INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Cultural differences

Culture

Historically, the word derives from the Latin word
 'colere', which could be translated as 'to build', 'to care for', 'to plant' or 'to cultivate'.

Spencer-Oatey (2000) proposed the following definition:

Culture is a fuzzy set of attitudes, beliefs, behavioural norms, and basic assumptions and values that are shared by a group of people, and that influence each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the "meaning" of other people's behaviour.

Hall (1983) views culture as often subconscious.
"Culture has always dictated where to draw the line separating one thing from another. In the West a line is drawn between normal sex and rape, whereas in the Arab world is much more difficult, for a variety of reasons, to separate these two events."
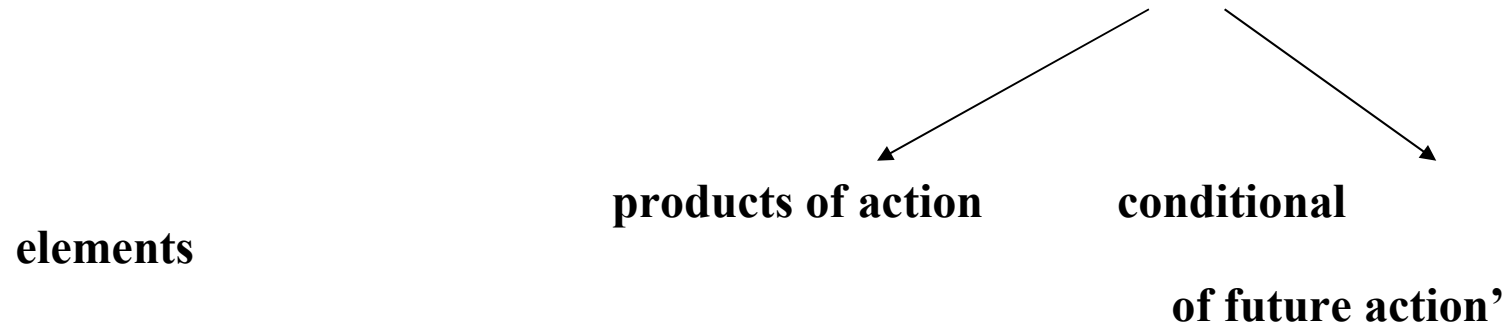
Hofstede (1994) defined

   culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another"

   Kroeber & Kluckhohn definition of culture reads
   'Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; …'
   the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems.

                              products of action   conditional

   elements

                                                     of future action'

Concluding, we can say that 'culture' consists of various factors that are shared by a given group, and that it acts as an interpretive frame of behaviour.

"What is culture? How can it be defined and what does it do?"
Quotations

- ***O Mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other.***
  The Quran, 49:13

- ***Culture is a thin but very important veneer that you must be careful not to scratch. People from different cultures are basically the same and respond in the same way. However, make sure that you understand their basic customs and show an interest and willingness to learn the differences between your cultures.***
  Mike Wills

- ***Culture is the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas.***
  E. Schein

- ***Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action.***
  Clifford Geertz

- *** I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.***
  Mahatma Gandhi

- ***Culture is a little like dropping an Alka-Seltzer into a glass-you don't see it, but somehow it does something.***
  Hans Magnus Enzensberger

- *If man is to survive, he will have learned to take a delight in the essential differences between men and between cultures. He will learn that differences in ideas and attitudes are a delight, part of life's exciting variety, not something to fear.*
  Gene Roddenberry

- *On a group of theories one can found a school; but on a group of values one can found a culture, a civilization, a new way of living together among men.*
  Ignazio Silone

- *A culture may be conceived as a network of beliefs and purposes in which any string in the net pulls and is pulled by the others, thus perpetually changing the configuration of the whole.*
  Jacques Barzun

- *Culture is the name for what people are interested in, their thoughts, their models, the books they read and the speeches they hear, their table-talk, gossip, controversies, historical sense and scientific training, the values they appreciate, the quality of life they admire. All communities have a culture. It is the climate of their civilization.*
  Walter Lippmann

- *Culture means control over nature.*
  Johan Huizinga

- *Culture is roughly anything we do and the monkeys don't.*
  Lord Raglan

Types of culture

● **CORPORATE CULTURE** *(for example, the culture of Microsoft)*

● **PROFESSIONAL CULTURE** *(for example, the culture of lawyers or doctors)*

● **GENDER CULTURE** *(for example, the different cultures of men and women)*

● **AGE CULTURE** *(for example, the culture of young, middle-aged, and old people)*

● **RELIGIOUS CULTURE** *(for example, Catholicsm, Islam)*

● **REGIONAL CULTURE** *(for example, Northern and Southern Italy)*

● **CLASS CULTURE** *(for example, working class, middle class, and upper class)*

factors that bind people together

- **intracultural**
  The term intracultural is used to describe data and interactional data from within one cultural group.

