations for the profound differences in these two adjoining countries? (Brutal repression in Burma, India's cultural influence on Burma, and China's cultural influence on Thailand.) Are there other places where the influences of India and China compete? (Yes, in Malaysia and Indonesia one sees the influence of Chinese art and trading and Indian epic tales such as the Ramayana.)

(4) Poverty: Burma's hidden riches challenge the West and reveal three different definitions of poverty.

Based on the 10th chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Burma.

Students will be able:

• To recognize how poverty has come to be defined historically.

• To understand three different definitions of poverty found in the world today.

• To debate the true nature of Western poverty.

Directions:

Form an impression of the people of Burma, such as Pottos, Maung Nyo and the smiling peasant seen from a train window by reading pp. 190-193.

Read "Burma and the big lesson: the nature of poverty," pp. 196-202.

Discussion points:

• Who came up with the concept of the "poverty line"? (British social thinker Charles Booth, in 1886.)

• How do European nations define poverty? (Many say the poor are those whose earnings falls in the bottom quarter of the national range.) How does the United States define poverty? (The poverty line is three times the dollar amount needed to buy a nutritious but low-cost diet.)

• What is the United Nations' definition of absolute poverty? (When a person does not have the means to purchase sufficient food to ensure 2,250 calories per day.)

• What material things do the U.S. poor typically possess? (VCRs, washing machines, telephones, color televisions and refrigerators.) What material things do the U.S. poor typically lack? (Personal computers, dishwashers.) How do the U.S. poor compare to the overall populations of many European nations in terms of appliances owned? (Sixty percent of the U.S. poor have VCRs, compared to lower proportions of Dutch people, Belgians, Germans, Swiss, French and Italians.

• How can we define the true nature of U.S. poverty? (Not fully participating the economy, which typically happens to a family headed by a woman only.)

• What three types of poverty exist in the world? (Grinding poverty, as evidenced by disease, hunger and slow starvation, such as in found in parts of India and Bangladesh. Genteel shabbiness, as found in Burma. An ability to fully participate in the middle-class lifestyle, as is found in the United States.)

(5) Etiquette

Based on the fifth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Japan.

Students will be able:

• To understand that directness, as found in American and Australian society (and to an extent, in China and the Netherlands as well) is not the norm in the rest of the world.

• To recognize that Japan shares many parallels with Britain, another formal society.

• To grasp that the manners required of a visitor in Japan or Britain are likely to be closer to appropriate behavior for small villages around the world than U.S. directness and openness.

Directions:

Read the fifth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 99-116.

Discussion points:

• What little things must the American traveler to Japan be aware of (p. 99)? (To address people by their last names, to exchange business cards ceremoniously, to avoid the word "no," to speak softly and to refrain from asking personal questions.)

• What other nation shares much of Japan's approach to great politeness? (Britain.) What are some of these similarities? (Thirty-one are shown in the box on page 100.) What are some of the geographical and historical reasons for both nations' emphases on discretion and subtlety? (Fear of invasion, having an older culture.)

• What aspects of life in Japan tend to confound visitors the most (pp. 106-08)? (Communal sleeping rooms, raw fish, attitudes toward personal cleanliness.) But which of these same cultural aspects are now appearing in American life? (California hot tubs and Jacuzzis, futons, sushi bars and the emphasis on lightness in nouvelle French and American cuisines.)

• Are there any lessons on how to behave in Japan that also apply to the developing world? (Yes--most of the world's cultures employ some varieties of indirectness in their communication, as linguist Deborah Tannen points out. So speaking softly and in a formal way may work in rustic or isolated societies as well as in Japan and Britain.)

• What geographic and historical factors make continental nations, such as the United States, China, Canada, Brazil and Australia, more direct and less formal (pp. 115-16)? (These nations, except China, are younger, more democratic, less homogeneous and more frontier-like in spirit.)

• How many expatriate Americans live in Japan (p. 104)? (32,000. Note to professor: about 50,000 Americans live in Britain). What can they expect to learn from their overseas experience? (How to communicate in a more subtle and respectful fashion, the importance of keeping their voice volume down.)

• What are some easy ways to get to meet Japanese people (pp. 108-11)? (Attend baseball games and visit a karaoke bar--especially productive in a city of open people such as Hiroshima.)

(6) Intercultural communication in Madagascar: Translating language and culture

Based on the first chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Madagascar.

Students will be able:

• To comprehend three factors that can complicate communications in remote areas: unusual language structures, superstition and little flow of information in agricultural villages.

