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GlobalPAD Core Concepts

What is Culture?

A Compilation of Quotations

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Definitions of Culture

Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define. In 1952, the American anthropologists, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions. Apte (1994: 2001), writing in the ten-volume *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, summarized the problem as follows: 'Despite a century of efforts to define culture adequately, there was in the early 1990s no agreement among anthropologists regarding its nature.'

The following extract from Avruch provides an historical perspective to some of the ways in which the term has been interpreted:

> Much of the difficulty [of understanding the concept of culture] stems from the different usages of the term as it was increasingly employed in the nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, it was used in three ways (all of which can be found today as well). First, as exemplified in Matthew Arnolds' *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), culture referred to special intellectual or artistic endeavors or products, what today we might call "high culture" as opposed to "popular culture" (or "folkways" in an earlier usage). By this definition, only a portion – typically a small one – of any social group "has" culture. (The rest are potential sources of anarchy!) This sense of culture is more closely related to aesthetics than to social science.
>
> Partly in reaction to this usage, the second, as pioneered by Edward Tylor in *Primitive Culture* (1870), referred to a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development (evolutionary) continuum (in Lewis Henry Morgan's scheme) from "savagery" through "barbarism" to "civilization". It is worth quoting Tylor's definition in its entirety; first because it became the foundational one for anthropology; and second because it partly explains why Kroeber and Kluckhohn found definitional fecundity by the early 1950s. Tylor's definition of culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". In contrast to Arnold's view, all folks "have" culture, which they acquire by virtue of membership in some social group – society. And a whole grab bag of things, from knowledge to habits to capabilities, makes up culture.
>
> The extreme inclusivity of Tylor's definition stayed with anthropology a long time; it is one reason political scientists who became interested in cultural questions in the late 1950s felt it necessary to delimit their relevant cultural domain to "political culture". But the greatest legacy of Tylor's definition lay in his "complex whole" formulation. This was accepted even by those later anthropologists who forcefully rejected his evolutionism. They took it to mean that cultures were wholes – integrated systems. Although this assertion has great heuristic value, it also, as we shall argue below, simplifies the world considerably.
>
> The third and last usage of culture developed in anthropology in the twentieth-century work of Franz Boas and his students, though with roots in the eighteenth-century writings of Johann von Herder. As Tylor reacted to Arnold to establish a scientific (rather than aesthetic) basis for culture, so Boas reacted against Tylor and other social evolutionists. Whereas the evolutionists stressed the universal character of a single culture, with different societies arrayed from savage to civilized, Boas emphasized the uniqueness of the many and varied cultures of different peoples or societies. Moreover he dismissed the value judgments he found inherent in both the Arnoldian and Tylorean views of culture; for Boas, one should never differentiate high from low culture, and one ought not differentially valorize cultures as savage or civilized.
>
> Here, then, are three very different understandings of culture. Part of the difficulty in the term lies in its multiple meanings. But to compound matters, the difficulties are not merely conceptual or semantic. All of the usages and understandings come attached to, or

can be attached to, different political or ideological agendas that, in one form or another, still resonate today.

Avruch 1998: 6–7

Reflection

Look at the following definitions of culture, and consider the characteristics of culture that they each draw attention to:

'Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.'

Tyler (British anthropologist) 1870: 1; cited by Avruch 1998: 6

'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 may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.'

Kroeber & Kluckhohn 1952: 181; cited by Adler 1997: 14

'Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.'

T.Schwartz 1992; cited by Avruch 1998: 17

'[Culture] is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.'

Hofstede 1994: 5

'... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next.'

Matsumoto 1996: 16

'Culture is a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour.'

Spencer-Oatey 2008: 3

Some Key Characteristics of Culture

1. *Culture is manifested at different layers of depth*

In analyzing the culture of a particular group or organization it is desirable to distinguish three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions.

When one enters an organization one observes and feels its *artifacts.* This category includes everything from the physical layout, the dress code, the manner in which people address each other, the smell and feel of the place, its emotional intensity, and other phenomena, to the more permanent archival manifestations such as company records, products, statements of philosophy, and annual reports.

Schein 1990: 111

This level [visible artifacts] of analysis is tricky because the data are easy to obtain but hard to interpret. We can describe "how" a group constructs its environment and "what" behaviour patterns are discernible among the members, but we often cannot understand the underlying logic – "why" a group behaves the way it does.

To analyze why members behave the way they do, we often look for the *values* that govern behaviour, which is the second level in Figure 1. But as values are hard to observe directly, it is often necessary to infer them by interviewing key members of the organization or to content analyze artifacts such as documents and charters. However, in identifying such values, we usually note that they represent accurately only the manifest or *espoused* values of a culture. That is they focus on what people *say* is the reason for their behaviour, what they ideally would like those reasons to be, and what are often their rationalizations for their behaviour. Yet, the underlying reasons for their behaviour remain concealed or unconscious.

To really understand a culture and to ascertain more completely the group's values and over behaviour, it is imperative to delve into the *underlying assumptions*, which are typically unconscious but which actually determine how group members perceive, think and feel. Such assumptions are themselves learned responses that originated as espoused values. But, as a value leads to a behavior, and as that behaviour begins to solve the problem which prompted it in the first place, the value gradually is transformed into an underlying assumption about how things really are. As the assumption is increasingly taken for granted, it drops out of awareness.

Taken-for-granted assumptions are so powerful because they are less debatable and confrontable than espoused values. We know we are dealing with an assumption when we encounter in our informants a refusal to discuss something, or when they consider us "insane" or "ignorant" for bringing something up. For example, the notion that businesses should be profitable, that schools should educate, or that medicine should prolong life are assumptions, even though they are often considered "merely" values.

To put it another way, the domain of values can be divided into (1) ultimate, non-debatable, taken-for-granted values, for which the term "assumptions" is more appropriate; and (2) debatable, overt, espoused values, for which the term "values" is more applicable. In stating that basic assumptions are unconscious, I am not arguing that this is a result of repression. On the contrary, I am arguing that as certain motivational and cognitive processes are repeated and continue to work, they become unconscious. They can be brought back to awareness only through a kind of focused inquiry, similar to that used by anthropologists. What is needed are the efforts of both an insider who makes

the unconscious assumptions and an outsider who helps to uncover the assumptions by asking the right kinds of questions.

