about a person or a thing. Prejudice is the word used to refer to something that you hate completely. (**bias**: a term used when choice can be made between two things and the person selects the thing which he/she himself/herself likes. Bias refers to a thought of an individual or a group which is leaning towards an area of life such as politics, society, religion or economics.)

Proxemics- use of fixed space, territoriality, and personal space

Reverse culture shock- anxiety, disorientation, and stress that one can experience upon return to one's home country.

Segregation/separation- maintaining one's original culture and not participating in the new culture

Sexism- practice of limiting women to traditional women's roles and men to traditional men's roles.

Sojourner- one who lives in a country for a specific period of time for a specific purpose such as employment and expects to return home

Stereotype- the fixed idea or image that people have of a type of person or thing, which is reality is not always true. Judgement made about another solely on the basis of ethnic or other group membership.

Subculture- group within a larger society that shares distinctive cultural characteristics to distinguish it from others

Synergy- where the combined effect is more than the sum of the individual parts

Territoriality- refers to how space can be used to communicate messages

Universalism – where behaviour is guided by rules rather than specific circumstances

Xenophobia- unreasonable fear or hatred of foreigners

Part One: Culture

The Meaning of Culture

Culture- is a very powerful force in our lives. It determines many of *the experiences* we have and the *meanings* we give to them. The culture we have acquired inevitably influences *the way we communicate* which in turn influences *how we are perceived* by our audiences.

But what exactly is culture? To the sociologist, culture is everything that we are socialized to do, think, use, and make. Much of what humans think and do is learned from the *society*[6] they live in. Because humans live in groups and communicate with each other, they pass on what they know and believe to their children and to each other. They pass on, for example, ideas about what they believe is important or not important in life, what they see as normal and abnormal behaviour, and what they believe to be right and wrong. All these ideas **form** the culture of the particular society they live in, and guide the behaviour of the members of that society. **Culture:** everything humans are socialized to do, think, use, and make.

Values- are socially shared ideas about what we consider to be good, desirable, or important in life. We show what we value by how we live our lives. For example if many people of a society

---

[6]   A collection of individuals sharing a common culture and living in the same geographical territory.

value money, this will be reflected in the amount of attention that the society gives to it-for example, in its newspapers. The values of a society form *the basis* of its *rules, or norms*.

Norms- define what is *socially acceptable or unacceptable* behaviour in particular social situations. When we violate or go against social norms, there may be some kind of negative consequences. That is, there may be a penalty or punishment to discourage us from acting this way again. Most of us are not even aware of many behaviours as social norms. We think they are natural. Kissing is a good example. We usually know what is acceptable and what is not about who we kiss, how we kiss, and when and where.

Investigating 'culture'.[7] Why does culture matter?[8]

The word culture is a very flexible concept, has many meanings and is open to many interpretations. Below we are trying to identify as many of the components or branches of culture as possible.

Business:

Style: formal/informal

Hierarchy: obedience/independence

Communication: written/spoken

Physical:

Body language: gestures/ facial expression

---

[7] Guse, Jenni, (2011) *Communicative Activities for EAP*, Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers. P.215

[8] Derek Utley *Intercultural Resource Pack*, Cambridge University Press, 2011

Appearance: dress/features

Politics:

Government: centralization/bureaucracy

Democracy

Language:

Spoken: volume/speed/ formality/jargon/ politeness[9]/ dialect

Written: length/formality

Social life:

Class/gender/tradition/hospitality/greetings/emotion,

Family life: old people/children

Food and Drink:

Acceptable/unacceptable,

Times,

Place: restaurant/home

Importance

Routines:

Meal times

Work times

Towns:

Houses

Traffic –driving habits

---

[9] **Bluntness = directness of speech**

What is Culture?[10]

Myriads of definitions of culture abound, from

- the pragmatic-the way we do things around here-to
- the academic – a shared system of assumptions, values and beliefs of people which result in characteristic behaviours.