Directions:

Read the first chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 5-28, including the box on p. 17, "Competence in Speaking Malagasy."

Discussion points:

• How does Jeannette's conversation with Chariffa (p.10) illuminate the lack of information in the daily lives of the Malagasy? (Chariffa asks whether America is a good place or not.)

• How does the cab driver named Abdul (p. 11) easily overcome the language barrier with Jeannette, Jim and Stephany? (He used pantomime and exquisite pronunciation to provide practical information.)

• What misunderstanding occurred with Madame Madio (p. 14) on the island of Nosy Komba? (The Americans thought that when she said that she would arrange a boat for them--bateau in French--that this meant a motorized vessel rather than a leaky dugout canoe.)

• What happens when Jeannette's group tries to check into a hotel in Diego Suarez (p. 17)? (The innkeepers gaze off in the distance.)

• What are problems account for the difficulties with the hotel staff and other miscommunications in Madagascar (box, p. 17)? (French is a second language for both the Malagasy and English-speaking visitors. Sentences in Malagasy do not follow the same word order as in Romance languages. And life in agricultural areas often varies little year to year, making information a scarce good to be hoarded.)

• To enter Madagascar's parks, Jeannette, Jim and Stephany pay money directly to park officials (p. 18). What do the Malagasy call these payments? (A cadeau, French for "gift.") What would Americans typically call these payments? (A bribe.) What does the word "cadeau" connote for the Malagasy people? (That the payment is a tip for the happily extended service of showing off the park.)

• Jim and Stephany told Jeannette, the only French speaker in their group, that without her they would never have gotten out of the Antananarivo airport (p. 21). Why did Jeannette find translating in Madagascar so exhausting? (She had to translate both a language and a culture, and as a journalist used to using English with all its nuances, she felt frustrated in not being able to express herself.)

(7) Intercultural communication in China: Inventive ways around the language barrier

Based on the second chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet*, on China.

Students will be able:

• To recognize the worldwide popularity of English study, and how this has created a younger generation of English speakers in China.

• To realize how Christian schools created an older generation of English speakers in China.

• To realize the importance of gesture, pantomime and creativity in successful nonverbal communication.

• To enjoy ways that street level encounters provide a window into the soul of a nation of 1 billion people.

Directions:

Read the second chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 29-54.

Discussion points:

• What was the first obstacle Jeannette faced in communicating in China (p. 31)? (She couldn't absorb any of the simple sentences in her phrasebook, such as "Do you speak English?") But who materialized to help her? (An elderly hotel employee booked her room and helped her buy a bus ticket.) And what words does she know by the end of her first day in China (p. 32)? (The Chinese words for thank you, rice and tea.)

• What factors made communicating on day 2, in the little village of Yangshuo, relatively easy (pp. 32-34)? (Wen Pantian spoke English, Jeannette showed him and little village girls her Chinese phrasebook, and she also shared photos of her family.)

NOTE to professor: The encounter with Wen helps illustrate the fact that more than 200 million Chinese people are studying English, often on their own with tapes at night after work.

• What aspects of Jeannette's encounters in Yangshuo remained rather mystifying even given Wen's knowledge of English? (Her photo showing the family dog created confusion, as dogs often eaten in southern China; and the rowdiness of the audience at the local movie theater seemed startling.)

• Jeannette describes an awful train ride in China. How did her phrasebook come in handy? (She used it to ask for a first-class ticket, to thank the ticket taker who helped her leave third class, and to "converse" with a Chinese factory manager and his wife.)

• Jeannette describes on-the-street encounters with Bao Shaokui in Beijing (p. 41), an engineer's assistant in Chongqing (p. 43), and a bunkmate on a Yangtze River boat (p. 44). What can an American learn in such conversations? (That the Chinese will engage in reverse bargaining over a worn coat to be gracious to a foreign guest; that descriptions of U.S. affluence may shock the Chinese and offend their pride; that the Chinese show great nimbleness and inventiveness in nonverbal communication.)

• After the Tiananmen Square revolt, Jeannette returns to China and meets Yutong (p. 50-51) in Suzhou and loses her American Express travelers' cheques in Shanghai (box, p. 50-51). What do these encounters reveal about communication in China? (Yutong's remark, "God bless you," reflects the Chinese use of secret code and indirectness to reflect resistance to an atheistic government. And Jeannette's experiences at the Bank of China show that a gluey bureaucracy explains much of daily frustration in China, perhaps more than any language barrier.)