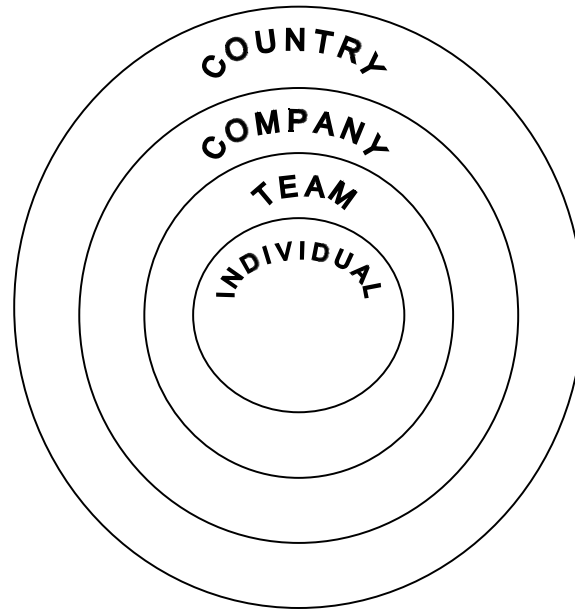*For example: Value variations among Germans is intracultural.*

- **intercultural**
  The term intercultural is generally used to describe comparative data and studies of a large number of cultures, or studies that try to identify dimensions that are not culture specific.
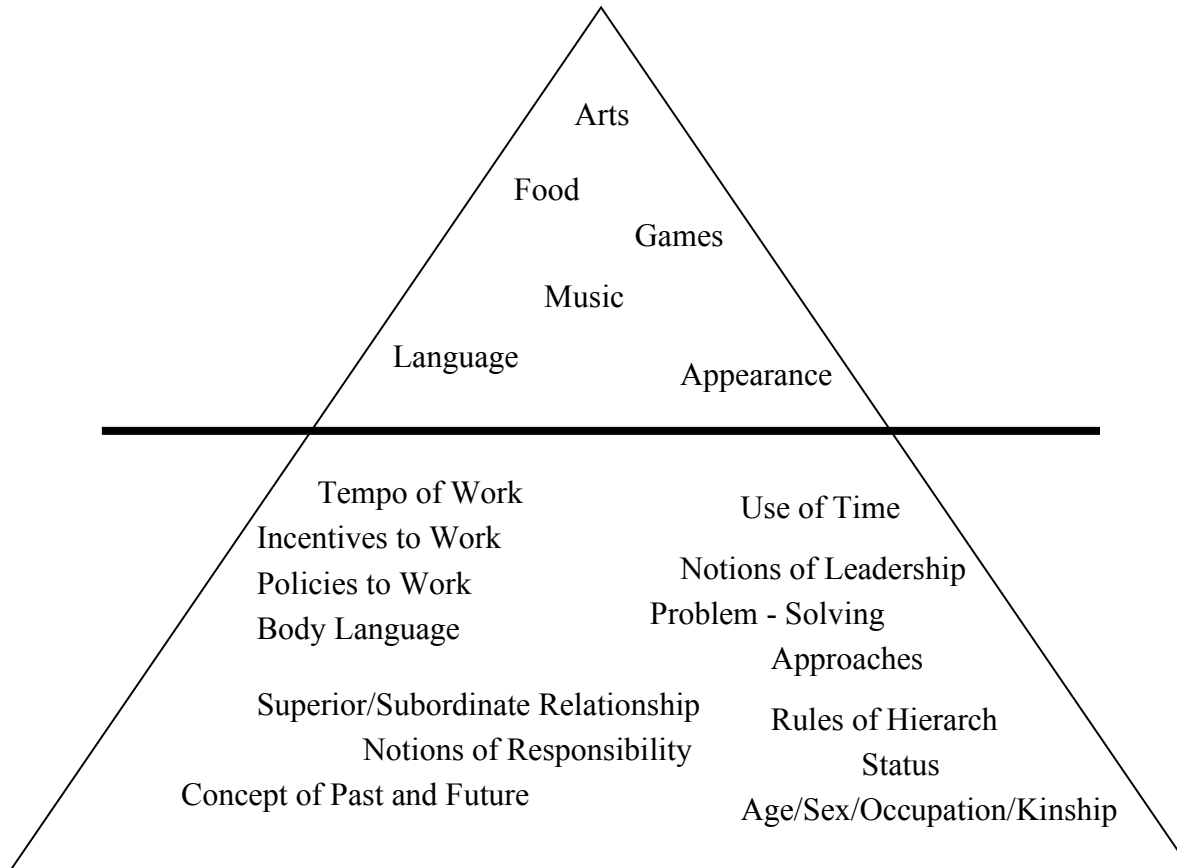
For example: Hofstede's work is intercultural, as it desribes cultural dimensions applicable for all cultures.