The best way to understand culture, D. Utley argues, is by analogy with children learning their first language-instinctively, unconsciously, contingent/dependent upon their environment. They are also performing a feat of linguistic genius. Besides *linguistic competence*, children are also acquiring *communicative competence*, i.e. learning to use the appropriate speed and volume of speech, pitch and tone of voice, chuckles, sighs, gasps, etc. to communicate a highly nuanced range of emotions. Beyond these so-called **paralinguistic features**, children are also learning **extra-linguistic communication**: gestures, how and when to make eye contact, *how close to stand to different people*, when it is their turn to speak, etc. As children continue to grow and to learn, they in time acquire **cultural competence**: a vast web of interconnected knowledge which includes, among other things, which groups of people should be accorded the most respect, which behaviours are acceptable for men and which for women, which foods one may eat, what is funny and what is not[11]. In short, children become fully socialized members of a community, and *the constellation/a group of similar things- of values, norms and behaviours they have learned can be summed up with the word 'culture'*.

---

[10] Derek Utley *Intercultural Resource Pack*, Cambridge University Press, 2011 p. 7

[11] Edward T.Halls' *The Silent Language*, New York: Anchor Books, 1997, particularly chapter 3, 'The Vocabulary of Culture'.

Hofstede's definition of culture

Gerard Hendrik (Geert) Hofstede (born 2 October 1928 in Haarlem) is a Dutch social psychologist and writer.

Based on his extensive body of research, Hofstede defines culture as 'mental programs' or 'patterns of thinking, feelings, and acting' that function like 'software of the mind'. He argues that culture is unavoidably a collective phenomenon insofar as our culture is learned from and shared with the people in our social environment. He calls culture 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'. He emphasizes the fact that culture is a mental programming and that culture is learned. For example a manager cannot coordinate the actions of employees without a deep understanding of their values and beliefs.

Discussion Questions

   a. Consider how far we are *a product of our different cultures*, and how far we are *unique individuals*.
   b. Share your thoughts on *the complex cultural situations* in which we all live and work.
   c. Think of the *influences* that colour our acts of communication[12].

Defining "Culture" Today

Culture is a complex term and one that is difficult to define. Hundreds of definitions of culture have been created by theorists in

---

[12] Gudykunst, W.B. and Yun Kim, Y. 2002, *Communicating with Strangers*, New York: McGraw-Hill cited in Utley, D. 2011, *Intercultural Resource Pack*, Cambridge University Press p. 32

different disciplines. Most of them agree on certain key charac-
teristics. These characteristics are that culture

- is learned- more often children learn their culture as the
  way the world is and perceive that the way individuals in
  their culture behaves is the one correct way to behave. This
  is where ethnocentrism may lead to misunderstanding and
  conflict. In fact, anthropologist Edward T. Hall has said that
  **"(c)ulture hides much more than it reveals, and strange-
  ly enough what it hides, it hides most effectively from its
  participants."** [13] It is necessary that we go beyond our ini-
  tial perceptions of our own culture. For example, we need to
  realize that just because our culture believes that making eye
  contact is a sign of honesty, it does not mean that someone
  from another culture who does not make eye contact with us
  must therefore be dishonest. Just as Western scholarship has
  dominated in IR (International Relations) field, so have su-
  perficial values attributed to "Western" culture. To endorse
  this view Houman A. Sadri and Madelyn Flammia argue
  that "Ideas of *colonization and power politics* are ingrained
  in these frameworks and may be unconsciously reflected
  in our own conceptions of intercultural relations. Thus, to
  avoid unwanted conflicts, one must be mindful." [14]
- involves the shared perceptions and values of large groups
  of people- we speak of a national culture, and many cultures
  are characterized in relation to nations-such as the Japanese
  culture. However, culture does not necessarily have to be a

