Preface

Everyone is talking about intercultural communication and globalization but how can we train our students to think globally? The key is in the 3 C's. Understanding what Culture is, realizing strategies to Communicate those ideas, and then making Connections on a personal level.

Finding Connections follows interesting characters on an interconnected journey through 15 scenes that will present situations and language strategies to help students to make connections with those from other cultures. It is a character-driven book that also has a built-in teaching video of me in each chapter.

Speaking a foreign language fluently is not enough. There has to be a connection to the people and culture if one truly wants to understand the target language. Every culture has customs, humor, ways of thinking and rules of engagement that are somewhat unique. The idea for *Finding Connections* began years ago, in my efforts to help my students to understand, not just the English language, but also to provide them some insights into American culture.

The characters in this book are completely different from other books I have done. The scenes were true collaborations between the actors, crew, and myself. The situation and motivations of each character were decided upon but I never held the actors too close to the script. I wanted the language to be as natural as possible. The result, I hope, is a collection of fun and interesting scenes where the characters have been allowed to create something—true to themselves and their unique experiences of America.

The idea for the strategy videos came about for a couple of reasons. First, the videos are multi-layered. There is subtext that is just as important as what the characters actually say. This should be examined if learners are to get the most out of each scene. Next, there is absolutely a need for students to practice note taking. It is an essential academic skill that needs to be taught and practiced. The difference between spoken and written discourse cannot be taught without students experiencing it firsthand.

Finally, I hope the pleasure we took in making this book comes through to those watching. I believe every learner will find something interesting and exciting to discuss. Our goal is that this book can play a small part in helping students on their own journey in finding their connections in the years to come.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thank you to the Fluent Films actors because of your input, the videos are twice as good:

Jenny: Chrystal Chau
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Vinh: Nhan Du
Maya: Lipica Shah
Zac: Austin Mitchell
Lily: Caitin Mehner
Heather: Arami Malaise
Kate: Rachel Kaplove
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Max: Matt Dumont

I'd like to thank Ted Kerley, Jerry Caraccioli, and Simon in Morocco for all the logistical support. You made your homes our homes.

Next, to the Fluent Films crew: Eri Togami who also appears in 2 videos as "woman in the room." Arami Malaise, script supervisor extraordinaire, and Sarah Moliski who pulled double duty more than once, acting and as production assistant on the same day. Finally, to the indefatigable Jenny P.L. Tatsumi, who had more roles than I can mention. From makeup, lighting, catering, and shooting to name a few—you always gave it your all. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you to the City of New York. There is usually no place else I'd rather be.

Last but not least, the team at Kinseido. I remember the first night I pitched *Finding Connections* to Nishida-san and Imakado-san. To my surprise, they liked the idea as much as I did. I am particulary indebted to Imakado-san though, without his guidance and patience, this project would never have been possible.

                                                        Todd Rucynski

Unit Overview

⬡ Warm Up: Survey / Ranking

Ranking is a quick and easy way to activate learners and get them introduced to the theme. The hope is that conversation will follow. Examples are provided to help.

⬡ Reading

A short reading of the same theme follows vocabulary and points of view will differ from the video segment. Questions follow to elicit opinions.

⬡ Let's Watch! 1

Only the first half of the video is shown so that students can learn to listen actively and predict what will come next.

What did you hear?

After reading the 3 questions, students will find chosen lines of exactly what each character has said. This should lead to some grammar discussion as well as only one answer is possible in the given context.

⬡ Let's Watch! 2

Learners will watch the second half of the video here.

Before Watching: Predict!

Learners will read the possible answers and predict based on what they have learned about the characters and situation in the first half.

Watch Again: Pop up questions

Here we watch the whole video. Four questions will pop up onto the screen. The questions are more in-depth and the challenge for the learners is to have remembered what they saw in the first viewing.

This is an opportunity for students to voice their opinions on the theme and video.

Strategies for Improving Communication

This is a note-taking exercise that also reviews the video situation and offers advice and strategies for improving communication.