(8) Intercultural communication in Borneo: Guides offer windows into a culture

Based on the third chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Borneo.

Students will be able:

• To learn how they, as crosscultural communicators, will need trusted guides as "windows" into a different culture.

• To appreciate how immersion speeds acquisition of a language.

• To assess whether missionaries operate as effective communicators, and whether their translations of the Bible into 1,200 languages indicates respect for language as the signpost of culture.

Directions:

Read the third chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 55-72.

Discussion points:

• Jeannette faces the same obstacle upon landing by missionary's airplane in upcountry Borneo as she did in China: no idea as to how to proceed without knowing the local language (pp. 59-62). How did this problem resolve itself? (Onas, a young Kenyah tribesman, met her at the airport and talked in Indonesian with Emile Borne, her missionary pilot. Together they set a plan allowing her to explore a bit and fly out in four days. And Onas began language drills in Indonesian as they hiked to a nearby village to observe a ceremony.)

• How did Onas reflect ingenuity in communicating (p. 63)? (Asked what "tanjung" meant in English, he grabbed a map of South Africa and ran his finger under the Cape of Good Hope, indicating that "tanjung" meant "cape.")

• Why did Onas' sister Rosmina find Jeannette comical (p. 64)? (Because Jeannette had carried rice into a rice-growing area.)

• How many languages did Jeannette and Genevieve, a traveler from Quebec, use during their stay with Dorothe and Andreas in Long Ampung (p. 65)? (Four: English, French, Indonesian and Kenyah, the local language.) What are possible explanations for Genevieve's virtuosity with Indonesian and Kenyah? (Being from Quebec, she was already bilingual in French and English and more acquainted than many Americans with the skills needed to be multilingual. Additionally, Indonesian is one of the world's easiest languages to learn.)

• During a visit to a longhouse in Lidung Payau (p. 68), how do the Westerners communicate with Ibu, the mother of the family? (Jeannette gave Ibu beads as a gift, and Ibu taught her names for various beads in Kenyah. As in China, the longhouse residents also looked at photographs of Jeannette's family, and had a big laugh when she began bleeding from a leech bite on the longhouse floor.)

• How does missionary pilot Borne communicate with the Dayaks of inland Borneo (p. 71)? (In Indonesian.) How many languages have missionaries translated the Scriptures into? (1,200.) Do you feel that the language abilities of missionaries and the 1,200 Bible translations indicate sensitivity to local cultures, as believe author Belliveau and anthropologist van der Geest, or that the introduction of Christianity undermines respect for local traditions, as stated by professors Maxwell and Rousseau?

(9) Intercultural communication in Kenya and Tanzania: Warmth and laughter bridge cultures

Based on the fourth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on East Africa.

Students will be able:

• To understand how the courtesy of learning a local language such as Swahili pays dividends.

• To recognize how overgenerous gift-giving during travel may be unadvisable.

• To appreciate differences between African and African-American communication styles.

Directions:

Read the fourth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 73-98.

Discussion points:

• Jim is quite popular with Kenyans met at the remote Florida Day and Night Club outside Lake Nakuru (p. 79). What aspects of his personality appeal to them? (He is friendly and prepared to roar with laughter at their banter. Additionally, Sam and Gladys seemed flattered at the arrival of foreign guests at their local roadhouse.)

• The children at the Masai village outside Masai Mara ask visitors for T-shirts, pens, chewing gum and money (p. 80). Is such interaction healthy for both parties? (No, the Masai children become supplicants, and the Western visitors are looked at as Santa Clauses.) What is a better way for travelers to approach the matter of giving gifts? (Give gifts out, not casually, but when a relationship has been established. For example, Jeannette gave Ampung in Borneo a pen after staying with his family several days and after it became clear he needed one for school. For small kindnesses, items such as postcards from home, crafts handmade personally, Time magazine for Chinese friends and beads for people in upcountry Borneo can be quite welcome.)

• What small step does Jeannette take to communicate with a security officer at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport and what is the result (p. 95)? (A single word of Swahili charms the officer and leads to a pleasant encounter, showing the value of attempting to learn local languages.)