Schein 1984: 3–4

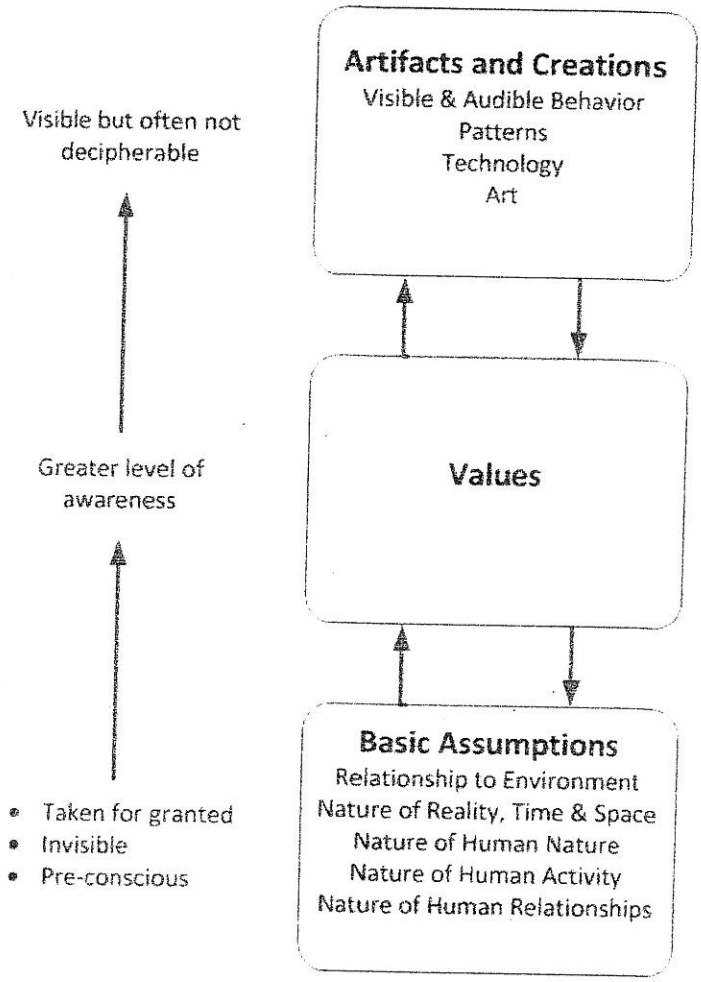

Figure 1: The Levels of Culture & their Interaction
(Minor adaptation of Schein 1984: 4)

2. *Culture affects behaviour and interpretations of behaviour*

Hofstede (1991:8) makes the important point that although certain aspects of culture are physically visible, their meaning is invisible: 'their cultural meaning ... lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders.' For example, a gesture such as the 'ring gesture' (thumb and forefinger touching) may be interpreted as conveying agreement, approval or acceptance in the USA, the UK and Canada, but as an insult or obscene gesture in several Mediterranean countries. Similarly, choice of clothing can be interpreted differently by different groups of people, in terms of indications of wealth, ostentation, appropriateness, and so on.

The following examples illustrate this:

Example One

I observed the following event at a kindergarten classroom on the Navajo reservation:

A Navajo man opened the door to the classroom and stood silently, looking at the floor. The Anglo-American teacher said 'Good morning' and waited expectantly, but the man did not respond. The teacher then said 'My name is Mrs Jones,' and again waited for a response. There was none.

In the meantime, a child in the room put away his crayons and got his coat from the rack. The teacher, noting this, said to the man, 'Oh, are you taking Billy now?' He said, 'Yes.'

The teacher continued to talk to the man while Billy got ready to leave, saying, 'Billy is such a good boy,' 'I'm so happy to have him in class,' etc.

Billy walked towards the man (his father), stopping to turn around and wave at the teacher on his way out and saying, 'Bye-bye.' The teacher responded, 'Bye-bye.' The man remained silent as he left.

From a Navajo perspective, the man's silence was appropriate and respectful. The teacher, on the other hand, expected not only to have the man return her greeting, but to have him identify himself and state his reason for being there. Although such an expectation is quite reasonable and appropriate from an Anglo-American perspective, it would have required the man to break not only Navajo rules of politeness but also a traditional religious taboo that prohibits individuals from saying their own name. The teacher interpreted the contextual cues correctly in answer to her own question ('Are you taking Billy?' and then engaged in small talk. The man continued to maintain appropriate silence. Billy, who was more acculturated than his father to Anglo-American ways, broke the Navajo rule to follow the Anglo-American one in leave-taking. This encounter undoubtedly reinforced the teacher's stereotype that Navajos are 'impolite' and 'unresponsive', and the man's stereotype that Anglo-Americans are 'impolite' and 'talk too much.'

Saville-Troike 1997: 138–9

Example Two

The first time I saw coconut-skating I was so sure it was a joke that I laughed out loud. The scowl that came back was enough to tell me that I had completely misunderstood the situation. In the Philippines a maid tends to be all business, especially when working for Americans.

But there she was, barefooted as usual, with half of a coconut shell under each broad foot, systematically skating around the room. So help me, *skating*.

If this performance wasn't for my amusement or hers (and her face said it wasn't), then she had gone out of her head. It wasn't the first time, nor the last, that my working hypothesis was that a certain local person was at least a part-time lunatic.

I backed out and strolled down the hall, trying to look cool and calm.

"Ismelda ... Ismelda is skating in the living room," I said to Mary, who didn't even look up from the desk where she was typing.

"Yes, this is Thursday, isn't it." ...

"She skates only on Thursdays? That's nice," I said as I beat an awkward retreat from Mary's little study room.

"Oh, you mean *why* is she skating – right?" Mary called after me.

"Yes, I guess that's the major question," I replied.

Mary, who had done part of her prefield orientation training in one of my workshops, decided to give me a dose of my own medicine: "Go out there and watch her skate; then come back and tell me what you see." And so I did.

Her typewriter clicked on, scarcely missing a beat, until I exclaimed from the living room hallway, "I've got it!"

"Well, good for you; you're never too old to learn." Mary's voice had just enough sarcasm in it to call me up short on how I must sound to others. And while the typing went

on I stood there admiring nature's own polish for hardwood floors, coconut oil, being applied by a very efficient Southeast Asian method.

Ward 1984; cited by Lustig and Koester 1999: 41

3. *Culture can be differentiated from both universal human nature and unique individual personality*

Culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes. Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side, and from an individual's personality on the other (see Fig. 2), although exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists.

Human nature is what all human beings, from the Russian professor to the Australian aborigine, have in common: it represents the universal level in one's mental software. It is inherited with one's genes; within the computer analogy it is the 'operating system' which determines one's physical and basic psychological functioning. The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and talk about it with other humans all belong to this level of mental programming. However, what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on, is modified by culture. Human nature is not as 'human' as the term suggests, because certain aspects of it are shared with parts of the animal world.

