CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Defining Cross-Cultural Communication

Communication

- The process of transferring meanings from sender to receiver (Luthans & Doh, 2015, p. 203)
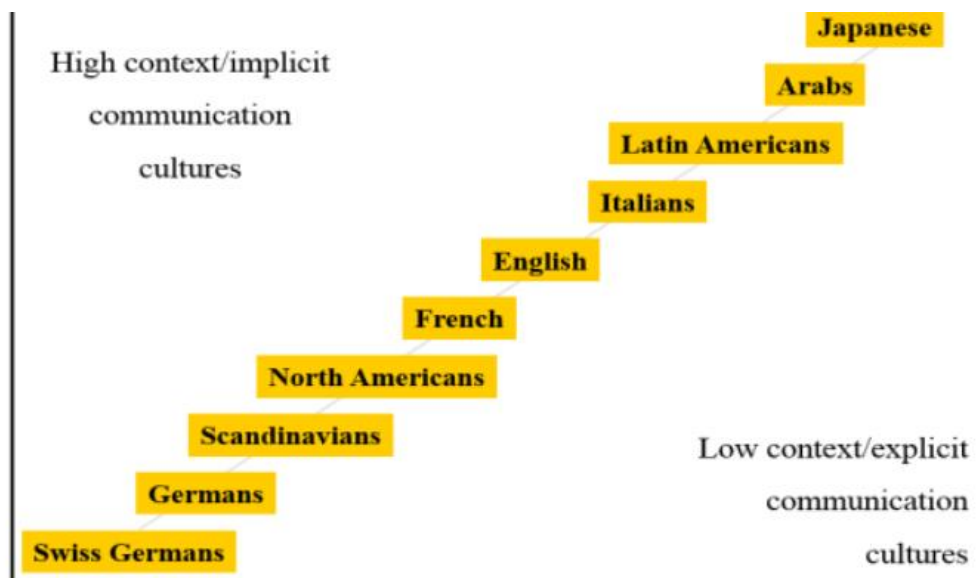
Cross Cultural Communication

- Involves an understanding of how people speak from different cultures of how people from different cultures speak, communicate and perceive the world around them
- In an organisation deals with understanding different business customs, beliefs and communication strategies
- External – communicating with various stakeholders in foreign locations
- Internal – communicating within the firm e.g. with local managers and employees in host subsidiaries

The communication process

(Deresky, 2011, p.139)
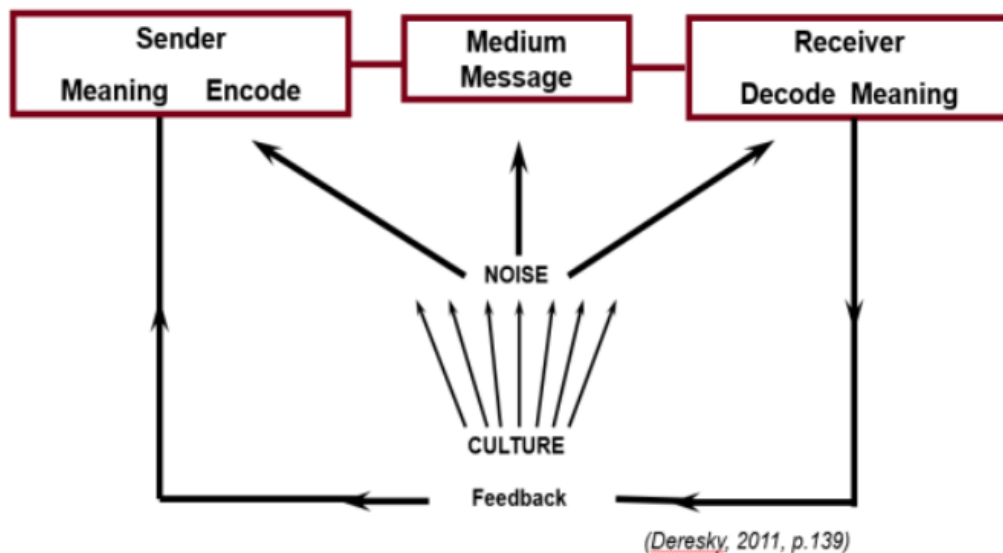
VERBAL COMMUNICATION STYLES

- Hall (1976) identified the important distinction between explicit and implicit communication
- Low-context languages
    o One in which people state things directly and explicitly
    o Person says precisely what they mean
- High-context languages
    o One in which people state things indirectly and implicitly
    o Messages are often coded
    o Receiver must interpret the message by filtering through what is said and how it is conveyed

High context/implicit communication cultures

Japanese
Arabs
Latin Americans
Italians
English
French
North Americans
Scandinavians
Germans
Swiss Germans