Intercultural is also used to describe interactional data from members of different cultural backgrounds (normally more than two).

'The Culture Onion'

Iceberg Model

Arts

Food

Games

Music

Language

Appearance

Tempo of Work
Incentives to Work
Policies to Work
Body Language

Use of Time

Notions of Leadership
Problem - Solving
Approaches

Superior/Subordinate Relationship
Notions of Responsibility
Concept of Past and Future

Rules of Hierarch
Status
Age/Sex/Occupation/Kinship

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

- Non-verbal communication
- Communication style
- Time and space
- Power
- The individual and the group
- Uncertainty
- Nature

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

- Managing people
- Negotiating
- Socializing
- Giving presentations
- Advertising
- Applying for a job

Hofstede

*Geert Hofstede, the Dutch social psychologist and engineer, collected data from **employees of IBM** in the late **1960s** and early **1970s.** His database cover-ed employees working in 72 **of the company's national subsidiaries**, who fol-lowed **38 different occupations**, and spoke **20 languages**. More than **116,000 questionnaires** were distributed, each with over **100 questions**. Hofstede published his findings in **1980** in a groundbreaking book called Culture's Consequences, which has had an enormous influence on the further develop-ment of the field. **He identified four dimensions:***

10. **individualism/collectivism**
11. **uncertainty avoidance**
12. **power distance**
13. **masculinity/femininity**

*Hofstede later extended his work to include a fifth dimension: **LONG-TERM ORIENTATION** . Although generally highly respected, his work has been criti-cized for concentrating too much on national cultures.*

Individualist and Collectivist cultures

__Individualist cultures__ stress self-realization, whereas collectivist ones require that the individual fits into the group. __The collectivist idea__ is illustrated by the Japanese saying 'The nail that stands out must be hammered down'. In __indi-vidualist cultures__, people look after themselves and their immediate family, whereas in __collectivist ones__ they look after a wider group, in exchange for loyalty.

Collectivist cultures tend to have the following features:

- identity is based on the social network to which you belong
- harmony should be maintained
- communication is high context
- employer—employee relationships are like a family link
- decisions on employing people take the group into account
- management is management of groups
- relationship is more important than task.

(Adapted from Hofstede 1991:67)

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Individualist cultures tend to have the following features:

- identity is based on the individual
- honest people speak their mind
- communication is low context
- employer-employee relationships are based on a contract
- decisions to employ people take skills into account
- management is management of individuals
- task is more important than relationship.

(Adapted from Hofstede 1991:67)

The **Power Distance** Index (PDI) is one of the five intercultural dimensions developed by Hofstede. This cultural dimension looks at how much a culture does or does not value hierarchical relationships and respect for authority.

Below is a country list illustrating the scores compiled by Professor Geert Hofstede with regards to the dimension named

Power Distance Index

- China – 80
- India – 77
- Iran – 58
- Russia – 93
- Saudi Arabia – 80
- Turkey – 66
- Egypt – 80
- Germany - 35

- Italy – 50
- UK – 55
- USA – 40
- Sweden – 31
- Spain – 57
- Brazil – 69
- Mexico – 81
- Japan - 54

- **Individualism** is one of the five intercultural dimensions developed by Hofstede. This cultural dimension looks at how much a culture emphasises the rights of the individual versus those of the group (whether it be family, tribe, company, etc).

    Individualist cultures include **the United States** and much of **Western Europe**, where personal achievements are emphasised.

