



# Introduction to Cross-cultural communication

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## Learning objectives

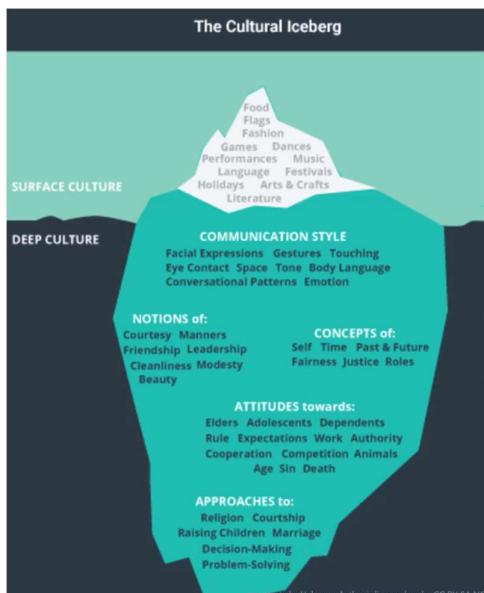
- Learn what culture is.
- Learn the aspects of cross-cultural communication.
- Understand why knowledge of cultures and etiquette is important in business communication.





## C3- 21<sup>st</sup> century skill

- Business organizations today operate in a global market place.
- Travel and communication advances and cross-country markets resulted in cross-cultural dimensions



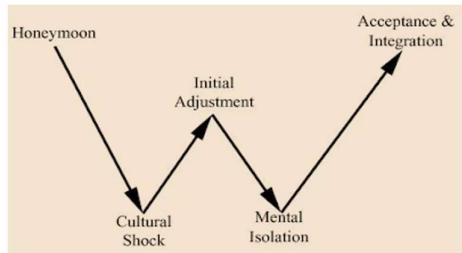
## What is culture?

- 'culture is a way of life of a group of people... the stereotyped patterns of learning behaviour, which are passed on from one generation to the next through means of language and imitation."
- Cultural is what people are.
- Communication within a cultural group is easy.



## Intercultural encounters

- Differences in culture means differences in language, accent, background, body language, beliefs and values and so on
- Differences get sharper with distance and diversity.
- Religion & background further accentuate the cultural differences.



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## Culture shock

disorientation caused by a change from a familiar environment, culture and ideology to another that is drastically different or alien

## Awareness of cultural differences

- Business communication is goal oriented-convey information and elicit response
- Verbal communication: Adapt the appropriate tone, accent, loudness, pace, clarity
- Non-verbal communication: Appropriate handshake, posture, gestures, body movements, timing and distance

## Awareness of cultural differences

*cont...*

- |                         |                             |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Conversational style  | • Interpretation of silence |
| • Greetings             | • Spatial distance          |
| • Sense of time         | • Gestures and touch        |
| • Paying compliments    | • Manners and formality     |
| • Giving gifts          | • Frankness and intimacy    |
| • Attire and appearance | • Expression of emotions    |
| • Respect for elders    | • Methods of negotiation    |
| • Addressing people     | • Dining and tipping        |

## An example scenario

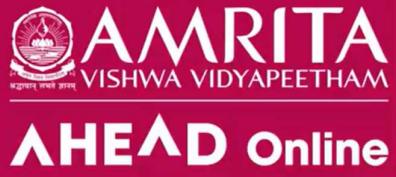
- An American exporter tries to sell to a Saudi official.
- The exporter sits back comfortably in his chair.
- He crosses his legs, exposing the sole of his shoe.
- He passes documents with his left hand.
- He refuses coffee.



## To sum up

- Culture is what we are.
- Cross-cultural communication is the crux of modern day businesses.
- Awareness of cultural differences can help overcome embarrassing situations.





## Cultural protocols

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### Learning objective

- Learn the general and specific cultural protocols of various countries





## What's in a name?

- When you are introduced to someone, get the person's name clearly.
- Ask for the correct spelling and pronunciation.
- Knowing names help in relationship building.

### Introductions and informality

- USA- age and gender are not considered
- Person with the highest rank is introduced first
- Both men and women stand up
- UK, Japan, Germany, Australia- business exchanges are formal
- Americans- informal and friendly
- Korea- follows a hierarchical pattern





## Closeness and intimacy

- Greeting by hugging a female- acceptable in Latin American countries
- Greeting by shaking hands or kissing a lady's hand- acceptable in European countries
- Not even eye contact with ladies in Arab countries
- Arab men stand close together; in the USA, it may have sexual interpretation.
- Indians fold hands to convey namaste; shaking hands with ladies is acceptable in metros.
- The Japanese and the Chinese try to avoid touching while greeting.

