

Principles of Professional Communication 1

Intercultural Communication

Culture is hard to see and harder to define

- Culture is the sum total of learned values, beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct the behaviour of members of a particular society
- Culture is a belief system that the members of the culture hold, consciously or unconsciously, as absolute truth.
- This belief system guides everyday behavior and makes it routine; provides answers to the unanswerable questions of life, sickness, and death; and makes the world make sense.

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Beliefs, values and customs

- Beliefs consist of a number of mental or verbal statements that reflect a person's particular knowledge or assessment of something
 - I believe democracy is important
 - I believe night will follow day
 - I believe Kevin Rudd was the greatest Australian Prime Minister ever

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Beliefs, values & customs

- Values – are basically beliefs except that they are:
 - relatively few in number
 - serve as a guide for culturally appropriate behaviour
 - are enduring or difficult to change
 - are widely accepted by members of society
 - I value honesty, I value freedom, I value friendship
- Customs – are modes of behaviour that constitute culturally approved or acceptable ways of behaving in specific situations eg greeting, dress, eating, celebratory, rituals

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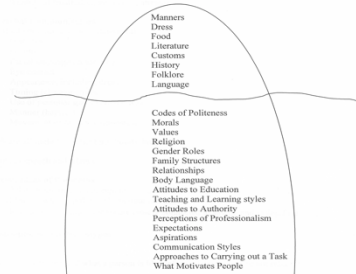
Culture is learned and forgotten

- Culture is learned but the process by which we learn it is mostly forgotten
- We are dealing with something which occurs at an unconscious and often intangible level
- Models for understanding and “seeing” culture include a tree and an iceberg – there is more to it than you can see or are aware of!

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The iceberg model of culture



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Cross cultural negotiation

- Cultural assumptions underpin the other person's perception of reality but are *invisible to us*
- These cultural assumptions are also largely invisible to the other person
- Ethnocentrism refers to the way we tend to evaluate other cultures from the viewpoint of our own culture's value system
 - 'White Australia' Policy (ALP leader HV Evatt famously said "two Wongs don't make a white")
 - Aboriginal racial assimilation policies

Culture reflects and is influenced by ...

- Physical environment – natural geography and human alterations to it. This dictates the economic base of the culture which in turn is shaped by the environment
 - Indigenous cultures have a strong affinity to the land which informs their perspectives



Culture reflects and is influenced by ...

- Social environment – social, political, educational, class, family, legal and business structures which develop in response to the physical environment
 - an agrarian society will develop class structures based on land ownership and an extended family



Culture reflects and is influenced by ...

- Training environment – in which formal and informal socialisation of individuals occurs.
- Cultural values, roles, norms, customs, and rituals are learned through absorbing the ideas, modes of behaviour and aspirations that are culturally acceptable



The theory of high and low context cultures

- Developed by anthropologist Edward T Hall as a way of categorising cultural differences
- High and low context cultures differ in their approaches to power hierarchies, social relationships, work ethics, business practices and time management
- Hall's model is useful in understanding how members of different cultures develop business relationships, negotiate with outsiders and implement contracts

Characteristics of high context cultures

- Communication is by a *shared code* and so tends to be more economical and efficient
- Cultural patterns are ingrained and slow to change
- Agreements tend to be spoken rather than written. Contracts are not considered binding but are open to further negotiation if necessary
- People in authority are personally responsible for the actions of subordinates

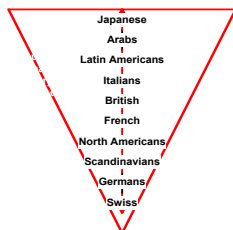
Characteristics of low context cultures

- Messages must be made explicit – members rely less on non verbal codes
- Authority is diffused and personal responsibility is difficult to pin down
- Agreements tend to be written rather than spoken – contracts are treated as final and binding
- Cultural patterns are faster to change


Dominant values of high and low context cultures

High context (group orientation)	Low context (individual orientation)
Harmony with nature	Mastery over nature
Fate	Personal control over environment
Being	Doing
Past or present orientation	Future orientation
Tradition	Change
Focus on relationships	Time dominates
Hierarchy/status	Human equality
Elders	Youth
Cooperation	Competition
Formality	Informality
Indirectness/ritual	Directness/openness
Spiritualism/detachment	Practicality/efficiency

EX 3.1 High Context and Low Context Countries




Things we take for granted can cause confusion



- Should you bring anything?
- When should you arrive?
- When should you leave?
- Should you offer to help?
- What should you do after the party?