    Collectivist cultures, such as **China, Korea**, and **Japan,** emphasize the group such as the family and at work this manifests in a strong work group mentality.

- **Masculinity** is one of the five intercultural dimensions developed by Hofstede. It is also one of the least understood as many people tend to associate it with masculinity literally. In essence it looks at the degree to which 'masculine' values like competitiveness and the acquisition of wealth are valued over 'feminine' values like relationship building and quality of life.

From Hofstede's research Japan was found to be the world's most masculine society, with a rating of 95. Sweden was the most feminine with a rating of 5. Other examples of "masculine" cultures include the USA, the Germany, Ireland and Italy. "Feminine" cultures include Spain, Thailand, Korea, Portugal and the Middle East.

Uncertainty avoidance is one of the five intercultural dimensions developed by Hofstede. In essence this cultural dimension measures a country or culture's preference for strict laws and regulations over ambiguity and risk. According to the Hofstede's findings **Greece** is the most risk-averse culture while **Singapore** the least. Generally speaking **Protestant** countries and those with **Chinese** influences score low. **Catholic, Buddhist and Arabic** speaking countries tend to score high in uncertainty avoidance.

Below is a country list illustrating the scores compiled by Professor Geert Hofstede with regards to the dimension named

Uncertainty Avoidance Index

- China – 30
- India – 40
- Iran – 58
- Russia – 95
- Saudi Arabia – 68
- Turkey – 85
- Egypt – 68
- Germany - 65
- Italy – 75
- UK – 35
- USA – 46
- Sweden – 29
- Spain – 86
- Brazil – 76
- Mexico – 82
- Japan - 92

The Cultural Comparison Graph –
the areas where the two cultures differ greatly

China/Italy

- **PDI (Power Distance Index)** - the degree of equality or inequality between people in a country's society.

- **IDV (Individualism)** - the degree to which a culture values and reinforces the importance of the individual as opposed to the group.

- **MAS (Masculinity)** - the degree to which a culture reinforces the traditional role of males vs females.

- **VAI (Uncertainty Avoidance)** - the level of tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity within a culture.
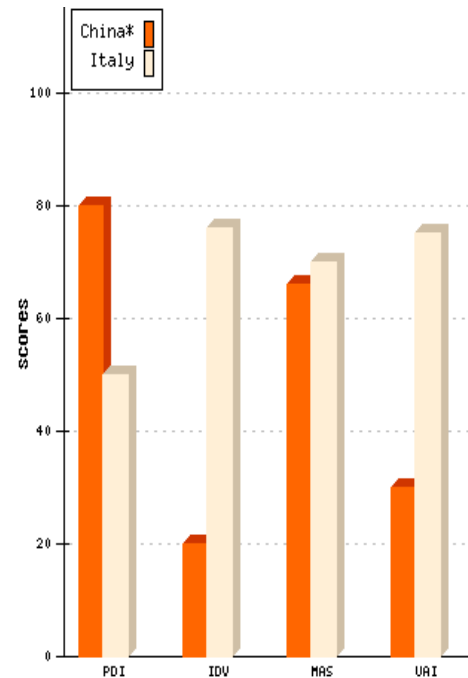
Trompenaars

*Dutchman, Fons Trompenaars, carried out research on **15,000 managers** from **28 countries**. His findings can be found in the very successful book, Riding the Waves of Culture (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1997).* ***He describes three main cultural dimensions:***

6. **RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE**
7. **ATTITUDE TO TIME**
8. **ATTITUDE TO THE ENVIRONMENT**

Intercultural Competence is:

- The fundamental acceptance of people who are different to oneself outside one's own culture.

- The ability to interact with them in a genuinely constructive manner which is free of negative attitude (e.g. prejudice, defensiveness, apathy, aggression etc.)

- The ability to create a synthesis, something which is neither "mine" nor "yours", but which is genuinely new and would not have been possible had we not combined our different backgrounds and approaches.