---

[13]   Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday,
       1981), p. 29
[14]   Houman A.Sadri, Madelyn Flammia, *Intercultural Communication, A
       New Approach to International Relations and Global Challenges,* The
       Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011 p. 34

group of people who share the same national boundaries,
government and laws. This reflects the idea of transnational
representation in the IR field. Moreover, some states are na-
tion-states-mainly consisting of one nation-while others are
multi-national states-entailing more than one nation.
- is expressed as behaviour- an individual's cultural beliefs
  and values are often expressed in his behaviour, which po-
  litical scientists have aimed to explain with little success. In
  IR, a major criticism against the realist school is that realism
  fails to consider the different sets of beliefs, ideologies, and
  collective cultural identities that prompt sovereign states to
  behave the way that they do. The *supporters of the realist
  school*, Houman A. Sadri and Madelyn Flammia argue, tend
  to ignore the fact that the rationality assigned as the reason
  behind state's actions depends on the cultural context.
- is dynamic and adaptive-as society continues to evolve, so
  will the cultures of the world. Cultures may change as a result
  of exposure to new ideas from outside, contact and conflict
  with other cultures, technological innovations and internal
  variables and conflicts. With the proliferation of email and the
  internet, a set of guidelines for **behaviour online, referred to
  as netiquette**, has been developed. Diverse cultures have dif-
  ferent ways of adapting to and using new technologies.

What is Culture? Ways of becoming inter-culturally more competent

'Oh would some power give us the gift, to see ourselves as others see
us! It would free us from many a blunder and foolish notion.'

Robert Burns (1759-96)- Scottish poet, in his poem 'To a Louse'.

'Culture, a system of beliefs and values shared by a particular group of
people'

Craig Storti [15]

Culture is normally associated with **the place** where you were born or have spent most of your life, usually a country. This is because countries often *share vital characteristics* such as history, climate, laws, art or geography. But there are other groups which have their own distinctive cultures, for example.

- A larger geographical area: southern Europe, East Asia
- A part of a country; Siberia, Yorkshire
- A company: IBM, Ericsson, Toyota
- A team: new software implementation project
- A function: financial controllers
- A professional association: the Greek Institute of Certified Public Accountants

At the centre of all these groups is **the individual**, whose *combination of inherited genes* and **specific environmental influences** have made him or her **a unique person**.

This individual will be a member of many different cultures. At the same time as sharing some of the characteristics of each of these groups, he or she as an individual will have much in common with people outside the same groups. Categories will inevitably overlap: a Colombian employee of Ericsson may derive certain cultural characteristics from his or her country and others from the company. The former could make him or her different from an Ericsson employee in Britain; the latter could make him or her different from a Colombian working for Siemens.

Myriads of definitions of culture abound- exist in great numbers-, from **the pragmatic**-'the way we do things around here' to **the academic** 'a shared system of assumptions, values and beliefs of people which result in characteristic behaviours".

---

[15] To put it another way: it is culture as encountered in behaviour that we must learn to live with. Storti, Craig (2001) *The Art of Crossing Cultures* (2nd edition), Yarmouth: Intercultural Press. p. 15

But perhaps the best way to understand culture, Utley argues[16], is by analogy with children learning their first language-*instinctively, unconsciously, contingent[17] upon their environment*. Besides **linguistic competence,** children are also acquiring **communicative competence,** i.e. learning to use the appropriate speed and volume of speech, pitch and tone of voice, etc. to communicate a highly nuanced range of emotions. Beyond these so-called *paralinguistic features*, children are also learning **extra-linguistic communication**: *gestures, how and when to make eye contact, how close to stand to different people, when it is their turn to speak, etc.*

As children continue to grow and to learn, they in time acquire **cultural competence**: *a vast web of interconnected knowledge* which includes, among other things,

- which groups of people should be accorded the most respect,
- which behaviours are acceptable for men and which for women,
- which foods one may eat,
- what is funny and what is not.

In short, children become fully socialized members of a community, and the constellation[18] of values, norms and behaviours they have learned can be summed up with the word 'culture'.

What is "culture"

No standard definition of "culture" exists in the academic world, for the concept of culture is evolving as the earth becomes smaller through electronic, homogeneous communication. This "globalisation" of the planet requires that workers throughout the world understand the components of the vast array of cultures available.

---

[16] Utley, D. 2011, *Intercultural Resource Pack,* Cambridge University Press p. 7

[17] Dependent on something that may or may not happen. My success is contingent upon/on your help.

