Language Exercise

We identified a number of cross-cultural variables in how people use language. I organized them into the following groups:

A. words, syntax, meaning
B. tone, volume, rate
C. direct/indirect, turn-taking, interruption
D. content
E. use of silence

Now, we’d like you to choose either group C, D, or E and make some finer distinctions among the variables. (Group A is too difficult unless you are a linguist, and Group B is too simple!). For example:

Group C: What does it mean that one way of talking is more direct than another? What are different ways people can interrupt one another and take control of the conversation?

Group D: Brainstorm a few examples of what is acceptable/unacceptable content to discuss in different cultures. Are some topics acceptable for only some subgroups to talk about?

Group E: From your reading, how is silence viewed in different cultures?

Be ready to discuss your findings with the rest of the class.