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Hofstede's five dimensions of culture (first pub 1980 but revised 2001)



- Power distance: the degree of inequality among people which the population of a country considers as normal
- Uncertainty avoidance: the degree to which people in a country prefer structured over unstructured situations
- Individualism/ collectivism: the extent to which people feel they are to be cared for to care for themselves, their families or organisations they belong to
- Masculinity/ femininity: the extent to which a culture is conducive to dominance, assertiveness and acquisition of things vs a culture more conducive to people, feelings and the quality of life
- Long term/short term orientation: long term = orientation towards the future, like saving and persistence vs short term = values oriented towards the past and present, like respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations

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Communication characteristics of Australians



- Australian culture is low context
- Majority of verbal information is stated explicitly
- Prefer openness, honesty and some freedom of emotional expression
- Spontaneity and casualness characterise informal relationships
- Within reason, Australians expect to challenge the status quo
- Independence, self determination and personal confidence are highly regarded

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Non verbal aspects of culture

- General appearance and dress – clothing and skin colour can influence how we perceive and communicate with others. Notions of beauty bodily adornments, tattoos etc reflect different cultural values



Non verbal aspects of culture

- Smell – cultures perceives odours differently and assign them different meanings eg in many western cultures, body odour is taboo
- Facial expressions – some are thought to be universal eg smiling = joy, happy but some Chinese cultures may smile when discussing something sad or uncomfortable



Non verbal aspects of culture

- Eye contact and gaze – culture modifies how much eye contact we may engage in and with whom
 - In many Asian cultures it is rude to look a superior in the eye
 - Winking has different meanings in different cultures
 - In Latin America, winking is a romantic or sexual invitation
 - In Nigeria, parents may wink at their children if they want them to leave the room
 - In China, winking can be rude

Non verbal aspects of culture

- Gestures – some are universal but some have distinct meanings in different countries
 - In France, playing an imaginary flute means “you are taking so long I’m bored”
 - In Syria, picking the nose signals “go to hell”
 - In the USA, imitating the action of shovelling means “the person is speaking a lot of manure”
 - Among Jewish people, if one person points to his hand he means “grass will grow on my palm before what I am hearing comes true”
 - The ‘OK’ sign is rude and even insulting in p Russian, Germany and Brazil



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Non verbal aspects of culture

- Touch – duration, frequency, and location
 - Many men in Egypt are more touch oriented; a handshake may be accompanied by a gentle touching of the recipient’s elbow with the fingers of the left hand
 - Latin Europeans and Latin Americans more touch-oriented than Northern Europeans, Scandinavians or Japanese
- Paralanguage – how something is heard and vocalised vary and hold different meanings

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Non verbal aspects of culture

- Space or proxemics – responses to violations of personal and public space are culturally defined
 - Westerners prefer more distance in public space than Arabs
 - Even in public space, westerners believe they can “stake their claim” by the use of objects eg bags on tables, no pushing into lines

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Non verbal aspects of culture

- Time – different cultures view time in different ways. Differences can include
 - past vs future orientation
 - time as a ‘resource’ – ‘wasting time’, ‘making up time’, ‘saving time’, ‘time management’
 - time as determined by economic units (work day week), cycles of nature (summer, winter, autumn, spring)




Language and culture

- Sapir-Whorf hypothesis – language has evolved to reflect the culture in which it is used and in part determines a culture’s way of thinking eg they observed that Eskimos have 18 words for “snow”
- English places great importance on clarity and directness and conveying of information
- Japanese culture places importance on language conveying subtle aspects of feeling or relationships

Language does not always translate literally

- Kentucky Fried Chicken “finger lickin’ good” translated in Chinese as “eat your fingers off.”
- Pepsi “lift your spirits” translated in Taiwan as “Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead.”
- Coca Cola originally in Chinese translated as “bite the wax tadpole”. Coca Cola revised its slogan so that it translated into something like “happiness in the mouth”
- In Japan, Exxon changed its original name Enco as this translated to “stalled car”
- Salman Rushdie reportedly said a culture can be very much defined by its untranslatable words



The Meaning of 'Tingo'
from Adam Jacot de Boinod 2005

- In Indonesia there is a word meaning "to take your clothes off in order to dance" plus *didis* to search and pick up lice from one's own hair, usually when in bed at night
- The Inuit people rely on *areodjarekput* which means the practice of exchanging wives for a few days
- Japanese have the word *bakkushan*, for a girl who looks as though she might be pretty when seen from behind
- Persian word *nakhur* meaning "a camel that will not give milk until her nostrils are tickled"
- *Tingo* comes from the Pascuense language of Easter Island and means "to take all the objects one desires from the house of a friend, one at a time, by asking to borrow them until there is nothing left."
- the Cook Islands Maori word *papakata*, meaning "to have one leg shorter than the other."

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ASSEMBLY INSTRUCTIONS

■ **Mens of Change into Push Car & Passenger Car**
There is a hollow of guide before and behind in handle shaft of the main body. Insert the protrudent side of handle shaft into the hollow side.