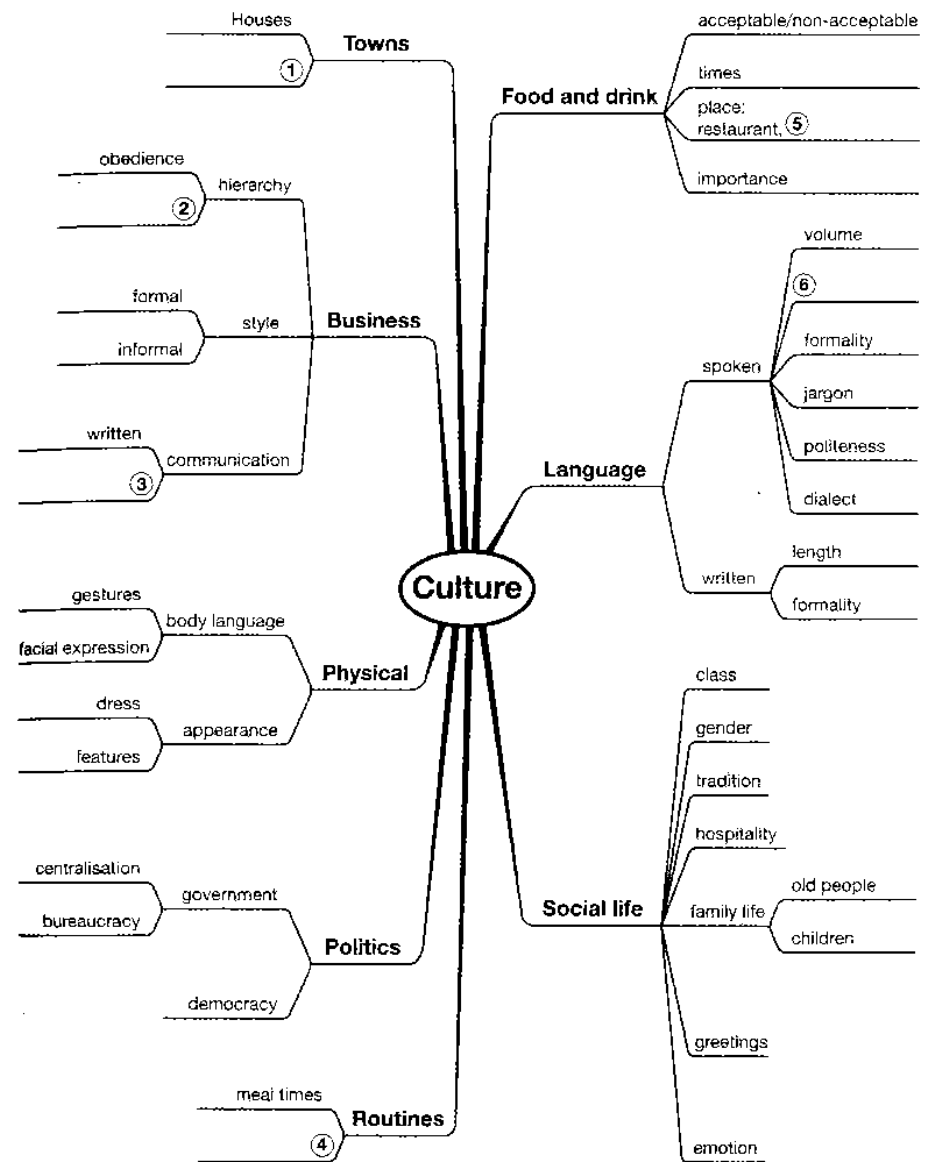[18] A group of similar people or things esp. famous ones.

Brainstorming: What is culture for you?

What is 'culture' for you? The word has many meanings and is open to many interpretations.

The aim of this mind map is to try to identify as many of the components of culture as possible. Follow the lines out from the central word 'culture'.