BENEFITS OF CROSS CULTURAL COMPETENCE TRAINING

- ***Self-Awareness:*** *People learn about their own strengths, weaknesses, prejudices and preconceptions.*
- ***Builds Confidence:*** *Cultural competency training promotes self-confidence in individuals and teams through empowerment.*
- ***Breaks down Barriers:*** *Our cultural training demystifies 'the other' and creates awareness.*
- ***Builds Trust:*** *Awareness leads to dialogue which leads to understanding which results in trust.*
- ***Motivates:*** *Through self-analysis people begin to recognise areas in which they need to improve and become motivated to develop.*
- ***Opens Horizons:*** *Cultural competency training helps people think outside the box.*
- ***Develops Skills:*** *Participants develop better 'people skills' - they begin to deal with people with sensitivity and empathy.*
- ***Develops Listening Skills:*** *By becoming good listeners, people become good communicators.*
- ***Using Common Ground:*** *Rather than focus on differences participants move towards creating a shared space.*
- ***Career Development:*** *Cross cultural competence training enhances people's skills and therefore future employment opportunities.*

THE INTERCULTURALLY EFFECTIVE PERSON

Simply stated, an interculturally effective person is someone who is able to live contentedly and work successfully in another culture.

Taken a little further, the interculturally effective person has three main attributes:

- **an ability to communicate with people of another culture in a way that earns their respect and trust**
- **the capacity to adapt his/her professional skills (both technical and managerial) to fit local conditions and constraints**
- **the capacity to adjust personally so that s/he is content and generally at ease in the host culture**

Breaking the Barriers of Intercultural Communication

1. Break Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs rather than objective truth and are usually influenced by a number of subjective factors.

2. Empathise

Through putting yourself in someone else's shoes you come to see or appreciate their point of view.

3. Involve

Involving others in tasks or decision making empowers and builds strong relationships, a more creative approach to problem solving as it incorporates different points of view.

4. Discourage Herd Mentality

It encourages creativity, innovation and advancement

5. Shun Insensitive Behaviour

By attacking someone's person, you attack their culture and therefore their dignity. This can only be divisive.

6. Be Wise

Intercultural communication is essentially founded upon wisdom, i.e. showing maturity of thought and action in dealing with people.

The widely known work of Milton Bennett helps to elucidate the process of adaptation to a new culture. In his work, Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, 1993, he describes six main stages in the development of intercultural sensitivity:

denial

defensiveness

minimization

acceptance

adaptation

integration

Culture shock

The symptoms of culture shock can include:

- strain
- sense of loss
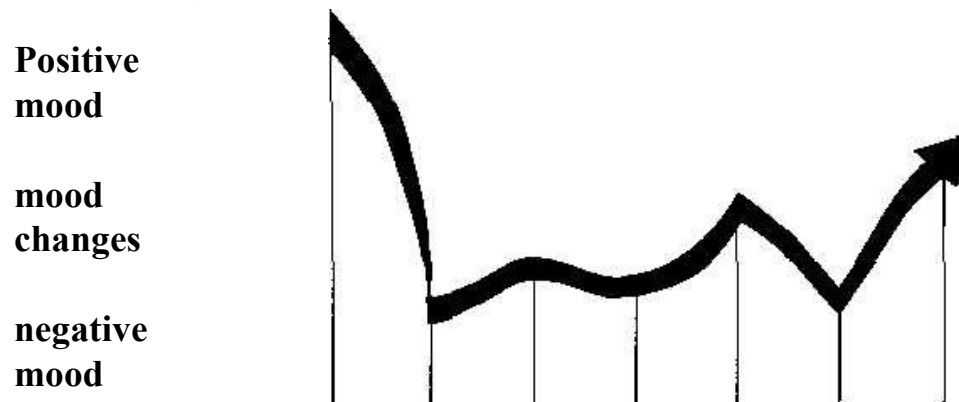- anxiety
- helplessness

Physical symptoms can include:

- headaches
- sleeplessness
- desire for comfort foods (for example, chocolate)
- excessive consumption of alcohol

- confusion
- feeling rejected
- obsession with hygiene

- overeating
- stomach pains

Phases of culture shock *(Marx 1999)*

Positive mood

mood changes

negative mood

The Cultural Adjustment Process

There are several stages most newcomers go through in adjusting to a new culture.

1.   **Fun**: The excitement and adventure of experiencing new people, things, and opportunities.

2.   **Flight**: The urge to avoid everything and everyone that is different. This stage is characterized by symptoms similar to those seen in cases of clinical depression, but as a reaction to culture shock.

3.   **Fight**: The temptation to judge people or things that may be different in a negative light. At this stage, one wrestles with the influence of the new culture while resisting giving up one's original cultural identity. Hopefully, a blend will emerge that fits you well.