• Jeannette, Jim and Stephany enjoy their encounters with Sam, Gladys, Omar, Ali Hamed, Bopol, Bore and others in Kenya (p. 97). How did these Kenyans seem different to African-Americans? (Most East Africans neither wore the "mask" that evolved among African-Americans during slavery to conceal their true feelings nor projected "attitude.") What communications issues may arise for African Americans traveling in Africa? (They may find the experience a joyous homecoming and encounter with the creativity of Africans; or they may encounter corruption and incompetence that create a gulf between the African-American traveler and the local people.)

(10) Intercultural communication in Polynesia: Why language and culture survive

Based on the sixth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Tahiti and Hawaii.

Students will be able:

• To appreciate which factors allow culture and language, its cardinal indicator, to survive, by examining Tahiti compared to Hawaii.

• To understand the ease of experiencing daily life with a Tahitian family for anyone who speaks French and stays in family-run lodgings.

• To know the importance of French as a traveler's or expatriate's language in Polynesia, West Africa, the Caribbean and Madagascar, and the applicability of French to picking up Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.

Directions:

Read the sixth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 117-34.

Discussion points:

• What does a church service on Bora Bora indicate about the survival of local culture (p. 118)? (The service is conducted in Tahitian as well as French, and the use of the Tahitian language indicates cultural survival.)

• How do Tahitians such as Deborah and Simone view sharks (p. 125-27)? (With admiration rather than fear, and with specific knowledge of which species are safe and which are harmful.)

• How do the Tahitians Jeannette meets such as Deborah and Simone, and earlier Fredo on Bora Bora (pp. 118-122) tend to communicate? (Through invitations to share activity rather than words, which they use sparingly!) What are the keys to experiencing daily life with a Tahitian family? (Willingness to help with food gathering and preparation, writing letters in English, or fishing).

• How does Hawaii compare to Tahiti in the preservation of Polynesian language (p. 128, p. 131)? (Some Hawaiian words crop up in everyday use, but Hawaiian is rarely spoken in public in complete sentences. Professor Sinoto notes on p. 131 that the use of Tahitian is being eroded on the main island of Tahiti, but not on its outislands.)

• Why does Polynesian culture survive to a greater extent on Tahiti and its islands than in Hawaii (pp. 131-34)? (Tahiti has a higher number of Polynesians, is farther from the overwhelming cultural influences of the United States and Japan and has fewer tourists.) What drawbacks are associated with the greater Polynesian cultural survival among Tahitians (p. 247)? (Tahitians lack political power. Because they are more assimilated into the American mainstream, Polynesian Hawaiians have achieved greater political representation, including the U.S. Senate and governor's seat in Hawaii, and now seem to be catching up in cultural awareness as well.)

(11) The Yucatan: A birthplace of written communication

Based on the ninth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on the Yucatan.

Students will be able:

• To appreciate how, as in Tahiti and Brazil, language survival among the Maya indicates cultural survival as well.

• To understand a few practical ways to communicate during travel.

• To realize the profound implications of the creation of a written language in the isolated Americas.

Directions:

Read the ninth chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 167-82.

Discussion points:

• Why might women may enjoy greater ease in communicating with the Maya than with western Mexicans (box, p. 170)? (The Maya generally are less macho and gentler, and have numerous cultural differences with central and western Mexicans.)

• Is Mayan a living language (box, p. 171; and p. 173)? (Yes, by 1996 signs at the ruins of Coba appeared in Maya as well as Spanish and English; see photo, p. 171. And Mauro the restaurant proprietor is one of 5 million Maya who keep this language alive and even teach it to passing tourists.)

• How can travelers communicate better with local people (box, p. 174; and p. 176)? (See tips 1, 2 and 8 in box: make certain you are not accidentally confusing people; keep to the menu; learn essential local words!) Note to professor: See more on this topic in the next unit on Burma. What sports topic can be of great interest in Mexico, as it is in Japan? (Baseball! See discussion with tour bus driver who likes the Baltimore "Or-ree-OH-les.")

• In what way were the Maya one of civilization's earliest communicators (p. 180)? (They were one of the first peoples to invent writing, which also arose independently in Sumeria, China, Egypt and the Indus Valley in Pakistan.) What do you find more impressive about the Maya: their pyramids or the glyphs that adorn them and link the Maya to the modern writer at a computer?

(12) Brazil: A crescent called New Africa

Based on the 12th chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* on Brazil.

Students will be able:

• To see the interplay between geography, the African diaspora, and language and cultural survival, and to realize links between the United States and Caribbean, and more broadly the eastern Americas, and Africa.

• To see how street-level encounters shed light on Brazil's Amazonian Indians and its African, European and mixed-race descendents.