1 *Complete the spaces numbered 1 to 6 with a suitable word or phrase.*

2 *Continue the lines outwards with suitable ideas.*

Utley, D. *Intercultural Resource Pack,Intercultural communication resources for language teachers,* Cambridge University Press Professional Englisch, 2004, p. 13

Social scientists such as John H. Bodley in *An Anthropological Perspective from Cultural Anthropology: Tribes, States and the Global System* (1994) have construed culture as "society and its way of life or in reference to human culture as a whole". Alfred Krober and Clyde Kluckholm (1952) identified what they perceived as the components of culture: religion, economy, social heritage, learned human behaviour, language, way of life, ideals, values, rules of living, ways of problem solving, learned habits, patterned and interrelated ideas, symbols, and arbitrarily assigned meanings that are shared by society. Fundamentally, culture refers primarily to the attitudes and behaviours that characterise a group of people. The group of people may be related by geography, nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, or any other group identification.

How does culture affect communication?

The elements of culture defined by Krober and Kluckholm (1952) differ from place to place and impact how communication occurs. Communication, in this case, refers to the verbal or non-verbal interaction between two or more people. In the global workforce which requires employees to travel to other countries on a day-to-day basis, understanding how to communicate in a variety of cultures becomes an important problem.

KEEP IN MIND THAT
- **understanding a particular culture will give you a significant business advantage**
- **not understanding a culture could lead to disaster**
- **there are many reasons for different cultural behaviours**

Behaviour is a critical component of communication. Outer or upper layers of communication are those which are most obvi-

ous. Beamer and Varner (2001) in *Intercultural Communication in the Global Workforce* call this layering the "front stage" and "back stage" behaviour of a culture. Front stage behaviours are those observed immediately upon encountering an individual from another culture. For example, Greek and Arab businesspersons may kiss each other on the cheek before the start of a social function; one from Singapore may bow to a Japanese person. Americans most often shake hands. Knowing whether to kiss, bow, or shake hands is an important cultural aspect of conducting business in a global environment.

Knowing what to do is a good way to start, but understanding why a behaviour exists may be helpful. This level of understanding is the inner or "back stage" of cultural behaviour (Beamer and Varner). Back stage behaviours include the way people "make decisions, respond to deadlines, accomplish tasks, rank events by importance, and conceptualise knowledge". Figure 1 shows the difference between front stage and back stage cultural behaviour.

KEEP IN MIND THAT
- **front stage cultural behaviour is most likely connected with deeper meanings of a culture**

It is actually the back stage of cultural behaviour that is more important to the communication process. In this layer, it is possible to understand how people within a specific culture think and express themselves and how they expect others to respond. For instance, an American businessman, Mr. Smith, asked a Japanese businessman, Mr. Yenn, if the project he needed would be on time. When Mr. Yenn responded, "Yes, the project will be completed by the deadline," Mr. Smith expected to receive it by

FRONT STAGE CULTURAL BEHAVIOUR
What do you see first?
• Shaking hands
• Kissing on the cheek
• Bowing to another person
• Greeting by a pat on the back

BACK STAGE CULTURAL BEHAVIOUR
What do you understand later?
• Making decisions
• Responding to deadlines
• Accomplishing tasks
• Ranking events by importance
• Conceptualizing knowledge

Fig. 1. Layers of cultural behaviour.

the agreed upon deadline. When he did not receive it, Mr. Smith learned that in the Japanese culture, responding "no" would have been an insult to Mr. Smith. In the Japanese culture, it is more important to save face than it is to tell the truth. This is the back stage cultural behaviour; the reason for the response. If Mr. Smith had understood this multi-level response, he would have known to ask the question in a different way. By asking, "When do you think the project will be ready?" Mr. Smith could have negotiated a deadline that would have been satisfactory to both parties. This simple act would have avoided the yes-no front stage response and the back stage cultural behaviour that led to an incorrect response.

What is the context of culture?

The context of culture, according to Hall in *Beyond Culture* (1976), relates to the framework, background and surrounding

circumstances in which communication or an event takes place. According to Hall, a "high context culture" is one that depends upon interpersonal relationships for structure, interaction and communication. This leads to formal, indirect communication. In the high context culture, everyone in that culture understands the required behaviours and communication style. The opposite is a "low context culture." In a low context culture, language reflects what is thought, intended and meant. Thoughts are expressed clearly, precisely and efficiently. Facts and actions are the goals of low context culture communications.