Strategies: Note Taking

The first thing you realize when trying to take notes is that spoken language is different from written. The tongue is much faster than the hand. You can, however, learn certain techniques to write more quickly. To do this, you will have to make a system of abbreviations or symbols that you understand. You do not have to learn a set system. You can make your own but here are some ideas:

Using symbols. These are common words and most you are familiar with the symbols because of your keyboard.

& = and	w/o = without
? = question	b/c = because
% = percent	@ = at
w/ = with	

Standard abbreviations

ie = in other words
eg = example

Using only the first syllable of the word or leaving out final letters.

con = conservative	max = maximum
imp = important	intro = introduction
ind = individual	

Start with a fresh sheet of paper. You want to make sure you have enough space.

Do not try to write everything. Listen for discourse markers and words that are stressed. Todd will usually say, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, to help break down the information. Listen for facts, dates, and key ideas and underline the most important.

Check your notes soon after the lecture is finished so you can fill in parts you do not understand.

Strategies in Action

This is a time to practice the strategies with a partner or group. Students are given tips and, with all the other language learned in the unit, will be able to converse about the theme. This is the biggest step to finding connections!

Finding Connections

Communication and Culture in 15 Scenes

Contents

Character Profiles

Heather
Scenes 3, 7

Music Lover, Photographer. Fan of Tim's old movies.

Friends

New to New York. Young and possibly naive. Casual, loves the beach!

Alex
Scenes 2, 6, 11

Lily
Scenes 9, 13

Drama instructor. Directs plays. Loves Ice cream.

Friends

?

Friends

Lovers

?

College student. Drama major. Not sure if he should be in New York.

Max
Scene 9

Josh
Scene 13

Works in Publishing. Lily's oldest friend. Loves tennis and cookies.

Tim

Scenes 1, 3, 5, 7, 10

Wealthy, unemployed former child actor. Likes music and playing in the park.

Roommate

Vinh

Scenes 1, 5, 10

College Student. Works at a comedy club. Is careful with money.

Friends

Jenny

Scenes 2, 4, 6, 11, 14

Avid reader who practices martial arts. Spends most of her time in Central Park.

Kate

Scenes 12, 15

Yoga instructor. Vegan. World traveler. Lives in New York without stress.
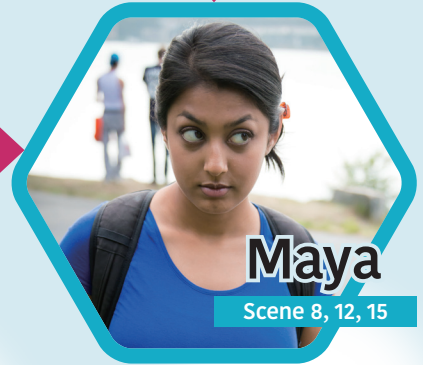
Friends

Friends

Friends

Zac

Scenes 4, 8, 14

Investment Banker. Loves the beach and Italian sandwiches.

Maya

Scene 8, 12, 15

Market researcher. Storyteller. Raised in India and New York.

Friends

What made you who you are?

Warm Up: Survey / Ranking

● *Rank how knowledgeable you are about your country on a scale of 1 to 5.*

	NO ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬ YES
I know the culture.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
I know the food.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
I know the history.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
I am patriotic.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5
I know what makes it unique.	1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — 5

● *Now share your ideas with a partner using the examples below .*

- I think I am very patriotic because I love the _____ and I can tell you what makes my country _____ in the world. For example, _____ and _____ .

- I do not consider myself an expert on history. All I know is the _____ .

Tips history / food / people / culture / politics / manners / customs / unique

Reading

● **Read the following text.**   DL 02   CD1-02

What does it mean to be Japanese or American?

What does it mean to be Japanese or American? Does it mean knowing the culture and history? Or is it only being born in a country and learning the language? Of course, the United States has a different history than Japan. United States citizens have come from all over the world. Still, some people expect Americans to look a certain way. What
5 do you imagine Americans look like? Many believe that Americans are Caucasian with blue eyes but this cannot be true for all if you know anything about the history of immigration in the United Sates.