■ **In Case of Push Car**
Insert the protrudent side of handle shaft toward backward and then the handle is made effective as the width of guide hollow is narrow.

■ **In Case of Passenger Car**
Insert the protrudent side of handle shaft toward fore direction and then the handle is made effective as the width of guide hollow is wide.

■ **How to Install the Handle**
(1) Cover the handle with shaft and use the hold together it.
(2) Set bolt, washer and nut in order all shown in the drawing and finally fix them with driver.

■ **How to Install the Knob**
Fully insert the handle into the hole of main body backward on an average. On the occasion of using it as passenger, please remove the knob.

■ **Quality of Materials**
Main Body / Handle shaft / Wheel Push Bar / Polyethylene Handle / Cast / Polypropylene

"WARNING"
(1) This product is assembly one, according to when you use this one, please assemble.
(2) When you assemble, fixed wheel and handle, please fix it and bolt perfectly. If it is loose, it's very dangerous for children.

CORRECT USAGE OF TOY CAR

◆ REQUIREMENT OF PARENTS TO CARE ◆

1. Do not play on the road in where the vehicles necessarily pass.
2. Do not play on a slope, it's danger.
3. It is dangerous to use at the places to be in danger of fall such as stair and porch.
4. On the occasion of leaning the weight against the handle, baby may be fallen ahead, therefore the place to be played should be chosen and also parents had better watch the baby until accustomed to play himself himself, alone.
5. Do not approach it high temperature where existed the fire such as stove and heater.
6. Do not leave the car outdoor as to not expose to rain.
7. On the occasion of using it as push car, do not push the handoperated line when the baby in the seat.
8. On the occasion of using it as push car for the toddling baby near about 12months since born, the leg comes in contact with the car's speed and accordingly the baby may be overturned. Parents should watch beside the baby without fail.
9. Top car and a push car is safe in some time overturned backward at the leaving the push-handle, it's dangerous. Please release the push-handle at the time of sitting.
10. On the occasion that the package is used by pulling, it would be dangerous if baby puts it on head and therefore guardian should pay attention.
11. Indoor using brings a damage to floor or alcove, so place for playing should be chosen.

■ **Month's Age of Baby & Playing Variety**

Playing Variety	6-12 month	12-18 month	18-48 month
Just using only (except advancing)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing as push-car	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Over driving by hand power and coming ahead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playing with wheeling (limited handle operation is possible)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Different cultures express dissatisfaction in different ways – Egypt 2011



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Communicating across cultures – micro concerns

- Try to restrict vocabulary to 3000 words or less
- Only use words in their most common meaning
- Select words with with one meaning rather than many meaning eg right = 27/accurate =1
- Be aware of alternate spellings
- Be aware of words created by changing a part of speech from common usage eg 'doable'

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Communicating across cultures – micro concerns

- Use maximum punctuation and get it right – punctuation marks are signposts to a reader
- Avoid complex sentences
- Avoid redundancies – peak capacity, very unique
- Use active rather than passive constructions – 'we paid the bill' rather than 'the bill was paid'
- Try to achieve the right level of formality especially in email – forms of address etc

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Communicating across cultures – micro concerns

- Avoid idiomatic expressions and metaphors – ‘a slice of the cake’, ‘chip on his shoulder’ etc. They are not meant to be taken literally
- Avoid words or expressions borrowed from sports – ‘from left field’, ‘level playing field’, ‘ballpark figure’, ‘sticky wicket’
- Avoid words and assertions that have associations with Christianity – ‘Holy Land’. Much of our language is based on Judaic-Christian tradition which is not universal

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Culture ... an overview

- Culture is invented
- Culture is learned – it is not innate but is handed down between generations
- Culture is socially shared – it is shaped by humans within group settings
- Culture is gratifying and persistent – because it meets our needs, culture is reinforced
- Culture is adaptive – it can change when necessary

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Culture ... an overview

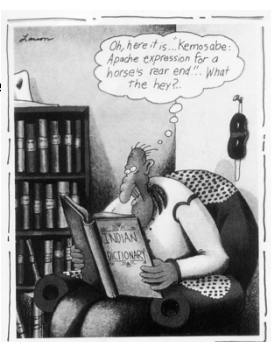
- Cultures are similar but different
- Cultures share the following elements
 - sports – bodily adornments – dancing
 - a calendar – cooking – courtship – family
 - education – gestures
- Culture is organised and integrated – it is a consistent pattern that fits together

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Last word from Hall & Larson

Culture is not some exotic notion studied by a select group of anthropologists in the South Seas. It is the mould in which we are all cast, and it controls our daily lives in many unsuspected ways.

Edward T Hall (1959) *The Silent Language*



The Lone Ranger, long since retired, makes an unpleasant discovery.