4.   **Fit**: Willingness to understand, to embrace, and to creatively interact with the new culture. At this final stage, adaptation to the local culture has been made and hopefully one has made a decent adjustment.
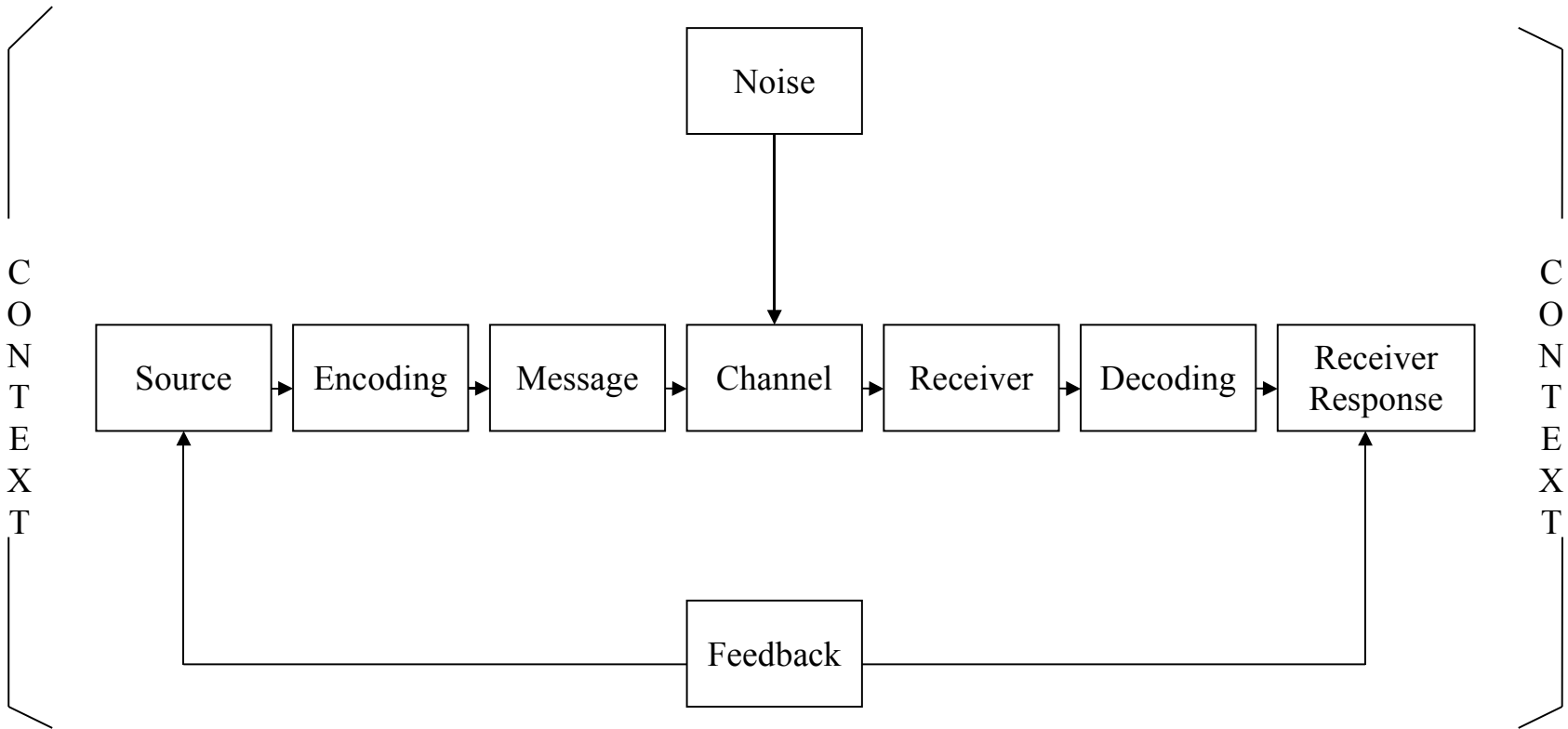
EXAMPLES OF FAST AND SLOW MESSAGES

Fast Messages

- Prose
- Headlines
- A communiqué
- Propaganda
- Cartoons
- TV commercials
- Television
- Easy familiarity
- Manners

Slow Messages

- Poetry
- Books
- An ambassador
- Art
- Etchings
- TV documentary
- Print
- Deep relationships
- Culture

