INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: AN OVERVIEW

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FACTORS IN SUCCESSFUL CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

How are behavior and expectations affected by cultural background?

What factors associated with (cross-cultural) transitions make adaptation to cultural differences difficult?
WHAT WE CAN SEE

Language
Clothes
Behaviors
Traditions
Habits
Thought Processes
Perception Of Others
Values
Idea Of Self
Beliefs
Shared Assumptions
Rules

WHAT WE CAN’T SEE
THE ICEBERG: A MODEL FOR (INTERCULTURAL) COMMUNICATION
CULTURE A

Values, Norms, Expectations

Behavior

CULTURE B

Values, Norms, Expectations

Behavior

("CULTURE CLASH")
WHAT IS CULTURE?

“Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”

Edward Burnett Tylor
WHAT IS CULTURE?

“The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.”

Geert Hofstede
WHAT INFLUENCES OUR BEHAVIOR?
WHAT INFLUENCES OUR BEHAVIOR?

- Age
- Career
- Personal Preference
- Context
- Cultural Background
- Family Role
- Languages
CULTURAL NORMS: THE 10:00 APPOINTMENT

Arrival Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Person</th>
<th>Culture A</th>
<th>Culture B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>Standard Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30</td>
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<td>11.00</td>
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<td>11.30</td>
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CULTURAL NORMS: THE 10:00 APPOINTMENT

![Graph showing cultural norms for two cultures with different arrival time expectations.]

- **Culture A** expects individuals to arrive around 10:00, with a tolerance window of ±15 minutes.
- **Culture B** prefers individuals to arrive at 10:00 exactly, with a tolerance window of ±10 minutes.

**Arrival Time**
- **9.30**
- **10.00**
- **10.30**
- **11.00**
- **11.30**

**Person A** from Culture A arrives at 10:30, which is outside the tolerance window.

**Person B** from Culture B arrives at 10:00 exactly, within the expected tolerance window.

[Image 8x9 to 74x27]
[Image 697x176 to 942x422]
OBELIX DISTORTION

US

THEM
Motivation

Knowledge

Strategy

Behavior

CQ!

(Lynn Van Dyne & Soon Ang, David Livermore)

BUILDING CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE: UNDERSTANDING (POSSIBLE) CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
Cultural Relativism (Country/Culture-Based Comparison)

Cultural Overview (Norms and Values/Standards of Behavior)
THOMAS’S CULTURAL STANDARDS

German Standards (Chinese Context)
- Rule-Oriented
- Individualism
- Directness/honesty
- Privacy
- Authority-Oriented

(Thomas & Schenk, 1996)

German Standards (American Context)
- Differentiation of Distance
- Plan-Oriented
- Responsibility-Oriented
- Gender-Role Differentiation

(Markowsky & Thomas, 1995)
CULTURAL MODELS

Cultural Relativism (Country/Culture-Based Comparison)

Cultural Overview (Norms and Values/Standards of Behavior)

Cultural Dimensions (Potential Differences in Behavior/Perception)
CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Prof. Geert Hofstede  
Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions Theory  
(1980)

Prof. Alfonsus (Fons) Trompenaars  
Trompenaars' model of national culture differences (1997)
I plan my day according to the clock – each event has a time slot.

German team suggests 9.00 am.

It’s respectful to show up at the time you’ve agreed upon.

German team arrives at 9:00.

German team has prepared detailed presentation.

Meetings are for doing business – if we are serious researchers we will be well prepared.

German team plans to present presentation.

It’s best to get to business quickly so we can use our time efficiently.

German team has arranged to leave the next morning.

It’s ok to plan appointments close together – if we use time efficiently, we are working well.

Indian team agrees to 9:00.

They agreed to be there at 9:00.

Indian team arrives after 9:00. Professor arrives at 9:45.

They think the meeting is not important – the professor does not respect us.

Indian team takes German team on tour of dept., makes introductions.

They are being friendly, but they seem not to be interested in our research.

Indian team takes German team out to lunch.

Why don’t they care about the project?

Indian team has not planned time for presentation.

They must not think highly of our research.
SEQUENTIAL

• Clock determines actions.
• Tasks are completed one after another.
• Work packages are separated – only relevant persons or resources are involved in specific tasks.

SYNCHRONIC

• Context or people determine action.
• Tasks may be completed simultaneously.
• There is little separation of work into packages – people and resources are part of a network and everything is connected.
Indian Researchers

On time = being there when all important people are there. Being late shows disrespect or disinterest.

Relationships are very important – I can’t work effectively with you unless I have a strong relationship with you.

A bigger network is always better! Helping to extend someone’s network is a way to help them.

German Researchers

On time = when the clock says 9:00. Being late shows disrespect or disinterest.

Schedules are not determined by people. I do not need to have a strong relationship to someone to work effectively with them.

Contacts with no professional relevance are not as useful.
German team suggests 9.00 am.

German team arrives at 9:00.

German team has prepared detailed presentation.

German team plans to present presentation.

German team has arranged to leave the next morning.

Indian team agrees to 9:00.

Indian team arrives after 9:00. Professor arrives at 9:45.

Indian team takes German team on tour of dept., makes introductions.

Indian team takes German team out to lunch.

Indian team has not planned time for presentation.

They want to set a time – but they must know how it really works here.

Why did they show up so early? (Typical...)

They prepared a presentation! Don’t they care about working together?

Why wouldn’t they plan more time for the important things?

What a short visit! And how inflexible!

It’s polite to agree, but the context will determine the actual time.

The meeting starts when the professor arrives.

Contacts are so important! This will be good for them – and important for my colleagues.

We must get to know each other so we can work well.

We will have time later to talk about the details. Now is not the time.
UNDERSTANDING THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE: FACTORS AFFECTING CULTURAL COMPETENCY
CQ!

(Lynn Van Dyne & Soon Ang, David Livermore)

culture shock

**noun**

**Definition of CULTURE SHOCK**

: a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation

https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/culture%20shock
Why not “culture shock”?

- negative effect on perception of host culture
- limits ability to effectively identify & address other underlying stressors
- creates an expectation that negative experiences will happen
- equates achieving cultural fluency to success
What about the curves?

- Not enough scientific evidence
- Prior experiences matter – everyone responds to change differently
- Context matters
- Creates confusion (where am I on the curve?)
Understanding & preparing for relevant stressors

Supporting (cross-cultural) transitions

= ?
Supporting (cross-cultural) transitions = Understanding & preparing for relevant stressors
Loss/lack of knowledge of norms

Loss of social network

Stress in daily routines/tasks/activities

Stress of not being able to make yourself understood

Loss of the ability to communicate

Loss of “majority status” and feeling of belonging

Challenges to your personal value system

Changes in family system

Loss of (social) identity

Loss of social network

Stress in daily routines/tasks/activities

Loss of the ability to communicate

Stress of not being able to make yourself understood

Loss of “majority status” and feeling of belonging

Challenges to your personal value system

Changes in family system

Loss of (social) identity
...WHY CAN’T WE JUST ADAPT TO OTHER CULTURES?
Do I see a problem?

Can I cope with the problem?

Stressor

No stress reaction

No or minimized stress reaction

Stress reaction!
TOOLKIT

What might stress me?

What resources + strategies are available to me?
What might stress international students (or colleagues)?

What resources + strategies are available? What can we provide or do differently to support them?
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