• To be encouraged that a new language can be learned when in a sink-or-swim situation.

Directions:

Read the 12th chapter of *An Amateur's Guide to the Planet,* pp. 219-246.

Discussion points:

• What do encounters with Roberto and Marcus, two guides in the Pantanal, reveal about race relations in Brazil (box, p. 222, and p. 224). (Roberto becomes the first person to puncture Brazil's myth of racial democracy to the Belgian family he is guiding, and in a separate incident, Marcus casually uses the n-word, affirming Roberto's observations.)

• How does Christao, an Amazonian Indian, interact with the world of the jungle (pp. 227-30)? (By scent and hearing, as well as by sight.) What advantage do Melissa and Mario have in communicating with Christao? (Melissa speaks four languages, including Portuguese, and was a translator at the Barcelona Olympics; Mario is a native Brazilian and speaker of Portuguese.)

• What simple connections does Jeannette find with Brazilians in Alcantara and Salvador (pp. 232-239)? (She talks with Toquino about soccer, the national passion; with Ivan, Fernando and Luis about their school, John Kennedy Elementary; with Zinha about handsome men; and with Emile about her grandfather, who was also called Emile.) What factors enable Jeannette to suddenly begin speaking Portuguese (p. 234)? (Zinha speaks well enunciated Portuguese and offers many contextual clues. And Jeannette no longer is traveling with people who speak both English and Portuguese and must sink or swim, speaking Portuguese in a town that hasn't had an overnight American visitor in 12 years.)

• Why can Emile and his fellow participants in a trance ceremony in Salvador chant, a century after the end of the slave trade, in Yoruba, the daily language of 20 million in Nigeria and Benin (pp. 236-38, nap graphic, p. 220, box, p. 244)? (Greater numbers of African descendants lead to the preservation of

language and culture in Brazil, with 50 percent to 75 percent of the population descended from Africans, vs. the southeastern United States, with 30 percent or less.)

• What factors related to the type of slavery in Brazil led to greater survival of African customs? (Many Brazilian slaves shared the bond of Islam, lived in cities rather than rural areas and been transported more recently from Africa than American slaves.)

• What drawbacks are associated with the greater African cultural survival among Afro-Brazilians? (The historic head start of acculturation among African Americans has been linked to their greater success in education, politics and health in the United States compared to Brazil. Afro-Brazilians have an illiteracy rate of about 30 percent and typically have the equivalent of a second-grade education.)

• In what part of the United States do some people speak an African-influenced language? (On the Sea Islands off Georgia and South Carolina, where Gullah is spoken.) Why have African-influenced languages survived in these islands? (For the same reason they survive in Brazil: a high concentration of African-descended people.)

• What practical steps can the traveler to Brazil take to communicate better? (Get language tapes of Portuguese showing photos of Rio rather than Lisbon on the cover. Brazilian Portuguese is somewhat different, more rolling and Africanized. Listening to Brazilian music and world beat helped Jeannette to recognize the Yoruba language at the trance ceremony and make the fascinating connection that Yoruba survived in the Americas.)

Conclusions for the cultural explorer

What must a person do to be a good cultural explorer?

• Realize that we are different from most of the people in the developing world: we have easier lives, we are likely to be less religious, less family oriented, we are less likely to speak more than one language, we muddy our English with jargon, sports talk and surfer-dude lingo.

• Realize that we are less connected to land and ancestors

• Find a local guide, formal or informal, to serve as a guide into the local culture and as a window into the soul of a place.

What steps can an English speaker take to be a better communicator?

• Realize that gesture and pantomime can work wonders (see material on China).

• If you plan to travel widely around different world regions, you may find French to be the most useful second language (see material on Madagascar and Polynesia.)

• Always purchase language tapes and try to learn the basics of the language for each place you are visiting. One source for books and other learning materials in more than 170 languages from Amharic to Zulu is Travel Books and Language Center, 4437 Wisconsin Ave., Washington, D.C. 20016, tel. (202) 237-1322, fax (202) 237-6022, toll free 1-800-220-2665.

What themes does An Amateur's Guide to the Planet present about communication?

• That many people in the developing world possess stupendous facility with language (note encounters in China and Borneo).

• That language is a key indicator of cultural survival and provides useful cues to effective crosscultural communication, and that nonverbal cues and pantomime help the traveler enormously as well.

• (See p. 247:) That travelers need to establish simple connections with people, such as by showing off family photographs; learning the language via local children, and staying in family-run lodging.

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