Issues in Cross Cultural Communication
Learning Objectives

- Explain the basic communication process and define cross-cultural communication
- Understand how language affects communication and how different cultures use the four styles of verbal communication
- Discuss various types of nonverbal communication
Learning Objectives (cont.)

- Enhance your cross-cultural communication skills
- Identify major barriers to communicating cross-culturally
Communication

The process of transmitting thoughts or ideas from one person to another
The Communication Process

Noise

Sender

Receiver

Thought → Encoding → Transmitting → Receiving → Decoding → Understanding

Feedback
Fast and Slow Messages

- The speed at which a message can be decoded and acted on
- A headline is fast, a book or fine art is slow.
- A fast message sent to people who are geared to a slow format will usually miss the target.
- While the content of a wrong speed message may be understandable, it won’t be received by someone expecting a different speed.
Examples of Fast and Slow

- Prose
- Headlines
- A communique
- Propaganda
- Cartoons
- TV Commercials
- Manners

- Poetry
- Books
- An ambassador
- Art
- TV Documentary
- Deep Relationships
- Culture
In humans territoriality is highly developed and strongly influenced by culture.
- Americans tend to establish places that they label “mine.”

Space also communicates power, but differently in different cultures

Personal space is another form of territoriality

An invisible bubble of space which expands and contracts depending on relationship, emotional state, cultural background and activity performed.
- E.g. Bubbles are larger in Northern Europe than Southern Europe so that there can be significant confusion.
Other Well Documented Cross-Cultural Communication Differences

- Language Usage
- Verbal Communication Styles
- Nonverbal Communication
Communication Styles

- High/low context
- Direct/indirect
- Elaborate/exact/succinct
- Instrumental/Affective
- Linear/circular/spatial
- Attached/detached
High and Low Context

Figure 7–1
Explicit-Implicit Communication: An International Comparison

# High Context and Low Context Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Context</th>
<th>Low-Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Austria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Meckler, U. Portland, 2000
Table 7–2
Verbal Styles Used in 10 Select Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Indirect vs. Direct</th>
<th>Elaborate vs. Succinct</th>
<th>Contextual vs. Personal</th>
<th>Affective vs. Instrumental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Exacting</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Direct</td>
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<td>Personal</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Elaborate</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Exacting</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Succinct</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Succinct</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Elaborate</td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Affective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Exacting</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
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<td>United States</td>
<td>Direct</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Direct/indirect styles

The extent to which speakers reveal their intentions through explicit verbal communication.
Direct style

Verbal messages reveal the speaker's true intentions, needs, wants, and desires.

– Example: American demands for directness, such as "Get to the point" "What exactly are you trying to say?"
Elaborate/exact/succinct styles

- Refers to the quantity of talk that people value.
Exact Style

- Falls between elaborate and succinct, as expressed in the maxim, “verbal contributions should be no more or less information than is required”
  - Example: German advertisements tend to communicate all of the necessary facts with little or no embellishment
Instrumental/affective styles

- Refers to using language as a tool for convincing or gaining an end versus language as a mechanism for description and feeling. Matches up with critical versus active listeners.
Instrumental Style

- Sender-oriented and goal-oriented
- Example: In the United States, the burden is on the sender to make the message clear. Assertiveness is valued, and persuasion is an important skill.
Linear/circular/spatial discussion styles

The style of logical flow of a set of sentences/phrases.
Linear

- Thought patterns are linear and direct.
- Example: In English writing a typical paragraph consists of (1) a topic statement followed by (2) subdivisions of the topic statement, (3) examples to support each idea, and (4) examples of the relationships between ideas. Ideas are communicated as a bridge from point a to point b.
Linear Style Example

- First state your opinion:
  - “I believe in most cases it is most important for market research be fast, even if it means it is a bit less accurate.”
- Then back it up in a linear logical way using an exact or succinct style.
“Let me explain. It takes about 9 months to get a new <product> from prototype phase to the market. The market is changes quickly. Every year new introductions are necessary. Research has only 3 months to collect initial data and analyze what it means. This gives development, production, sales and delivery enough time to get the product on the shelves so that they do not fall behind the competition. Taking more time to get market research perfect means we miss the holiday shopping season. Most of your products have a life cycle of a few years. It is better to make continuous small corrections to the product over this time. Small adjustments in the product are easy to make, inexpensive, and take only a month to be on the shelf in stores. So it is much more dangerous and expensive to be late than to be slightly inaccurate.”

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Attached/detached argument styles

- Extent to which people become emotionally involved in arguments and topics of conversation.