The Gold Rush brought more than 25,000 Chinese to California in 1850s. By 1880, 25% of workers in the state were Chinese. More than 100,000 Japanese came to the
10 USA before 1900. Starting in 1975, 100,000 Southeast Asian immigrants per year, for 10 straight years, entered the country. These examples are just from Asia. Of course not all of the people who came to America became citizens but their children had something in common. If you are born in the USA then you are a citizen. Americans clearly cannot be identified by how they look.

15 Japan does not have a past defined by immigration but did you know that 36,000 children every year in Japanese are born mixed-race? If they are born in Japan, speak Japanese and study history and culture in Japanese schools, are they Japanese? How might they feel if they are treated differently only because of their appearance?

What do you think?

● **Share your ideas with a partner.**

1. What are five questions you ask someone you first meet?

2. If someone is born in Japan and speaks Japanese, do you think he/she is Japanese?

3. What would you say if someone does not believe you are Japanese?

Now, let's check out the video!

Let's Watch! 1

Tim and Vinh meet for the first time. Tim is interviewing possible roommates. They are trying to learn about each other to see if they can get along …

What did you hear?

● **Choose exactly what each character says.**

1
- **A.** I am a child actor.
- **B.** I will be a child actor.
- **C.** I was a child actor.

2
- **A.** I'm sure it's how it sounds.
- **B.** I'm sure it's kind of how it sounds.
- **C.** I'm sure it's not how it sounds.

3
- **A.** My grandparents will come here from Vietnam.
- **B.** My grandparents came here from Vietnam.
- **C.** My grandparents come here from Vietnam.

Let's Watch! 2

Before Watching: Predict!

online / video   online / audio

🔴 *Guess what the character will say.*

🎧 DL 04   💿 CD1-04

A. I see. You are American!

B. So you grew up in New York State.

C. What's it like growing up in a village in Vietnam?

Watch Again: Pop up questions

online / video   online / audio

🔴 *Watch the whole video again and answer the questions.*

🎧 DL 03~04   💿 CD1-03   💿 CD1-04

1. When and how old was Tim when he bought this apartment?

2. Exactly where did Vinh grow up?

3. What do Tim and Vinh agree on about Vietnam?

4. Tim mentions two movies he was in. What are the titles?

What do you think?

🔴 *Share your ideas with a partner.*

1. How do you feel about the characters?

2. Why do you think Tim is confused?

3. Would you want to live there?

Strategies for Improving Communication

Strategies: Note Taking

Listen and try to get the 5 main strategies from the talk. Fill in as many details as you can. After, compare with your partner.

1

2

3

4

5

> *Now practice with a partner using the strategies above. You don't have to be yourself. Be a character. Have fun!*

Strategies in Action

● *With a partner, do some quick research and find a country that you want to know more about. After choosing, let's look at the strategies and see how we can use them.*

1 Make 5 questions for a person from the country you chose. For example, "I'm asking about the national sport because I love sports."

Tips Asking questions is a skill. Good questions have good reasons for asking.

I'm asking …	I want to know …
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•
•	•

2 Understand your r_____ with the person. Are you meeting for the first time (job interview) or did you study abroad together?

Tips Your r_____ is important to consider for the type of questions you will ask.

3 Acting fun! Pretend you are answering questions and choose a different f_____ e_____ for each one. See if your partner can guess how you are feeling.

Tips Use posture and gestures to communicate too.

4 Imagine you are surprised by an answer. Admit what you do not _____.

Tips Practice using the correct intonation.
Really? / I did not _____ that. / Is that right? / I had no idea! / That is fascinating. / I had never imagined that.

5 Try making 3 more questions that border on the personal. Sometimes you are not sure how private the person is or if a question might be annoying. Personal topics might include: age, religion, politics etc …

Tips I'm sorry but could I ask … / Do you mind if I ask about …? / This may be too sensitive but do people in your country …? / You don't have to answer if this is too personal but do you believe in …?