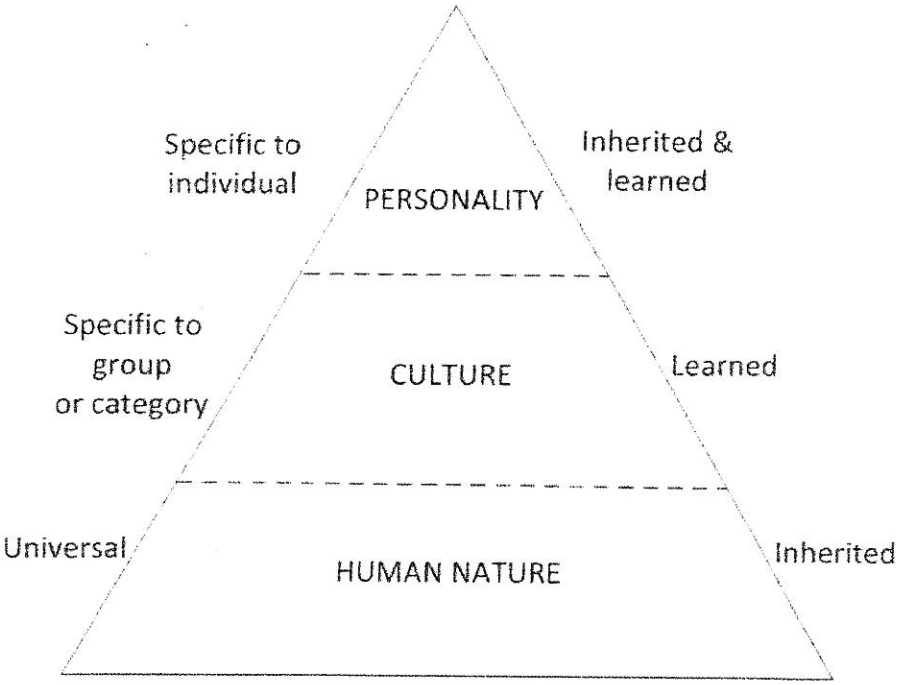

Fig. 2 Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede 1994: 6)

The *personality* of an individual, on the other hand, is her/his unique personal set of mental programs which (s)he does not share with any other human being. It is based upon traits which are partly inherited with the individual's unique set of genes and partly learned. 'Learned' means: modified by the influence of collective programming (culture) *as well as* unique personal experiences.

Cultural traits have often been attributed to heredity, because philosophers and other scholars in the past did not know how to explain otherwise the remarkable stability of differences in culture patterns among human groups. They underestimated the impact of learning from previous generations and of teaching to a future generation what one has learned oneself. The role of heredity is exaggerated in the pseudo-theories of *race*, which have been responsible, among other things, for the Holocaust organized by the Nazis during the Second World War. Racial and ethnic strife is often justified by unfounded arguments of cultural superiority and inferiority.

Hofstede 1994: 5–6

4. *Culture influences biological processes*

If we stop to consider it, the great majority of our conscious behavior is acquired through learning and interacting with other members of our culture. Even those responses to our purely biological needs (that is, eating, coughing, defecating) are frequently influenced by our cultures. For example, all people share a biological need for food. Unless a minimum number of calories is consumed, starvation will occur. Therefore, all people eat. But *what* we eat, *how often*, we eat, *how much* we eat, *with whom* we eat, and *according to what set of rules* are regulated, at least in part, by our culture.

Clyde Kluckhohn, an anthropologist who spent many years in Arizona and New Mexico studying the Navajo, provides us with a telling example of how culture affects biological processes: "I once knew a trader's wife in Arizona who took a somewhat devilish interest in producing a cultural reaction. Guests who came her way were often served delicious sandwiches filled with a meat that seemed to be neither chicken nor tuna fish yet was reminiscent of both. To queries she gave no reply until each had eaten his fill. She then explained that what they had eaten was not chicken, not tuna fish, but the rich, white flesh of freshly killed rattlesnakes. The response was instantaneous – vomiting, often violent vomiting. A biological process is caught into a cultural web. (1968: 25–26)

This is a dramatic illustration of how culture can influence biological processes. In fact, in this instance, the natural biological process of digestion was not only influenced, it was also reversed. A learned part of our culture (that is, the idea that rattlesnake meat is a repulsive thing to eat) actually triggered the sudden interruption of the normal digestive process. Clearly there is nothing in rattlesnake meat that causes people to vomit, for those who have internalised the opposite idea, that rattlesnake meat should be eaten, have no such digestive tract reversals.

The effects of culturally produced ideas on our bodies and their natural process take many different forms. For example, instances of voluntary control of pain reflexes are found in a number of cultures throughout the world. ... The ethnographic examples are too numerous to cite, but whether we are looking at Cheyenne men engaged in the Sun Dance ceremony, Fiji firewalkers, or U.S. women practicing the Lamaze (psychoprophylactic) method of childbirth, the principle is the same: People learn ideas from their cultures that when internalised can actually later the experience of pain. In other words, a component of culture (that is, ideas) can channel or influence biologically based pain reflexes.

Ferraro 1998: 19–20

5. *Culture is associated with social groups*

Culture is *shared* by at least two or more people, and of course real, live societies are always larger than that. There is, in other words, no such thing as the culture of a hermit. If a

> solitary individual thinks and behaves in a certain way, that thought or action is idiosyncratic, not cultural. For an idea, a thing, or a behavior to be considered cultural, it must be shared by some type of social group or society.
>
> Ferraro 1998: 16

> As almost everyone belongs to a number of different groups and categories of people at the same time, people unavoidably carry several layers of mental programming within themselves, corresponding to different levels of culture. For example:
> - a national level according to one's country (or countr*ies* for people who migrated during their lifetime);
> - a regional and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or linguistic affiliation, as most nations are composed of culturally different regions and/or ethnic and/or religious and/or language groups;
> - a gender level, according to whether a person was born as a girl or as a boy;
> - a generation level, which separates grandparents from parents from children;
> - a role category, e.g. parent, son/daughter, teacher, student;
> - a social class level, associated with educational opportunities and with a person's occupation or profession;
> - for those who are employed, an organizational or corporate level according to the way employees have been socialized by their work organization.
>
> Hofstede 1991: 10

So in this sense, everyone is simultaneously a member of several different cultural groups and thus could be said to have multicultural membership.

> Individuals are organized in many potentially different ways in a population, by many different (and cross-cutting) criteria: for example, by kinship into families or clans; by language, race, or creed into ethnic groups; by socio-economic characteristics into social classes; by geographical region into political interest groups; and by occupation or institutional memberships into unions, bureaucracies, industries, political parties, and militaries. The more complex and differentiated the social system, the more potential groups and institutions there are. And because each group of institution places individuals in different experiential worlds, and because culture derives in part from this experience, *each of these groups and institutions can be a potential container for culture*. Thus no population can be adequately characterized as a single culture or by a single cultural descriptor. As a corollary, the more complexly organized a population is on sociological grounds (class, region, ethnicity, and so on), the more complex will its cultural mappings appear. This is why the notion of "subculture(s)" is needed.
>
> Avruch 1998: 17–18

6. *Culture is both an individual construct and a social construct*

> ... culture is as much an individual, psychological construct as it is a social construct. To some extent, culture exists in each and every one of us individually as much as it exists as a global, social construct. Individual differences in culture can be observed among people in the degree to which they adopt and engage in the attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors that, by consensus, constitute their culture. If you act in accordance with those values or behaviors, then that culture resides in you; if you do not share those values or behaviors, then you do not share that culture.

While the norms of any culture should be relevant to all the people within that culture, it is also true that those norms will be relevant in different degrees for different people. It is this interesting blend of culture in anthropology and sociology as a macroconcept and in psychology as an individual construct that makes understanding culture difficult but fascinating.

Our failure in the past to recognize the existence of individual differences in constructs and concepts of culture has undoubtedly aided in the formation and maintenance of stereotypes.