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Attached Style

- If it's important, it's worth getting worked up over.
- Example: Impassioned Russian argument
- Detached If it's important, it shouldn't be tainted by personal bias emotions.
- Example: Rational British argument
Use with caution

- Too much of either
## Major Characteristics of 4 Verbal Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Style</th>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Major Characteristic</th>
<th>Cultures Where Found</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Vs. Contextual</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Focus on speaker “personhood”</td>
<td>Low power distance, individualistic, low context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Focus of role of speaker, role relationships</td>
<td>High power distance, collective, high-context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental Vs. Affective</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Language is goal oriented, sender focused</td>
<td>Individualistic, low-context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Language is process oriented, receiver focused</td>
<td>Collective, high-context</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Communications Exercise 1

- Organize into small groups
- For each culture in your group, compare two of the communication style categories across cultures
- Create a Category by Culture table
  - Include differences and similarities
  - What problems, misunderstandings might occur between these cultures in business situations do to the differences?
Forms of Nonverbal Communication

**Kinesics**  Communication through body movements, including facial expression, gestures, and posture

**Oculessics**  Communication through eye contact and gaze

**Haptics**  Communication through the use of body contact

**Proxemics**  Communication through the use of space

**Chronemics**  Communication through the use of time within a culture

**Chromatics**  Communication through the use of colors
Communications Exercise 2

- Organize into small groups
- For each culture in your group, compare three of the non-verbal communication categories across cultures
  - how is it used
  - what does it mean?
- Create a Category by Culture table
- Include differences and similarities
Communication Epigrams

There are a number of different "organization charts" that have been constructed to depict international organizations. An epigram is a poem or line of verse that is witty or satirical in nature. The following organization designs are epigrams that show how communication occurs in different countries. In examining them, remember that each contains considerable exaggeration and humor, but also some degree of truth.

In America, everyone thinks he or she has a communication pipeline directly to the top.

![Diagram of America's communication structure]

There are so many people in China that organizations are monolithic structures characterized by countless levels of bureaucracy. All information flows through channels.

![Diagram of China's communication structure]

At the United Nations everyone is arranged in a circle so that no one is more powerful than anyone else. Those directly in front or behind are philosophically aligned, and those nearby form part of an international bloc.

![Diagram of the United Nations' communication structure]

In France some people in the hierarchy are not linked to anyone, indicating how haphazard the structure can be.

![Diagram of France's communication structure]

Source: Adapted from Simcha Ronen. Comparative and Multinational Management (New York: Wiley, 1986), pp. 318–319. The epigrams in turn were derived from a variety of sources, including Robert M. Wohlstetner of the U.K.-based Market and Opinion Research International (MORI, Ole Jacob Raaad of Norway's FM Systems, and anonymous managers.)
Suggestions for Communication

1. Use most common words with most common meanings
2. Select words with few alternative meanings
3. Strictly follow rules of grammar
4. Speak with clear breaks between words
5. Avoid using esoteric or culturally biased words
6. Avoid use of slang
7. Don’t use words or expressions requiring listener to form mental images
8. Mimic cultural flavor of non-native speaker’s language
9. Paraphrase and repeat basic ideas continually
10. At end, test how well other understand by asking him/her to paraphrase
Barriers to Cross-Cultural Communication

- Culture
- Perception
- Experience
Convergence or Divergence?

- Increasing ease of communication
- Widespread use of English
- Similar words and concepts in different languages
- Number of different languages
- Barriers to cross-cultural communication
Exercise 3

Case Study: The Road to Hell

- Individually, read the case study handout
- Part 1: Break out into new groups
  - How did Rennalls experience the situation and why did he behave the way he did?
  - How did Baker experience the situation and why did he behave the way he did?
  - How would an outside observer explain why things happened the way that they did?
Exercise 3 continued

- Part two
  - How could this situation have been avoided in the first place?
  - What, if anything should be done now? By whom?
Implications for Managers

- Cross-cultural communication a critical skill
- Awareness of differences can improve communication skill
- Important to learn other languages
Video Tape: Carlos

- Watch the video and identify the cultural dimensions/values that can be observed in the behavior of both Carlos and his boss.
  - Contrast the differences in their communication patterns using
    - the four verbal styles
    - polychronic/monochronic
    - high/low context
Carlos Exercise, continued

- What errors did Carlos make?
- What should he have done to be more effective in this cross-cultural incident?
- What errors did Carlos’ boss make?
- What should the boss have done to be more effective?