Low context/explicit communication cultures

	High-Context	Low-Context
Reliance on non-verbal communication	High	Low
View of silence	Respected; communicative	Anxiety-producing; non-communicative
Attention to detail	Low	High
Communication approach	Indirect; inferential	Direct; explicit
Literalness	Low; interpretive	High; non-interpretive

• High-Context	• Low-Context
• Indirect plan approach • Importance of face-saving • Situational nature of rules • Reliance on implicit communication • Eg. Declining a request with vagueness or body language instead of with written or spoken words • Rank of receiver can affect medium and message • Centrality of personal relationships in communication	• Direct plan approach • Relativity of blunt behaviour • Importance of rules as abstract ideals • Reliance on explicit verbal communication • Distancing of personal from business relationships

Criticisms of Hall's High vs Low Context Cultures

- Kittler, Rygl and Mackinnon (2011) analused Hall's low/high-context work, and found the following
    - Hall's concept seemed to have lost some of its popularity in recent years. This decline is not related to the concept itself but to dubious country classifications attached to the concept
    - Mixed and often contradictory findings reveal inconsistencies in conventional country classifications
    - One of the limitations of Hall's study was that it was restricted to research published in English. For example the Asian research community might respond differently to a rater western concept

Elaborate to Succinct Styles

- Elaborate Style
    - Great deal of talking, description includes much detail, people often repeat themselves
    - Common in Arabic countries
    - More popular in high-context, moderate uncertainty-avoiding cultures
- Exacting Style
    - Focuses on precision and use of the right amount of words to convey the message
    - Too many words is seen as exaggeration, too few leads to ambiguity
    - England, Germany and Sweden
    - More common in low-context low uncertainty avoidance cultures
- Succinct Style
    - People tend to say few words and allow understatements, pauses and silence to convey meaning
    - Communicators are succinct to save face
    - Common in Asian countries
    - More common in high context high uncertainty avoidance cultures

Contextual and Personal Styles

- Contextual Style
    - One that focuses on the speaker and relationship of the parties
    - Words used reflect the role and hierarchal relationship of those in the conversation
    - E.g. Japan, India and Ghana
    - More common in high-context high power-distance, collective cultures
- Personal Style
    - Focuses on the speaker and the reduction of barriers between the parties
    - Common to use first names and address others informally
    - E.g. US, Australia and Canada
    - More common in low-context low power-distance, individualistic cultures

Affective and Instrumental Styles

- Affective Style
  - Characterised by language that requires the listener to carefully note what is being said and observe how the sender is presenting
  - Often involves non-verbal communication
  - What is left out is often just as important as what is included
  - E.g. Middle East, Latin American and Asian countries
  - Common in high-context, collective cultures
- Instrumental Style
  - Goal-orientates and focuses on sender
  - Sender clearly lets the other part know what they want the receiver to know
  - E.g. Switzerland, Denmark, US
  - More common in low-context, individualistic countries

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION STYLES
Non-Verbal Communication
- The transfer of meaning without words and through means such as body language and the use of physical space
- E.g. symbols, cosmetics

Kinesics and Proxemics
Kinesics
- Communication through body movement and facial expressions, such as eye contract, posture and gestures
- *Oculesics*: communicating through the use of eye contact and gaze
- *Haptics*: communicating through the use of bodily contact

Proxemics
- Communication through the use of physical space
- *Intimate distance:* used for very confidential communications
- *Personal distance:* used for talking with family and close friends
- *Social distance:* used to handle most business transactions
- *Public distance:* used when calling across a room or talking to a group

Chronemics and Chromatics
Chronemics
- Communication through the use of time
- *Monochronic time schedule:* things are done in a linear fashion e.g. US, UK, AUS
- *Polychronic time schedule:* many things done at the same time with higher value placed on personal involvement than finishing on time e.g. Latin America, Middle East

Chromatics

- Communication through the use of colour
- Colours mean different things in different countries

Noise

- 3 types of variables that can produce cultural noise which can impede the correct interpretation of messages from the sender to the receiver
- Physical
    - Such as body language, posture
- Psychological
    - Different cultural perceptions regarding the same message
- Semantics
    - Such as misinterpreting a message through language barriers

Communication in Australian Organisation

- Expect punctuality
- Like to have business cards
- Brief time on small talk
- First names
- Separate business and social affairs
- Consider informal, personal communicating more important than formal written methods

Indonesian Organisation

- High face-saving culture
- Authority rarely delegated
- Lower levels rarely expect to initiate actions
- Strict adherence to rules and decisions
- Personal interaction dominates
- Informality is accepted, but respect is paid in all circumstances
- A quiet voice and unassuming attitude is values

Intercultural Communication Barriers

- Assumption of similarities
- Language differences
- Nonverbal misinterpretations
- Preconceptions and stereotypes
- Tendency to evaluate
- High anxiety