

DM2556

Intercultural communication

Lecture 5

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Cross cultural communication at work and the business context

'Frenchies' (Cultural Connexions, IC 253)

'The pace of life in France is different..' It's slower; focus is on social relationships; food & meals are important; real conversations; perhaps less money but higher quality of life...

' As Americans, I think we often lose track of time, because we're too busy making money [...] or doing other activity that will someday appear meaningless. In Europe, as I observed, things just move slower. People have more time for their lives, their families, and their selves..' (Communicating Across Culture at Work, 81)

To be continued...

Social episodes

- **Cultural patterns** (shared interpretations)
- **Social roles**, or *persona*: set of expected behaviours with people in a particular position (e.g. student, mother, brother, boss, friend, teacher, etc.)
- **Rules of interaction**: provide a predictable pattern or structure to social episodes and give relationships a sense of coherence; unwritten, unspoken expectations (“if you haven’t had the rice, you haven’t eaten yet”)
- **Interaction scenes**: are made up of the recurring, repetitive topics that people talk about in social conversations; typically contains subscenes (cf *tropisms*, next slide)
- **Interaction contexts**: slide after next

Tropismes, according to French author Nathalie Sarraute, ce sont des mouvements indéfinissables, qui glissent très rapidement aux limites de notre conscience; ils sont à l'origine de nos gestes, de nos paroles, des sentiments que nous manifestons, que nous croyons éprouver et qu'il est possible de définir.

(Nathalie Sarraute, preface to *L'Ere du soupçon*, 1964)

Health Care

Education

Domestic work

Public order & crime prevention

Travel & tourism

Service sector (in general)

Marketing

Entertainment

Research

Online interaction (e.g. social media)

Business

Health Care

- Perceptions of health/medicine (magico-religious; holistic; biomedical)
- Family & gender roles
- Code usage, language and non-verbal communication
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Series: [Modern-day slavery in focus](#)

Domestic workers around the world: the big picture

There are an estimated 52 million domestic workers worldwide, but the kafala system in the Middle East can make life particularly hard there

Leila Haddou

The Guardian, Wednesday 26 February 2014 17.08 GMT



Article

A large, ornate orange lion dance costume with a wide, smiling mouth and large eyes is the central focus. It stands on a paved street next to several large woven baskets filled with oranges. In the background, a market scene unfolds with people, including a man in a blue shirt and white pants, and various stalls. A building with a sign that reads "PANGHUN JAYA" is visible in the distance. The overall atmosphere is festive and cultural.

sixth edition

Marketing Across Cultures

Jean-Claude Usunier and Julie Anne Lee



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Business

- Building a relationship, trust vs. discussing business
- How long time does it take to build trust?
- Who decides in an organization? Hierarchy & numbers
- Issues of age & gender
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Culture has a strong influence on the structures, processes and predominant managerial styles of organizations in different societies. For example, in a culture that is high on measures of uncertainty, formalization and centralization are prominent features of organizational structure; decision-making authority, responsibility and communication are distributed according to a hierarchical pattern; and the climate is reserved. In a low UA culture, on the other hand, the structure is informal and decentralized; decision-making authority and all that goes with it is widely distributed; and an open climate of discussion and bargaining prevails.'

(Communicating Across Cultures at Work, 68)

Organizational structures,
Work roles,
Organizational cultures,
Decision-making processes,
Employment relationships,
Perception of managerial effectiveness,
Task vs relationship orientation of managers,
Managers' roles and styles,
Managerial beliefs

France

Organization is viewed as a formal pyramid of differentiated levels of power;
'work the system';
typically only the supervisor or manager has power, which makes impossible close association between supervisor and subordinate;
inconsistent with matrix organization.

High PD; high UA implies less willing to show trust, allow participation in decision, or share information.

Sweden

X was a newly appointed manager in an international Swedish engineering firm. X was not Swedish, unlike most of his subordinates. One came to see him in early March, (1) without an appointment. She opened with his first name, (2) then said, 'I need some time off – about two weeks, in June, to revise for my exams.' (3) Her tone, though polite, appeared to imply that the request was routine and would be granted automatically. X was surprised and pointed out that June was a peak workload period. It would be difficult for her to be spared. (4) Given her previous attitude, he expected her to argue back, but instead she said, 'That's a problem, I can see. How can we get round it?'

Intrigued by this unexpectedly co-operative approach, X suggested that he could re-arrange the unit's holiday schedule, so she could take some of her six weeks holiday in late May/early June – he would speak to Johann about swapping with her. She looked startled, (5) was quiet for a long time, (6) then said, 'Holiday schedules can only be re-arranged following extensive consultation and discussion among the

whole team and with the agreement of all those affected.'

The responses of the subordinate in this manager-subordinate interaction may be explained as follows:

- (1) Swedish culture is egalitarian (low in power distance), which is reflected in a lack of formality in forms of address within organizations.
- (2) Swedish spoken style tends towards the direct or blunt, though not extremely.
- (3) Workers' rights for time off in Sweden are more extensive than in some other countries.
- (4) Swedish conversational rules encourage brainstorming and working things out co-operatively.
- (5) Swedes are more comfortable with silence than some other people.
- (6) Many decisions that in some countries would be the prerogative of management are taken by consensus in Sweden.

Based on: author's research

Organizational cultures

- Process-oriented vs result-oriented cultures
- Job-oriented vs employee-oriented cultures
- Professional vs parochial (local) cultures
- Open system vs closed system cultures
- Tightly vs loosely controlled cultures
- Pragmatic vs normative cultures

Decision-making process

Networks

Corruption