## Appearance

- Appearance constitutes 55 per cent of the first impression. - V Seitz
- Clothing can create both positive and negative impressions about people and the companies they represent.
- Standard western business suit- most appropriate abroad





## Time culture

- Linear time culture
  - completes tasks sequentially
  - avoid interruptions
  - focus on deadlines
  - stick to schedule
- Flexible time culture
  - adjustment of agenda
  - interruptions accepted
  - flexible

## Exchanging business cards

- Business cards are exchanged with both the hands in Japan and Taiwan.
- The card is positioned such that the person receiving it can read it easily.





## Mobile phone etiquette

- Know where and how to use mobile phones without annoying others
- Be aware of your speaking volume
- Don't answer your phone when meeting with others.
- Don't place your phone on the table when meeting others.
- Let the other person know when you have them on speakerphone.

## When in Japan

- Don't forget to bow.
- Direct eye contact is not a part of Japanese business etiquette.
- Avoid the American OK sign as well as shrugging the shoulder or winking the eye.
- Observe silence to express your dissatisfaction.

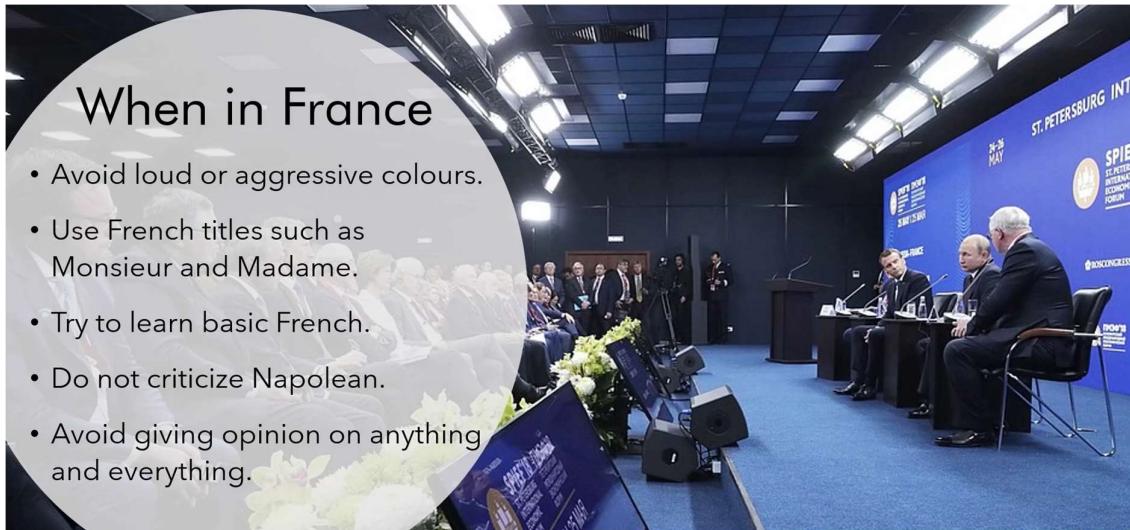




## Global China Business Meeting 2013

### When in China

- Address people by their professional titles.
- Do not speak fast.
- Follow hierarchical protocol.



### When in France

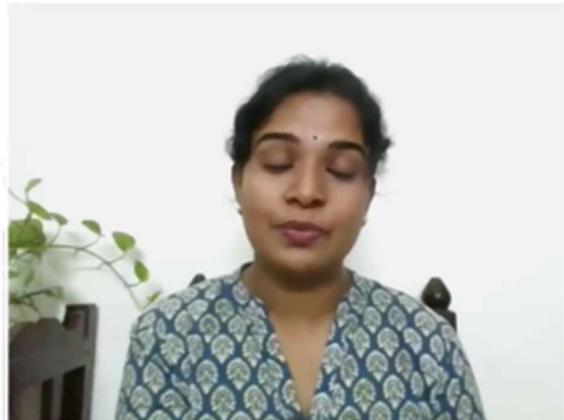
- Avoid loud or aggressive colours.
- Use French titles such as Monsieur and Madame.
- Try to learn basic French.
- Do not criticize Napoleon.
- Avoid giving opinion on anything and everything.



