

Language and Culture

Overcoming assumptions

What do we mean by culture?

- “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as member of society.” (Tylor 1874)
- "... culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to [art](#) and [literature](#), [lifestyles](#), ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs". (unesco 2002)

The way we do things round here

The way we perceive things round
here



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The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise
that what one person values
may be different to the next.

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The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise
that people have different
ideas about what's important.

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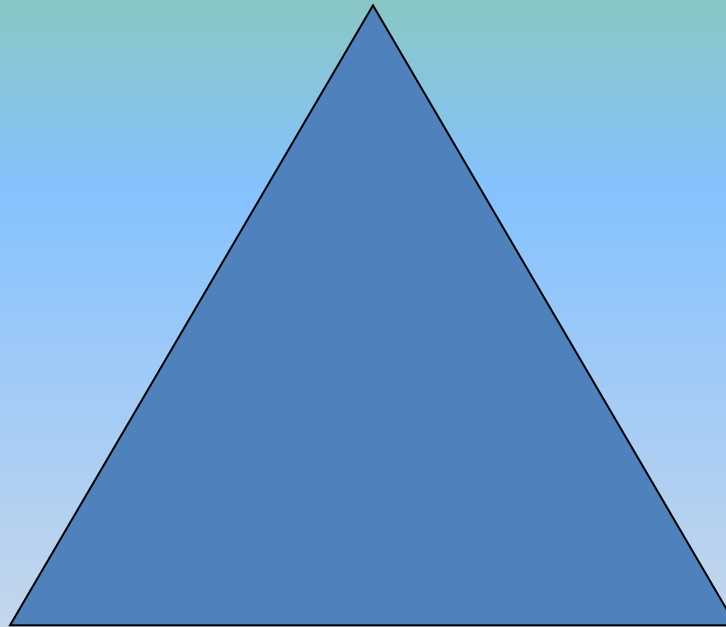


The more you look at the world,
the more you recognise that
people value the same things
but in different ways.

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Trust



Rapport

Building Good
Relations

Credibility

Matching communications
styles

- Cultural Drivers
- Manifestations in language

Cultural Drivers

- Time
- Family
- Politeness
- Status
- Age and youth
- Cleanliness
- Systems
- Protocols
 - Meetings
 - Presentations
 - Gifts
- Reference points
 - Faith
 - Literature
 - Popular culture

Manifestations in Language

- Content
 - Position of content
 - Expectation of content
- Labelling
- Communication styles
- Assumptions hidden in discourse

- English
- Youth
- Football supporters
- Lawyers

Communication Styles

- High context vs Low Context (Hall)
- Linear Active, Multi Active, Reactive (Lewis)
- Neutral vs emotional (Trompenaars)

The Communication Matrix

Are you....?

1 Direct

2 Indirect?

3 High context

4 Low context?

5 Concise

6 Expressive?

7 Formal

8 Informal?

9 Neutral

10 Emotional?

11 fast paced

12 Slow and measured?

WHAT IS YOUR STYLE? WHAT IS YOUR STRATEGY?

Language Training	Cultural Training
Advanced	
<p>Can deal with unpredictable situations Can express opinions Can use a difference of register Can repair discourse</p>	<p>Greater understanding of notions of politeness Can negotiate</p>
<p><i>Reflective – can compare the two systems with no value judgement</i></p>	<p><i>Reflective – can appreciate how his own culture might be perceived</i></p>
Adept	
<p>Can handle all situations freely and easily. Is aware of the relative weight and importance of words and expressions. Can understand and express humour, irony, and other nuances when called on</p>	<p>Has a feeling for the target culture – appreciates the subtleties. Is able to recognise potential cultural values and attitudes in behaviour patterns, topics of discourse etc. Can be appropriately diplomatic and/or firm when called on</p>
<p><i>Absorbed the language and culture – acts instinctively and intuitively</i></p>	

Language Training	Cultural Training
Survival	
Can shop Can reserve hotels Can get from place to place	Do bow Do keep eye contact Don't give a clock
<i>Tool kit to do the job - unquestioning rote learning</i>	
Operational	
Can handle predictable situations Can respond with more detailed information on professionally specific topics	Keep eye contact – it's a sign of openness and honesty Bow – it's a sign of politeness Be punctual – punctuality is a sign of respect
<i>Has understanding of the language system (grammar etc)</i>	<i>Has some understanding of the values and attitudes of the target culture</i>

What do we teach?

- Cultural Awareness
- Knowledge

- Intercultural competence

How do we teach it?

- Apply the knowledge and skills in real scenarios
- Critical incident training
- Discourse analysis from a cultural perspective
- What is it like to be in a culture shock situation?
- Coping strategies



A man attends an interview and is asked what qualities he can bring to the job. He answers by saying that he is a good father and that he has three children, all of whom have gone to university. One of them is a doctor. He talks for a long time about the achievements of his family and gives many examples. The interviewer repeats the question. The man expands on the success of his family giving yet more examples. He does not get the job.



A man goes into a bank and is served by a cashier. The

cashier is unsure of the procedures needed to deal with the man's request and calls for a superior to help. The cashier tells the man to wait by saying 'wait here' and in the mean time makes some phone calls and looks at her nails. The man gets angry and leaves the bank.



In a business meeting between two companies, a representative of one of the companies is giving a presentation. Periodically members of the other team interrupt him to ask questions. The presenter deals with the first two in detail but as this continues his responses become shorter. Members of the other team also make comments about the data being presented along the lines of 'that doesn't make sense if you take in to account...' The presenter cuts short his presentation and the delegation leaves the room.



A business negotiation has been going badly. After work, one group meet in the evening to discuss possible solutions. They arrive the next day with their solutions on a powerpoint presentation. The solutions entail changing the timetable for a week. The other group get very angry and accuse the first group of being mad. Both sides leave the room.



Mr A and Mr B have a conversation. Mr B has enjoyed this conversation

and when they are ready to part he says to Mr A that they really should get together to have lunch sometime. Mr A says he would enjoy that. After a few weeks Mr A begins to feel that Mr B has been rather insincere because he has not followed up his invitation with a specific time and place. He is unsure whether to do business with him in the future.

Careless Small Talk Costs...

- My mother? She's 84 and fighting fit. The home she's in is one of the best.
- My son's 30 and he's still living at home.
- The England team? They were rubbish in the World Cup
- Call me midday around 3 o'clock

Assumptions English native speakers make

- English is the international language of business
- As native speakers they have an advantage
- Use of language becomes a question of power

What do they get wrong?

- Talk too fast
- Use confusing, non committal language
 - That might be an idea
 - Don't you think that's not really true?
- Phrasal verbs
 - I should get round to that by Monday
 - Can you look it up?

Assumptions about understanding

- Assume that because someone speaks English well they understand everything
 - Assume a basic shared knowledge
- Acronyms
- Expressions
 - It's all gone pear shaped
 - Let's get down to brass tacks
- Cultural reference points
 - We've got to keep a straight bat
 - We don't want it to be another Millennium Dome

Thank you

Gracias

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