Japan and Great Britain exemplify high context cultures; Germany, a low context culture. For example, when a German businessman makes an appointment for 2:00 p.m., he means 2:00 p.m., not 2:05 or 2:10. The back stage level of understanding offers the explanation that the German culture is based on structure and organisation. The same businessman needs to know, however, that other "high context" cultures are less precise and exact in their expression of time. As a case in point, in Saudi Arabia, time is a very vague notion. The same 2:00 p.m. appointment for the German businessman means sometime after 2:00 in Saudi Arabia; even one or two hours later! In this case, the front stage of the cultural behaviour is the time, while the back stage is the understanding that for the German, the time is precise; for the Saudi Arabian, it is not. For the transaction to succeed, they must understand each other's culture.

KEEP IN MIND THAT
• unless you know how a culture works, you may easily become frustrated
• a number of reasons affect culture, one of which is weather
• you will have to leave behind many of your cultural prejudices when doing business abroad

As an example of cultural differences, an American business-woman, Ms. Davis, met a Malaysian businessman, Mr. Wangu. Ms. Davis made three cultural errors because she did not understand either the front stage or the back stage of cultural behaviour within the high context Malaysian culture. Here is what she did. Mr. Wangu offered his business card to Ms. Davis. Without looking at it (Mistake #1), she accepted it with her left hand (Mistake #2) and placed it in her pocket (Mistake #3). What didn't she know? In Asian cultures, high context cultures heavily influenced by the Islamic religion and other Asian customs and values, the business card is an important piece of paper which represents a person. It is normally taken in both hands, and the recipient shows great interest immediately. Ms. Davis should have read the card carefully upon receiving it, demonstrated interest and placed it into her wallet, a much more important location than a pocket. Her culturally incorrect behaviour meant that Ms. Davis was not able to win any business with Mr. Wangu's company, as he assumed that any transactions would be as carelessly accomplished as was their first interaction with the business card.

The Culture Iceberg- a model which helps to visualize culture

When you observe people from a certain culture, some characteristics –such as dress and the way people greet each other –are easy to see. Others are not easy. Culture is sometimes compared to **an iceberg** with the tangible expressions of culture and behaviour above the surface of the water, and the underlying attitudes, beliefs, values, and meanings below the surface. In other words some of which is visible, but much of which is difficult to see or invisible. There are many ways of defining the word culture. In this course book, culture is not used in the sense of literature,

music, and art, but rather in the sense of shared attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviour. Hofstede[19] has called it 'collective mental programming', or the 'software of the mind'. For some, it is simply 'the way we do things around here'.

The onion model-the culture onion- sees layers of culture which can be peeled away to reveal underlying basic assumptions. This natural reaction is called **ethnocentrism,** the basic human tendency to believe that the way we learned to do certain things is the (only) right way.

There are five different layers of culture which might affect *an individual's identity.*

a. Local community
b. Profession/occupation
c. Company
d. Business sector
e. Country

Can you add other layers to the onion?

Which layers of culture do you think are the most influential in a person's behaviour?

The **tree model** contrasts visible and hidden culture, with the roots providing an image of the historical origins of culture. Moving between cultures is like transplanting a tree-to be successful and roots have to be protected, and support will be needed in the new environment.

Various **models** have been used to illustrate the concept of culture[20].

---

[19] Hofstede, G. 1991. *Cultures and Organizations.* London: McGraw Hill.
[20] Gibson, R., 2000, *Intercultural Communication,* Oxford University

It can be seen as **an iceberg**, for instance, with

    a. the tangible expressions of *culture and behaviour above the surface of the water*, and

    b. the underlying attitudes, *beliefs, values, and meanings below the surface.*

Depending on *the individual's perspective*, those involved in intercultural interactions could be on a cruise liner approaching the iceberg, or the Titanic to crash into it.

The iceberg analogy:

"Surface elements" of culture: the more visible aspects of culture such as artifacts, objects and behaviours.