- Keep time. Every minute matters.
- Take appointments in advance.
- Women are treated as equals.
- Avoid topics like racism.

## To sum up

- General aspects of cross-cultural communication- learning names, closeness and intimacy, time culture, mobile phone etiquette, exchanging business cards, appearance, introductions and informality
- Country-specific protocols





# Overcoming cross-cultural communication problems

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## Learning objective

- Learn various tips to overcome cross-cultural communication problems





## How to overcome cross-cultural communication hurdles?

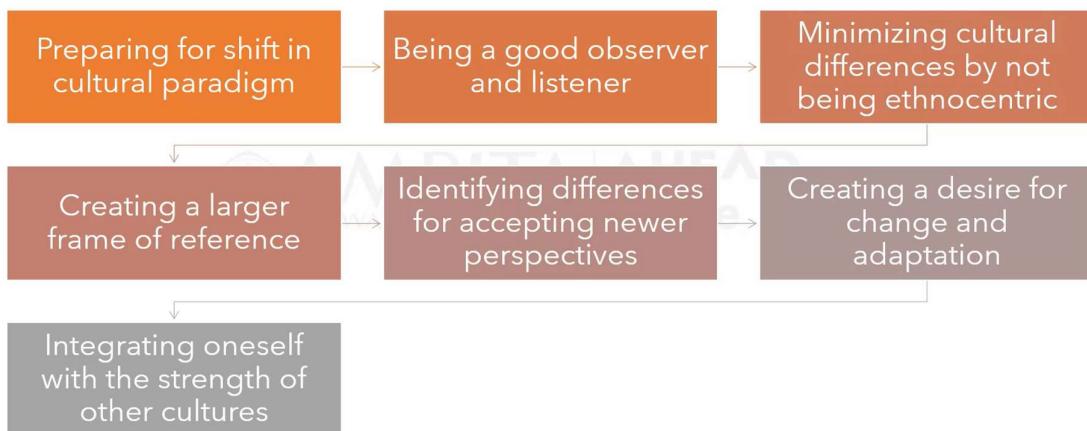
- Acquire skills & knowledge
- Be sensitive

## Low context & high context cultures

- Identified by Edward T Hall
- Two ways in which people of different cultures express their meanings

	Low-Context	High-Context
Example Countries	US, UK, Canada, Germany, Denmark, Norway	Japan, China, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, France, Italy, Spain
Business Outlook	Competitive	Cooperative
Work Ethic	Task-oriented	Relationship-oriented
Work Style	Individualistic	Team-oriented
Employee Desires	Individual achievement	Team achievement
Relationships	Many, looser, short-term	Fewer, tighter, long-term
Decision Process	Logical, linear, rule-oriented	Intuitive, relational
Communication	Verbal over Non-verbal	Non-verbal over Verbal
Planning Horizons	More explicit, written, formal	More implicit, oral, informal
Sense of Time	Present/Future-oriented	Deep respect for the past
View of Change	Change over tradition	Tradition over change
Knowledge	Explicit, conscious	Implicit, not fully conscious
Learning	Knowledge is transferable (above the waterline)	Knowledge is situational (below the waterline)

# Multicultural integration steps



Observe

- What are the topics that they are talking about?
- What are their business goals?
- How important is time to them?
- Do they talk to each other much?
- Do they greet each other?
- Do they shake hands, touch or bow?
- How much importance is attached to dress?
- Are they formal or informal?
- Do they show their feelings openly?

Don't worry

- No business communicator can have prior intimate knowledge of people with different cultural backgrounds.
- Perfection is not expected.
- Awareness and sincerity of approach are essential.
- Be conscious that differences exist.
- Accept ignorance and be sincere.
- Refrain from doing anything hurtful.

## Ways to learn

- Websites of countries, especially travel sites
- Travel guides
- Brochures, newsletters brought out by embassies
- Publications by trade organizations, chambers of industry and commerce etc.
- Interact with people who have already interacted with those cultures.
- Look for a suitable guide.



## To sum up

- Cultural differences call for adapting to changes.
- Even though prior knowledge is not possible, collect information.
- Be aware of cultural contexts.
- Understand the dos and don'ts.
- Be sincere and make an effort.



