#### 1 Unit 6

Intercultural Communication in Context

## 2 The Environmental Context

- The environment influences the communication process...
  - Indoors or outdoors
  - crowded or quiet
  - public or private
  - close together or far apart
  - warm or cold
  - bright or dark

#### 3 Information Load

- Information rate: the amount of information provided by the environment in a set time
- High load (airport scenario)
  - · Chaotic, dynamic, large-scale, busy
- Low load (dorm room scenario)
  - · Familiar, predictable, small-scale, simple
- The higher the load...
  - The more uncertainty, the more anxiety
  - Greatest source of uncertainty?
    - People especially from different cultures
- People likely to avoid high load environments

## 4 Information Load

## 5 Built Environments

- Universal human need: adaptations to the terrestrial environment for practical, aesthetic, ceremonial reasons
  - $\circ\,$  Ex. architecture, housing, landscaping, etc.
  - Changes natural patterns of behavior, including communication
  - Usually created to serve a function, but can be purely aesthetic.
- Hall's 3 layout patterns

- Fixed-feature space
  - Permanent space such as walls, floors, & windows
- Semi-fixed feature space
  - · Moveable space such as furniture and seating
- Informal space
  - Perceptual space that varies according to the movement of the interactants

# 6 Japanese Housing

- Traditional Japanese house style
  - Designed for multi-generational use
  - In harmony with nature: garden
  - Modular design using shoji & tatami
  - Important spaces: tokonoma, kitchen
  - Special function of bathroom
- 7 Japanese Housing: shoji
- 8 🔲 Japanese Housing: tatami
- 9 Privacy
  - A universal human need, like communication
  - How used & perceived based on culture
  - Related to how structures are built and used
  - Types of Privacy
    - Solitude / Reserve
    - Intimacy
      - With family
      - · With friends
    - Anonymity
- 10 Privacy: Office Space
- 11 Privacy: Office Space
  - Modern US work environment

- Limited or no physical privacy
- Psychological privacy
  - Sandra: Be oblivious to co-workers
  - Milton: Try to create private space
  - Peter: Live with no privacy & stress
- Communication problematic

#### 12 Time Orientation

- Monochronic orientation
  - Time segmented, priority to schedules
  - Focused on one transaction at a time
  - Mostly low-context cultures
- Polychronic orientation
  - Time a continuum, priority to relationships
  - Tolerant of interruptions, multiple interactions
  - Mostly high-context cultures
- Time orientation influences:
  - Scheduling
  - Living and working spaces
  - Business practices

#### 13 Time Orientation & Conflict

- Perception of polychronists by monochronists?
- Vice versa?
- Organization of space influenced by time orientation
- Monochronic orientation
  - · Emphasis on individual, private space
  - Orderly transactions, one at a time
  - Transparent, ordered way of doing business
- Polychronic orientation
  - Emphasis on common, communal space
  - No lines, no order, no privacy
  - Convoluted bureaucracy need to know the right people

## 14 Doing business across cultures

- What issues can arise?
  - Language, gestures
  - Appearance, dress
  - Business customs
  - Understanding consumers
  - Legal issues
  - Corruption

## 15 Power Distance & Organizations

- Characteristics of large power distance cultures:
  - Status conscious
  - Employ top-down communication
  - Employees not expected to participate in decision making
  - Mindful of employee welfare

## 16 Verbal Communication

- Seven deadly sins of Americans' English causing international misunderstanding:
  - Local color, slang, officialese/jargon
  - Humor, vocabulary, grammar
- Non-verbal: what issues might arise?
  - How to dress?
  - Greetings, shaking hands (how hard)
  - Who to greet? In what order? Women?
  - Proxemics: how close to get, where/when to sit

## 17 Cultural Aspects of International Business

- Comparing business practices in different cultures
  - Cultural taxonomies can be a starting point
  - However, care in lumping countries together: Europe, Asia, Middle East

- Importance of culture in doing business internationally => thriving IC training courses
- One frequent difference: role of women
  - More women in power positions: Western Europe
    - In a number of countries quotas for women on boards, in legislatures
    - Social benefits that help women work:
      - child care, extended maternity leave, paternity leave
  - Most of rest of the world: women less power than USA
  - Barriers to women:
    - People like to work with people similar to them, i.e. men hire men
    - Potential for sexual tension sometimes a concern cited
    - Concern about management styles

## 18 Formality of Japanese Business Culture

## 19 Formality of Japanese Business Culture

- Set ritual for exchanging business cards
  - Hand to partner with slight bow
  - Receive with both hands and read carefully
  - Two-sided, for Japanese & English: getting name right
- · Indicative of more formal Japanese culture
- · Ritual behavior seen in many aspects of life in Japan
- · Clash with American-style informality
- Verbal/non-verbal: Importance of silence, "hai"
- Strong sense of corporate social responsibility

## 20 Japanese Management Practices

- Business decisions based on benefit to company and to employees
- Shushin koyo (lifetime employment)
- Nenko joretsu (seniority grading)
  - Moving toward performance-based evaluation
- Taiso (morning exercise)

#### 21 Taiso

- Clip from *Gung Ho* (1986)
  - Japanese company taking over US auto factory First day
  - Japanese business practices face American workers
  - Point of exercising together
    - Health of employees a concern for the company (patriarchal attitude)
    - Team building => strong group coherence
    - Executives join in => also part of team
    - Goal: don't just do your job, think about the good of the company

# 22 German Management Practices

- Individualistic cultures with direct communication style
- · Facts more important than face
- · Factual honesty more important than politeness
- Compartmentalization (Ordnung muss sein)
- Leadership positions awarded with time and experience (practicality) over academic degrees
- State-regulated apprentice system => skilled workers

## 23 German Business Don'ts

#### 24 German Business Don'ts

- · Key aspects of German culture important in business
  - Punctuality not even 2 minutes late
  - Formality Sie/du, get down to business (no jokes or small talk)
  - Knowledge they've done their homework & expect the same
  - "Dienst ist Dienst und Schnaps ist Schnaps"
    - · Work at work and have fun when it's over
  - Awareness of German culture a plus

More important than speaking the language

## 25 Mexican Management Practices

- Major trading partner of USA NAFTA
- · Collectivist culture: Harmony highly valued
- · View work as a "necessary evil"
- Value cooperation over competition shouldn't try to stand out
- Top positions inherited or acquired through mutual favors/ friendship
- · Rigid hierarchy
- · Innovative/risk taking behavior is inappropriate

## 26 Mexican Business Etiquette

## 27 Mexican Business Etiquette

- · Business etiquette
  - Greetings depends on context
  - Titles important
  - Get name right including for women
    - Start with using family names
  - Pronunciation of names important
    - · Knowledge of Spanish a plus: English skills vary widely
  - In contrast to Germans, emotionally expressive style
  - Closer personal space and touching; strong eye contact

## 28 Chinese Management Practices

- · Huge potential market for businesses
- · Business practices guided by Confucian ideals
- Relationships viewed as unequal
- No separation between social & organizational relationships
- · Management is responsible for decision making
- Organizational conflict dealt with through mediation & compromise
- Gift giving has become a delicate issue

## 29 Chinese Business Etiquette

### 30 Chinese Business Etiquette

- Expectations from Chinese side
  - Importance of long term relationships: 关系 guān xì
  - Politeness very important
  - Handshakes, no bowing
  - Centrality of 面子 miàn zi (face)
  - Avoidance of direct statement of opinions, especially negative
  - Long negotiations typical
  - Language: usually interpreters are used, but knowing a few phrases in Mandarin a sign of respect