Matsumoto 1996: 18

... culture is a derivative of individual experience, something learned or created by individuals themselves or passed on to them socially by contemporaries or ancestors. ... such a conception of culture differs from ones that have dominated thinking in much of the social sciences, especially in international relations and conflict resolution. For one thing, in this concept, culture is seen as something much less stable or homogenous than in the concepts proposed by others. Our idea of culture focuses less on patterning and more on social and cognitive processing than older ideas of culture do. For another, by linking culture to individuals and emphasizing the number and diversity of social and experiential settings that individuals encounter, we expand the scope of reference of culture to encompass not just quasi- or pseudo-kinship groups (tribe, ethnic group, and nation are the usual ones) but also groupings that derive from profession, occupation, class, religion, or region. This reorientation supports the idea that individuals reflect or embody multiple cultures and that "culture" is always psychologically and socially distributed in a group. Compared with the older approach, which connected a singular, coherent, and integrated culture to unproblematically defined social groups, this approach makes the idea of culture more complicated. Such complication is necessary, because the world of social action, including conflict and its resolution, is a complex one, and we need a different concept to capture it.

Avruch 1998: 5–6

7. Culture is always both socially and psychologically distributed in a group, and so the delineation of a culture's features will always be fuzzy

Culture is a 'fuzzy' concept, in that group members are unlikely to share identical sets of attitudes, beliefs and so on, but rather show 'family resemblances', with the result that there is no absolute set of features that can distinguish definitively one cultural group from another.

This assumption [that culture is uniformly distributed] is unwarranted for two reasons, one sociogenic (having to do with social groups and institutions) and the other psychogenic (having to do with cognitive and affective processes characteristic of individuals). The first reason is a corollary of the social complexity issue noted above: Insofar as two individuals do not share the same sociological location in a given population (the same class, religious, regional, or ethnic backgrounds, for example), and insofar as these locations entail (sub)cultural differences, then the two individuals cannot share all cultural content perfectly. This is the sociogenic reason for the nonuniform distribution of culture. *Culture is socially distributed within a population.*

The second, psychogenic, reason culture is never perfectly shared by individuals in a population (no matter how, sociologically, the population is defined) has to do with the ways in which culture is to be found "in there", inside the individual. Here we are, broadly speaking, in the realm of psychodynamics, at least with respect to the ways and circumstances under which an individual receives or learns cultural images or encodements. Because of disciplinary boundaries and the epistemological blinders they often enforce,

these sorts of generally psychological concerns are considered off-limits for many social scientists. For this reason, even many culture theorists have preferred to think of culture only as "out there", in publish and social constructions, including symbols, that are wholly independent of mind – of cognition and affect. Other scholars, especially from economics or international relations, as we shall see in the next section, prefer to ignore mind completely, treating it as essentially a "black box" phenomenon. But by ignoring mind they do not in fact escape broadly psychological issues; they merely end up relying on an unacknowledged, and fairly primitive, psychology.

It is by approaching mind – cognition and affect – that we can sort out the ways in which culture is causal, noting well our discussion, above, of the danger of reifying culture so that is simplemindedly causes conflict. It doesn't – it cannot. But cultural representations – images and encodements, schemas and models – are internalised by individuals. They are not internalised equally or all at the same level, however, Some are internalised very superficially and are the equivalent of cultural clichés. Others are deeply internalised and invested with emotion of affect. These can instigate behavior by being connected to desirable goals or end states. The more deeply internalised and affectively loaded, the more certain images or schemas are able to motivate action. This is the proper sense in which "culture is causal". It also accounts for the nonuniform distribution of culture, because for two individuals even the same cultural representation (resulting, for instance, from a completely shared sociological placement) can be differentially internalised. this is the psychogenic reason for the nonuniform distribution of culture. *Culture is psychologically distributed with a population.* Of two revolutionaries, each sharing the same socio-economic background and program, the same political ideology, and the same intellectual opposition to the regime in power, only one is motivated (by rage? by hatred? by childhood trauma? by what?) to throw the bomb. No one interested in social conflict or in conflict resolution can remain aloof from psychogenic – cognitive and affective – processes and their connections to social practice.

Avruch 1998: 18–20

Just as there is no epidemic without individual organisms being infected by particular viruses or bacteria, there is no culture without representations being distributed in the brains/minds of individuals. ... There is no epidemic without diseased individuals, but the study of epidemics cannot be reduced to the study of individual pathology. From this perspective, the boundaries of a given culture are not any sharper than those of a given epidemic. An epidemic involves a population with many individuals being afflicted to varying degrees by a particular strain of micro-organisms over a continuous time span on a territory with fuzzy and unstable boundaries. And a culture involves a social group (such as a nation, ethnic group, profession, generation, etc.) defined in terms of similar cultural representations held by a significant proportion of the group's members. In other words, people are said to belong in the same culture to the extent that the set of their shared cultural representations is large.

Žegarac 2007: 39–40

8. *Culture has both universal (etic) and distinctive (emic) elements*

Humans have largely overlapping biologies and live in fairly similar social structures and physical environments, which create major similarities in the way they form cultures. But within the framework of similarities there are differences.

The same happens with language. Phon*etics* deal with sounds that occur in all languages. Phon*emics* are sounds that occur in only one language. The linguist Pike (1967)

took the last two syllables of these terms and coined the words "etics" for universal cultural elements and "emics" for the culture-specific, unique elements.

Although some students of culture assume that every culture is unique and in some sense every person in the world is unique, science deals with generalizations. The glory of science is seen in such achievements as showing that the laws that govern the movements of planets and falling apples are the same. Thus the issue is whether or not the emic elements of culture are of interest. When the emic elements are local adaptations of etic elements, they are of great interest. For example, all humans experience social distance from out-groups (an etic factor). That is, they feel closer to their family and kin and to those whom they see as similar to them than to those whom they see as different. But the basis of social distance is often an emic attribute: In some cultures, it is based only on tribe or race; in others it is based on combinations of religion, social class, and nationality; in India, caste and ideas about ritual pollution are important. In sum, social distance is etic; ritual pollution as a basis of social distance is emic. ...

To summarize about emics and etics, when we study cultures for their own sake, we may well focus on emic elements, and when we compare cultures, we have to work with the etic cultural elements.

Triandis 1994: 20

There is another way of thinking, however, that may be more productive for understanding cultural influences on human behavior. Instead of considering whether any behavior is etic or emic, we can ask how that behavior can be both etic and emic at the same time. Perhaps parts or aspects of that behavior are etic and other parts are emic. For example, suppose you are having a conversation with a person from a culture different from yours. While you talk to this person, you notice that she does not make eye contact with you when she speaks, and she does not look at you when you speak. On the few occasions when her eyes look your way, her gaze is quickly averted somewhere else when your eyes meet. From your cultural background, you may interpret that she does not feel very positive about your or your interaction. You may even begin to feel put off and reject any attempts at future interaction. You may not feel trusting or close to her. But she may come from a culture where direct gazing is discouraged or even a sign of arrogance or slight. She may actually be avoiding eye contact not because of any negative feelings but because of deference and politeness to you. Of course, these behavioural differences have real and practical implications in everyday life; think about this scenario occurring in a job interview, in a teaching-learning situation at an elementary school, at a business negotiation, or even in a visit with your therapist.