Monochronic and Polychronic Cultures

	Monochronic Culture	Polychronic Culture
Interpersonal Relations	Interpersonal relations are subordinate to present schedule	Present schedule is subordinate to Interpersonal relations
Activity Co-ordination	Schedule co-ordinates activity; appointment time is rigid.	Interpersonal relations co-ordinate activity; appointment time is flexible
Task Handling	One task at a time	Many tasks are handled simultaneously
Breaks and Personal Time	Breaks and personal time are sacrosanct regardless of personal ties.	Breaks and personal time are subordinate to personal ties.
Temporal Structure	Time is inflexible; time is tangible	Time is flexible; time is fluid
Work/personal time separability	Work time is clearly separable from personal time	Work time is not clearly separable from personal time
Organisational Perception	Activities are isolated from organisation as a whole; tasks are measured by output in time (activity per hour or minute)	Activities are integrated into organisation as a whole; tasks are measured as part of overall organisational goal

MONOCHRONIC PEOPLE

- do one thing at a time
- concentrate on the job
- take time commitments (deadlines, schedules) seriously
- are low-context and need information
- are committed to the job
- adhere religiously to plans
- are concerned about not disturbing others; follow rules of privacy and consideration
- show great respect for private property; seldom borrow or lend
- emphasize promptness
- are accustomed to short-term relationships

POLYCHRONIC PEOPLE

- do many things at once
- are highly distractible and subject to interruptions
- consider time commitments an objective to be achieved, if possible
- are high-context and already have information
- are committed to people and human relationships
- change plans often and easily
- are more concerned with those who are closely related (family, friends, close business associates) than with privacy
- borrow and lend things often and easily
- base promptness on the relationship
- have strong tendency to build lifetime relationships

VISUALIZATION OF TIME (Lewis 1996)

PRESENT

FUTURE unknowable   PAST visible influential

PRESENT vaguely understood

VALUES CONTINUUM

Part 1

Time and Its Control   ---------   **Human Interaction**
(punctuality, keeping schedules)   (relations between people most
                                                important)

Personal Control over   ----------   **Fate**
the Environment   (course of events is beyond power or
(Each person should control   control)
is beyond power whatever
might affect him)

Self-Help   ----------   **Birthright Inheritance**
(a person's achievement   (privilege of birth; inherited
on his own)   wealth or social position)

VALUES CONTINUUM

Part 2

Change ------------------ **Tradition**
(connotes improvement,   (honours rich and ancient
development, growth and   heritage/ civilization)
progress)

Future Orientation ------------------ **Past orientation**
(looking to future as better,   (past kept alive, today's world
planning and goal setting)   seen as continuity of past)

Individualism/Privacy ------------------ **Group's welfare**

Competition ------------------ **Cooperation**

VALUES CONTINUUM

Equality ---------------- **Hierarchy/Rank/System**

(position in society
clearly defined by rank/status)

Informality ---------------- **Formality**

Practicality/Efficiency ---------------- **Idealism**

(philosophical, knowledge for
knowledge's sake)

**Directness/Openness/
Honesty** ---------------- **Indirectness/Ritual/"Face"**

Action/Work Orientation ---------------- **"Being" Orientation**
(action is superior to inaction) (state of inaction is acceptable,
concern with the

nature of existence and inner self)

Materialism/Acquisitiveness ---------------- **Spiritualism/Detachment**

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner in their book *"Riding The Waves of Culture" (1997), identify seven value orientations. Some of these value orientations can be regarded as nearly identical to Hofstede's dimensions. Others offer a somewhat different perspective.*

**The seven sub-categories of value dimensions
identified were:**

Universalism	**versus**	**Particularism**
Communitarianism	**versus**	**Individualism**
Neutral	**versus**	**Emotional**
Defuse	**versus**	**Specific cultures**
Achievement	**versus**	**Ascription**
Human-Time relationship	**and**	**Human-Nature relationship**

Value Orientations   *Orientation Postulated Range of Variation*

Human nature	*Evil*	1. mutable	2. immutable			
	Neutral	1. mixmutable	2. immutable			
	Good	1. mutable	2. immutable			
Man-nature	*Subjugation*	1. to Nature Harmony	2. with Nature Mastery	3. over Nature		
Time	Inner development	Working for rewards				
Activity	*Past*	*Present*	*Future*			
Relational	*Being*	*Being-in-Becoming*	*Doing*	*Lineality*	*Collaterality*	*Individualism*

Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; 12)