"Deep under the surface elements": less visible manifestation of culture such as values, beliefs, societal rules.

When we **enter another culture** it is like **two icebergs colliding**, the real clash takes place beneath the water, where values and thought patterns conflict.

External culture is explicitly learned and easily changed. Objective knowledge.

Internal culture is implicitly learned and is difficult to change. Subjective knowledge.

When icebergs collide, if we know their values, we can explain their behaviour (valuable) By contrast, if their behaviour is different from ours, we often describe it both subjectively and negatively (evaluate)

Components of national culture[21]

Things which you can recognize quite easily: artefacts, directness of speech in business, driving habits, greetings, emotion shown in public, physical gestures

Things which take some time to recognize: balance between work and home, corruption, family life, gender-roles of males and females, humour, punctuality in business, social life/ public and private

Things which you recognize only when you are very familiar with a culture: democracy, social organization and class, treatment of outsiders/foreigners, values and beliefs.

Types of Culture

When interculturalists use the word 'culture' they *do not just mean national culture*, but the whole range of different types of culture. These include:

    a. corporate culture- for instance, the culture of Microsoft

    b. professional culture- for example, the culture of politicians, diplomats, economists

    c. Gender- the different cultures of men and women

    d. Age-the different cultures of young, middle-aged, and old people

    e. Religious culture-for example, Catholicism, Islam, Protestantism

    f. Regional culture- for example, Northern and Southern Italy

    g. Class culture-working class, middle class, and upper class.

---

[21]   Derek Utley, *Intercultural Resource Pack*, CUP, 2011 p. 17

In some cases *these factors* may play a more significant part than *national culture* in **binding people together**. Scientists of different nationalities who work together on research projects frequently report on how their *common professional interests are so strong* that *national cultural differences become unimportant.*

Even the way people dress for business differs widely across cultures.

Continental Europe: One famous example is that of a businessman from continental Europe, wearing a sports jacket and tie, arriving for a meeting in London with his British counterpart wearing a suit, to be greeted with the words, 'Did the airline lose your luggage?'. To the British partner, the other man's choice of a sports jacket suggested **inappropriate informality**. As always, it is not only *national cultural differences* that are important; *corporate culture can differ widely,* too, even within the same industry: a Microsoft executive, for example, might be dressed very differently from someone employed by IBM.

Culture shows

Take cultural differences into account if you want a 'yes', says Steve Martin.[22]

Even businesses that operate solely in one country will often come into contact with colleagues and customers from *a variety of cultural backgrounds.* So it probably makes sense to ask whether *a person's cultural origin* has any bearing on how they are persuaded by others. What factors people from different cul-

---

[22] Steve Martin is co-author of *Yes! 50 Secrets from the Science of Persuasion,* scienceofyes.com (March 2009, Business Life)

tures pay attention to most when deciding whether to say 'Yes' to a request in a business setting.

In the more *individualistic cultures*[23] such as the **USA, the UK and Canada** people were often most persuaded by those who had done something for them first. In deciding to comply with a request, they tended to ask themselves, "What has this person done for me recently?" They felt most obligated to comply if they owed the requester a favour.

Different results came up in more **collective cultures,** such as **China and Japan,** where the primary factor in deciding whether to comply with a request was *who the requester was connected to.* Typically people would ask themselves, "Is this requester connected to someone in my department, especially *someone of a high rank*?" If the answer was yes, they felt more obligated to fulfil the request.

Research has shown that in **Mediterranean and South American regions** requests were more persuasive if the requester was connected to their network of friends. In **Germany and Scandinavia,** though, the most *successful persuasion* occurred when requests were shown to be *consistent with an organization's official rules and policies.*

The foregoing discussion points to the conclusion that such studies can help businesses to increase their chances of *successfully influencing and persuading* **others from different origins to their own** *by considering what they do first, before making a request.* **In individualistic cultures** this could require a business

---

[23] Individualistic culture: is a society which is characterized by individualism, not collectivism Individualistic cultures are oriented around the self, independent instead of identifying with a group mentality