If we examine this behavior from an etic–emic polarity, we will undoubtedly come to the conclusion that gaze behavior must be a cultural emic; that is, cultures have different rules regarding the appropriateness of gazing at others when interacting with them. But, let's ask ourselves another question: Is there any aspect about this behavior that can be described as etic? The answer to this question may lie in the causes or roots of the cultural differences in the gaze. In the example described here, your partner wanted to show deference or politeness to you. Thus, she enacted gaze behaviors that were dictated by her cultural background in accordance with the underlying wish to be polite. If you are an American, your culture would have dictated a different gaze pattern, even with the same wish for politeness. Your culture dictates that you look your partner straight in the eye when talking and show interest and deference by looking directly at them when they speak. It is only the outward behavior manifestation that is different between the representatives of the two cultures however; the underlying reason is exactly the same. Thus, while the outward behaviors we can observe may rightly be called emic, the inner attributes that underlie those behaviors may in fact be etic.

It is in this way that etics and emics can coexist in relation to our behaviors. Our understanding of cultures and cultural influences on behavior will be vastly improved if we avoid tendencies to compartmentalize behaviors into one or the other category and, instead, search for ways in which any given behavior actually represents both tensions.

Matsumoto 1996: 21–2

9. *Culture is learned*

Culture is learned from the people you interact with as you are socialized. Watching how adults react and talk to new babies is an excellent way to see the actual symbolic transmission of culture among people. Two babies born at exactly the same time in two parts of the globe may be taught to respond to physical and social stimuli in very different ways. For example, some babies are taught to smile at strangers, whereas others are taught to smile only in very specific circumstances. In the United States, most children are asked from a very early age to make decisions about what they want to do and what they prefer; in many other cultures, a parent would never ask a child what she or he wants to do but would simply tell the child what to do.

Culture is also taught by the explanations people receive for the natural and human events around them. Parents tell children that a certain person is a good boy because _____. People from different cultures would complete the blank in contrasting ways. The people with whom the children interact will praise and encourage particular kinds of behaviors (such as crying or not crying, being quiet or being talkative). Certainly there are variations in what a child is taught from family to family in any given culture. However, our interest is not in these variations but in the similarities across most or all families that form the basis of a culture. Because our specific interest is in the relationship between culture and interpersonal communication, we focus on how cultures provide their members with a set of interpretations that they then use as filters to make sense of messages and experiences.

Lustig and Koester 1999: 31–2

This notion that culture is acquired through the process of learning has several important implications for the conduct of international business. First, such an understanding can lead to greater tolerance for cultural differences, a prerequisite for effective intercultural communication within a business setting. Second, the learned nature of culture serves as a reminder that since we have mastered our own culture through the process of learning, it is possible (albeit more difficult) to *learn* to function in other cultures as well. Thus, cross-cultural expertise for Western businesspersons can be accomplished through effective training programs. And finally, the learned nature of culture leads us to the inescapable conclusion that foreign work forces, although perhaps lacking certain job-related skills at the present time, are perfectly capable of learning those skills in the future, provided they are exposed to culturally relevant training programs.

Ferraro 1998: 19

10. *Culture is subject to gradual change*

Any anthropological account of the culture of any society is a type of snapshot view of one particular time. Should the ethnographer return several years after completing a cultural study, he or she would not find exactly the same situation, for there are no cultures that remain completely static year after year. Early twentieth-century anthropologists – particularly those of the structural/functional orientation – tended to deemphasize cultural dynamics by suggesting that some societies were in a state o equilibrium in which the forces

of change were negated by those of cultural conservatism. Although small-scale, technologically simple, preliterate societies tend to be more conservative (and, thus, change less rapidly) than modern, industrialized, highly complex societies, it is now generally accepted that, to some degree, change is a constant feature of all cultures.

Students of culture change recognize that cultural innovation (that is, the introduction of new thoughts, norms, or material items) occurs as a result of both *internal* and *external forces*. Mechanisms of change that operate within a given culture are called *discovery* and *invention*. Despite the importance of discovery and invention, most innovations introduced into a culture are the result of borrowing from other cultures. This process is known as cultural *diffusion*, the spreading of cultural items from one culture to another. The importance of cultural borrowing can be better understood if viewed in terms of economy of effort. That is, it is much easier to borrow someone else's invention or discovery than it is to discover or invent it all over again. In fact, anthropologists generally agree that as much as 90 percent of all things, ideas, and behavioural patterns found in any culture had their origins elsewhere. Individuals in every culture, limited by background and time, get new ideas with far less effort if they borrow them. This statement holds true for our own culture as well as other cultures, a fact that North Americans frequently tend to overlook.

Since so much cultural change is the result of diffusion, it deserves a closer examination. Keeping in mind that cultural diffusion varies considerably from situation to situation, we can identify certain regularities that will enable us to make some general statements that hold true for all cultures.

First, cultural diffusion is a *selective* process. Whenever two cultures come into contact, each does not accept everything indiscriminately from the other. If they did, the vast cultural differences that exist today would have long since disappeared. Rather, items will be borrowed from another culture only if they prove to be useful and/or compatible. ... Put another way, an innovation is most likely to be diffused into a recipient culture if: (1) it is seen to be superior to what already exists; (2) it is consistent with existing cultural patterns; (3) it is easily understood; (4) it is able to be tested on an experimental basis; and (5) its benefits are clearly visible to a relatively large number of people. These five variables should be considered by international business strategists when considering the introduction of new marketing or managerial concepts into a foreign culture.

Second, cultural borrowing is a two-way process. Early students of change believe that contact between "primitive" societies and "civilized" societies caused the former to accept traits from the latter. This position was based on the assumption that the "inferior" primitive societies had nothing to offer the "superior" civilized societies. Today, however, anthropologists would reject such a position, for it has been found time and again that cultural traits are diffused in both directions.

European contact with the American Indians is a case in point. Native Americans, to be certain, have accepted a great deal from Europeans, but diffusion in the other direction has been significant. For example, it has been estimated (Driver 1961: 584) that those crops that make up nearly half of the world's food supply were originally domesticated by American Indians. These include corn, beans, squash, sweet potatoes, and the so-called "Irish potato". ...

Third, very infrequently are borrowed items ever transferred into the recipient culture in exactly their original form. Rather, new ideas, objects, or techniques are usually reinterpreted and reworked so that they can be integrated more effectively into the total configuration of the recipient culture. Lowell Holmes has offered an illuminating example of how the form of a particular innovation from Italy (pizza) has been modified after its incorporation into U.S. culture. "Originally, this Italian pie was made with mozzarella or scamorza cheese, tomatoes, highly spiced sausage, oregano spice, and a crust made of flour, water, olive oil and yeast. Although this type of pizza is still found in most eastern cities, and

in midwestern ones as well, in many cases the dish has been reinterpreted to meet Midwestern taste preferences for bland food. Authentic Italian pizza in such states as Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, or the Dakotas is often considered too spicy; therefore, it is possible to purchase in restaurants or in supermarkets pizzas that are topped with American process cheese, have no oregano at all, and in place of spiced sausage, hamburger or even tuna fish rounds out the Americanized version. In many home recipes, the crust is made of biscuit mix. Although the Italians would hardly recognize it, it still carries the name pizza and has become extremely popular." (1971: 361–2) ...

