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| **High Context and Low Context Cultures** |

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| **High Context** | **Low Context** |
| **How people relate to each other** | |
| * Relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, are stable. * How things get done depends on relationships with people and attention to group processes * One’s identity is rooted in groups (family, work, culture) * Social structure and authority are centralized   + Responsibility is at the top   + Person at top works for the good of the group | * Relationships begin and end quickly   + Many people can be inside one’s circle, circle boundary is not clear * Things get done by following procedures and paying attention to the goal * One’s identity is rooted in oneself and one’s accomplishments * Social structure is decentralized   + Responsibility goes further down (i.e. is not concentrated at the top) |
| **How people communicate with each other** | |
| * High use of non-verbal elements; voice tone, facial expression, gestures and eye movement carry significant parts of a conversation. * Verbal messages are implicit   + Context (situation, people, non-verbal elements) is more important than words * Verbal message is indirect   + One talks around the point and embellishes it * Communication is seen as an art form   + A way of engaging someone * Disagreement is personalized   + One is sensitive to conflict expressed in another’s nonverbal communication   + Conflict must either be solved before work can progress or be avoided because it is personally threatening | * Low use of nonverbal elements   + Message is carried more by words than nonverbal means * Verbal message is explicit   + Context is less important than words * Verbal message is direct   + One spells things out exactly * Communication is seen as a way of exchanging information, ideas and opinions * Disagreement is depersonalized   + One withdraws from conflict with another and gets on with the task   + Focus is on rational solutions, not personal ones   + One can be explicit about another’s bothersome behaviours |
| **How people treat space** | |
| * Space is communal   + People stand close to each other, share the same space | * Space is compartmentalized and privately owned   + Privacy is important, so people sit further apart |
| **How people treat time** | |
| * Everything has its own time   + Time is not easily scheduled   + Needs of people may interfere with keeping to a set time   + What is important is that the activity gets done * Change is slow   + Things are rooted in the past, slow to change, and stable * Time is a process   + It belongs to others and to nature | * Things are scheduled to be done at particular times, one thing at a time   + What is important is that activity is done efficiently * Change is fast   + One can make changes and see immediate results * Time is a commodity to be spent or saved   + One’s time is one’s own |

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| **How people learn** | |
| * Knowledge is embedded in the situation   + Things are connected, synthesized, and global   + Multiple sources of information are used   + Thinking is deductive, proceeds from general to specific * Learning occurs by first observing others as they model or demonstrate, then practicing * Groups are preferred for learning and problem-solving * Accuracy is valued   + How well something is learned is important | * Reality is fragmented and compartmentalized   + One source of information is used to develop knowledge   + Thinking is inductive, proceeds from specific to general   + Focus is on detail * Learning occurs by following explicit directions and explanations of others * An individual orientation is preferred for learning and problem-solving * Speed is valued   + How efficiently something is learned is important |

**Activity:**

Identify whether each of the following cultures is higher or lower context:

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| * Australia * Canada (Anglophone) * Canada (Francophone) * France * Germany * Great Britain | * Italy * Japan * Latin America * Scandinavia * Saudi Arabia * United States |