Fourth, some cultural traits are more easily diffused than others. By and large, technological innovations are more likely to be borrowed than are social patterns or belief systems, largely because the usefulness of a particular technological trait can be recognized quickly. For example, a man who walks five miles each day to work does not need much convincing to realize that an automobile can get him to work much more quickly and with far less effort. It has proven to be much more difficult, however, to convince a Muslim to become a Hindu or an American middle-class businessperson to become a socialist.

It is important for the international businessperson to understand that to some degree all cultures are constantly experiencing change. The three basic components of culture (things, ideas, and behavior patterns) can undergo additions, deletions, or modifications. Some components die out, new ones are accepted, and existing ones can be change in some observable way. Although the pace of culture change varies from society to society, when viewing cultures over time, there is nothing as constant as change. This straightforward anthropological insight should remind the international businessperson that (1) any cultural environment today is not exactly the same as it was last year or will be one year hence. The cultural environment, therefore, needs constant monitoring. (2) Despite considerable lack of fit between the culture of a U.S. corporation operating abroad and its overseas workforce, the very fact that culture can and do change provides some measure of optimism that the cultural gap can eventually be closed.

Moreover, the notion of cultural diffusion has important implications for the conduct of international business. Whether one is attempting to create new markets abroad or instill new attitudes and behaviors in a local workforce, it is imperative to understand that cultural diffusion is selective. To know with some degree of predictability which things, ideas, and behaviors are likely to be accepted by a particular culture, those critical variables affecting diffusion such as relative advantage, compatibility, and observability should be understood.

An understanding that cultural diffusion frequently involves some modification of the item is an important idea for those interested in creating new product markets in other cultures. To illustrate, before a laundry detergent – normally packaged in a green box in the United States – would be accepted in certain parts of West Africa, the color of the packaging would need to be changed because the color green is associated with death in certain West African cultures.

Also, the idea that some components of culture are more readily accepted than others into different cultural environments should at least provide some general guidelines for assessing what types of changes in the local culture are more likely to occur. By assessing what types of things, ideas, and behavior have been incorporated into a culture in recent years, strategic planners should better understand the relative ease or difficulty involved in initiating changes in consumer habits or workplace behavior.

Ferraro 1998: 25–9

11. *The various parts of a culture are all, to some degree, interrelated*

Cultures should be thought of as integrated wholes – that is, cultures are coherent and logical systems, the parts of which to a degree are interrelated. ...When we say that a

culture is integrated we are saying that its components are more than a random assortment of customs. It is, rather, an organized system in which particular components may be related to other components. If we can view cultures as integrated systems, we can begin to see how particular culture traits fit into the integrated whole, and consequently how they tend to make sense within that context. And of course, equipped with such an understanding, international businesspersons should be in a better position to cope with the "strange" customs encountered in the international business arena. ...

If, in fact, cultures are coherent systems, with their constituent parts interrelated with one another, it follows logically that a change in one part of the system is likely to produce concomitant changes in other parts of the system. The introduction of a single technological innovation may set off a whole series of related changes. In other words, culture changes beget other culture changes.

To illustrate, one has only to look at the far-reaching effects on U.S. culture of a single technological innovation, which became widespread in the early 1950s – the TV set. This one single technological addition to our material culture has had profound consequences on the nonmaterial aspects of our culture, including our political, education, and religious systems, to mention only three. For example, political campaigning for the presidency in 1948 and earlier had been conducted largely from the back end of a railroad car on so-called "whistle-stop" tours. By 1960, the year of the first televised presidential debates, television had brought the ideas, positions, speaking styles, and physical appearances of the candidates directly into the living rooms of the majority of voters. Today political candidates, because of the power of television, need to be as attentive to makeup, clothing, and nonverbal gestures as they are to the substantive issues of the campaign. In formal education, one of the many consequences of the widespread use of television has been to lower the age at which children develop "reading readiness" as a direct result of such programs as "Sesame Street". ... Television has been described by various social commentators as both a blessing and a curse. Yet however we might feel about its pluses and minuses, we can hardly deny that it has contributed to profound changes in many other parts of the U.S. cultural system. And the reason for these changes is that cultures tend to be integrated systems with a number of interconnected parts, so that a change in one part of the culture is likely to bring about changes in other parts.

Ferraro 1998: 32–5

12. *Culture is a descriptive not an evaluative concept*

Sometimes people talk of 'high' and 'low' culture. Definitions associated with 'high culture' are as follows:

'[Culture is] i) a state of high development in art & thought existing in a society and represented at various levels in its members; ii) development and improvement of the mind or body by education or training.'

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English

This interpretation of culture is often linked with terms and concepts such as *civilised, well educated, refined, cultured*, and is associated with the results of such refinement – a society's art, literature, music, and so on.

However, our notion of culture is not something exclusive to certain members; rather it relates to the whole of a society. Moreover, it is not value-laden. It is not that some cultures are

advanced and some backward, some more civilised and polite while others are coarse and rude. Rather, they are similar or different to each other.

Inadequate Conceptions of Culture

[There are] at least six mutually related ideas about culture that we call inadequate. These ideas are often found in the writings and practice of individuals, including those in conflict resolution who, borrowing an outmoded anthropological view of culture, seek to use a cultural approach in their work.

1. *Culture is homogenous.* This presumes that a (local) culture is free of internal paradoxes and contradictions such that (a) it provides clear and unambiguous behavioural "instructions" to individuals – a program for how to act – or (b) once grasped or learned by an outsider, it can be characterized in relatively straightforward ways ("the Dobuans are paranoid"). A homogenous view of culture makes the second inadequate idea easier to sustain, namely that:

2. *Culture is a thing.* The reification of culture – regarding culture as a thing – leads to a notion that "it" is a thing that can act, almost independently of human actors. There is no hint of individual agency here. A good contemporary example of this sort of thinking is Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" argument. It is easy to fall into the semantic trap of reification. Read the earlier remark in this essay about the constitutive power of culture to construct a definition of itself! The term is used as a shorthand way of referring, as we shall see, to bundles of complicated cognitive and perceptual *processes*, and it is a series of short (cognitive) steps from shorthand to metonymy to reification. But we should be on guard, particularly since by reifying culture it is easy to overlook intracultural diversity, underwriting the third inadequate idea:

3. *Culture is uniformly distributed among members of a group.* This idea imputes cognitive, affective, and behavioural uniformity to all members of the group. Intracultural variation, whether at the individual or group level, is ignored or dismissed as "deviance". Connected to this is the further misconception that:

4. *An individual possesses but a single culture.* He or she is simply a Somali, a Mexican, or an American. Culture is thus synonymous with group identity. The root of this misconception stems from the privileging of what we can call tribal culture, ethnic culture, or national culture, over cultures that are connected, as we shall see, to very different sorts of groups, structures, or institutions. In part this came from the social settings in which anthropologists first developed the culture idea: small-scale and relatively socially undifferentiated tribal or ethnic groups. It was then compounded by political scientists who took up the notion of culture (as "political culture") and privileged the nation-state as their unit of analysis – hence the "national character" idea. In fact, as we will argue, for any individual, culture always comes in the plural. A person possess and controls several cultures in the same way, as sociolinguists tell us, that even a so-called monolingual speaker controls different "registers" of the same language or dialect.

5. *Culture is custom.* This idea holds that culture is structurally undifferentiated, that what you see is what you get. And mostly what you see (especially in a culture different from your own), naively of course, is custom. Culture here is virtually synonymous with "tradition", or customary ways of behaving. The important things to know, if you come from outside, are the customary rules for correct behavior. Culture here reduces to a sort of surface-level etiquette. Cultural variation is, as Peter Black once put it, merely a matter of "differential etiquette". Once again, individual agency is downplayed. In this view there is no sense of struggle, except perhaps for the struggle of deviants (see number 3, above) who

cannot or will not abide by tradition and custom: after all, the smoothing out of difference and the mitigation of struggle are precisely what rules and etiquette are for.

6. *Culture is timeless.* Closely related to the culture-is-custom view (indeed, to all of the above views), the idea that culture is timeless imputes a changeless quality to culture, especially to so-called traditional ones. We speak here, for example, of "the Arab mind" as though a unitary cognising element has come down to us from Muhammed's Mecca.

These six inadequate ideas about culture are related and mutually reinforcing. Using them, we argue, greatly diminishes the utility of the culture concept as an analytical tool for understanding social action, in this case, conflict and conflict resolution.

Avruch 1998: 14–16

Levels of Analysis and Fallacies to Avoid

Many of the studies to be discussed in this book will compare characterizations of particular national cultures with the average behaviour of a small sample of subjects drawn from within those cultures. In other words, we may find ourselves asserting that the collectivism of, say, Indonesian national culture *causes* a particular group of Indonesian students to make certain attributions on a questionnaire about reasons for the success or failure of their work. When expressed in this way, it is easy to see that the implication of causality is too strong to be plausible. We may in a general sense expect Indonesian national culture to be expressed in the educational system of that country, the type of students recruited, the type of teaching, and the type of assessment. But if we want to make a firmer test of causal links to individual behaviour, we should be better off knowing how collectivistic this specific group of Indonesian students in the study actually was. In other words we should use characterizations of whole cultures (e.g. collectivist values) to explain specific attributes of that culture as a whole (e.g. the type of political system that is found there, rates of disease, military expenditure and so forth). But we should use characterizations of the values of particular individuals or groups of individuals if we want to predict how those particular individuals will behave.

Culture-level measures can best be used to explain culture-level variation; individual-level measures can best be used to explain individual-level variations. Since most social psychological research is conducted with individuals, there is a pressing need for more researchers to use such individual-level measures, rather than relying on cultural-level characterisations such as those provided by Hofstede (Bond, 1996b). ...

Confusion about levels of analysis is probably the greatest single problem in the current development of cross-cultural psychology. The difficulty is that many researchers fall victim to what Hofstede (1980) and others refer to as the *ecological fallacy*. Suppose it is shown that the nations that spend most money on medicine have the most healthy populations. Does it follow that the individuals who spend most money on medicine are also the most healthy? Most probably not; indeed it is quite likely at the individual level that the relationship would be reversed: those who were most ill would be spending most. Consider now an instance that derives more directly from the concepts we have been discussing. Nations whose values favour low power distance include most of the richest nations in the world. Does it follow that individuals who are opposed to hierarchy are likely to be rich? Certainly not: many of the most successful entrepreneurs have achieved success through taking a strongly hierarchical view of management. Exceptions to this pattern such as Steve Jobs at Apple Computer in the United States, Richard Branson at Virgin in the United Kingdom and Ricardo Semler in Brazil may achieve folk-hero status as exceptions to the rule, but their fame should not blind us to the much greater frequency of success among less-talked about figures who espouse less egalitarian values.

... If we are interested in explaining the differences across national cultures, then we must treat each culture as a single unit, and rely only on indices that characterize each nation as a whole, such as measures reflecting average values, wealth, health, climate or demographic profile. It follows that we can only successfully do studies of this type if we have available data from several dozen nations, as did the studies that we have discussed earlier in this chapter.

If we are interested in explaining similarities and differences in the behaviour of individuals, whether those individuals are all in one cultural group or spread over many groups, then an individual-level analysis is called for. However, it will be impossible to do individual-level analyses *across* national cultures, unless one takes into account culture-level differences. So, for instance, if we wish to study the relationship between employee values and absence from work across national cultures, we could first take account of the fact that absence from work is more frequent in some nations than others. Each individual's absence from work is more frequent in some nations than others. Each individual's absence score must therefore be expressed in relation to the average score *for their nation* before the hypothesis could be tested. Alternatively, we could test the values–absence link across the entire sample, and then examine whether the strength of this linkage varies by nation. If the relationship does vary, it will then be necessary to determine whether or not this is due to measurement artefact (Bond, 1996).

Triandis *et al.* (1985) proposed that in order to avoid confusion between analyses conducted at the level of cultures and analyses based at the level of individuals, we should use different but related pairs of concepts. Their suggestion was that we use the term 'allocentric' to describe a culture member who endorses collectivist values, but the point of making the distinction is that there will also be a minority of such persons individualist cultures. Similarly Triandis *et al* suggest the use of 'idiocentric' to describe a culture member who endorses individualist values. The proposal is a good one, but level-appropriate terms have not yet been adopted by other researchers.

Smith and Bond 1998: 60–2

Culture and Related Terms

Culture and Nation In our everyday language, people commonly treat *culture* and *nation* as equivalent terms. Although some nations are in fact predominantly inhabited by one cultural group, most nations contain multiple cultures within their boundaries. *Nation* is a political term referring to a government and a set of formal and legal mechanisms that have been established to regulate the political behavior of its people. These regulations often encompass such aspects of a people as how leaders are chosen, by what rules the leaders must govern, the laws of banking and currency, the means to establish military groups, and the rules by which a legal system is conducted. Foreign policies, for instance, are determined by a nation and not by a culture. The culture, or cultures, that exist within the boundaries of a nation-state certainly influence the regulations that a nation develops, but the term *culture* is not synonymous with *nation*.

The nation of Japan is often regarded as so homogeneous that the word *Japanese* is commonly used to refer both to the nation and to the culture. Though the Yamato Japanese culture overwhelmingly predominates within the nation of Japan, there are other cultures living there. These groups include the Ainu, an indigenous group with their own culture, religion, and language; mainly from Okinawa, Korea, and China; and more recent immigrants also living there. The United States is an excellent example of a nation that has several major cultural groups living within its geographical boundaries; European Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and various Asian American cultures are all

represented in the United States. All the members of these different cultural groups are citizens of the nation of the United States.

Culture and Race *Race* commonly refers to genetic or biologically based similarities among people, which are distinguishable and unique and function to mark or separate groups of people from one another. However, race is less a biological term than a political or social one. Though racial categories are inexact as a classification system, it is generally agreed that race is a more all-encompassing term than either *culture* or *nation*. Not all Caucasian people, for example, are part of the same culture or nation. many western European countries principally include people from the Caucasian race. Similarly, among Caucasian people there are definite differences in culture. Consider the cultural differences among the primarily Caucasian countries of Great Britain, Norway, and Germany to understand the distinction between culture and race.

Sometimes race and culture do seem to work hand in hand to create visible and important distinctions among groups within a larger society; and sometimes race plays a part in establishing separate cultural groups. An excellent example of the interplay of culture and race is in the history of African American people in the United States. Although race may have been used initially to set African Americans apart from Caucasian U.S. Americans, African American culture provides a strong and unique source of identity to members of the black race in the United States. Scholars now acknowledge that African American culture, with its roots in traditional African cultures, is separate and unique and has developed its own set of cultural patterns. Although a person from Nigerian and an African American are both from the same race, they are from distinct cultures. Similarly, not all black U.S. Americans are part of the African American culture, since many have a primary cultural identification with cultures in the Caribbean, South America, or Africa.

Race can, however, form the basis for prejudicial communication that can be a major obstacle to intercultural communication. Categorization of people by race in the United States, for example, has been the basis of systematic discrimination and oppression of people of color.

Culture and Ethnicity *Ethnic group* is another term often used interchangeable with culture. *Ethnicity* is actually a term that is used to refer to a wide variety of groups who might share a language, historical origins, religion, identification with a common nation-state, or cultural system. The nature of the relationship of a group's ethnicity to its culture will vary greatly depending on a number of other important characteristics. For example, many people in the United States still maintain an allegiance to the ethnic group of their ancestors who emigrated from other nations and cultures. It is quite common for people to say they are German or Greek or Armenian when the ethnicity indicated by the label refers to ancestry and perhaps some customs and practices that originated with the named ethnic group. Realistically, many of these individuals are not typical members of the European American culture. In other cases, the identification of ethnicity may coincide more completely with culture. In the former Yugoslavia, for example, there are at least three major ethnic groups – Slovenians, Croatians, and Serbians – each with its own language and distinct culture, who were forced into one nation-state following World War II. It is also possible for members of an ethnic group to be part of many different cultures and/or nations. For instance, Jewish people share a common ethnic identification, even though they belong to widely varying cultures and are citizens of many different nations.

Culture, Subculture, and Coculture *Subculture* is also a term sometimes used to refer to racial and ethnic minority groups that share both a common nation-state with other cultures and some aspects of the larger culture. Often, for example, African Americans, Arab

Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, another groups are referred to as subcultures within the United States. The term, however, has connotations that we find problematic, because it suggests subordination to the larger European American culture. Similarly, the term *coculture* is occasionally employed in an effort to avoid the implication of a hierarchical relationship between the European American culture and these other important cultural groups that form the mosaic of the United States. This term, too, is problematic for us. *Coculture* suggests, for instance, that there is a single overarching culture in the United States, implicitly giving undue prominence to the European American cultural group. In our shrinking and interdependent world, most cultures must coexist alongside other cultures. We prefer to regard African Americans, Arab Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and similar groups of people as cultures in their own right. The term *coculture* therefore strikes us as redundant.

Lustig and Koester 1999: 33–36

Culture and Identity

Culture is not the same as *identity*. Identities consist of people's answers to the question: Where do I belong? They are based on mutual images and stereotypes and on emotions linked to the outer layers of the onion, but not to values. Populations that fight each other on the basis of their different "felt" identities may very well share the same values. Examples are the linguistic regions in Belgium, the religions in Northern Ireland, and tribal groups in Africa. A shared identity needs a shared Other: At home, I feel Dutch and very different from other Europeans, such as Belgians and Germans; in Asia or the united States, we all feel like Europeans.

Hofstede 2001: 10

There is no box on any known government form for a racial or ethnic group called "Cablinasian". And, yet, there is at least one American who could check that box. His name is Tiger Woods. Woods, the golf phenomenon, says in an interview that he invented the word as a child to describe his racial makeup: Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian.

In addressing his ancestry, Woods has broadened the discussion of race in American, putting into high relief the infinite shades of gray that bridge the largely artificial divide between "black" and "white".

It is a bold move. Many governmental functions – the census, affirmative action and poverty programs, and the drawing of congressional districts – are based on counts of the four officially recognized racial groups: American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black, and white. Those who are "Spanish/Hispanic" may check a box for their country of origin. ... Perhaps more important, deeper issues of cultural identity – and the nation's history of racial injustice – have been based on long-established racial distinctions.

But it's the way in which Woods fails to conform to those long-established ideas about race that makes him so interesting.

Barton 1997; cited by Lustig and Koester 1999: 139

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From cultural awareness to intercultural awareness: culture in ELT

Will Baker

Cultural awareness (CA) has emerged over the last few decades as a significant part of conceptualizing the cultural dimension to language teaching. That is, L2 users need to understand L2 communication as a cultural process and to be aware of their own culturally based communicative behaviour and that of others. However, while CA has provided a vital base of knowledge in relation to the cultural aspects of language use and teaching, it is still rooted in a national conception of culture and language. This is problematic given that English is now used as a global lingua franca. Intercultural awareness (ICA) is presented here as an alternative 'non-essentialist' view of culture and language that better accounts for the fluid and dynamic relationship between them. Key components of ICA are discussed along with their relevance to ELT practices and suggestions as to how they can be translated into classroom pedagogy.

Introduction

The cultural dimension to language has always been present in language pedagogy (Risager 2007), even if it is not always explicit. Given the closely intertwined nature of culture and language, it is difficult to teach language without an acknowledgement of the cultural context in which it is used. Indeed, culture has been a component of our understanding of communicative competence from early conceptions with Hymes' (1972) emphasis on the importance of sociocultural knowledge. More recently, intercultural communicative competence, underpinned by the notion of critical cultural awareness (CA) (Byram 1997), has extended the role of culture in successfully preparing language learners for intercultural communication. However, with the English language now used as a global lingua franca in a huge range of different cultural contexts, a correlation between the English language and a particular culture and nation is clearly problematic. This paper argues that while CA has been important, it needs re-evaluation in the light of the more fluid communicative practices of English used as a global lingua franca. In its place, intercultural awareness (ICA) is proposed as a more relevant concept for these dynamic contexts of English use.

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Globalization, English as a lingua franca, and ELT

Globalization affects all English language teachers from their choices of what materials to use, to which variety of English is most appropriate. As Block (2004) highlights, the role of English in globalization is multifaceted and neither exclusively benign nor evil. Furthermore, the extensive use of English in such a diverse range of global settings calls into question our understanding of the ownership and forms of the English language. In particular, the growth in the use of English in the 'expanding circle' (Kachru 1990), in which it is neither an L1 nor an official L2 within a country, problematizes native speaker-based conceptions of English use. Crystal's (2008) figures suggest that English is now most extensively used in this expanding circle and it thus follows that the majority of ELT classrooms will also be in this circle. English is therefore used most commonly not by native speakers but as a contact language between interlocutors with different languacultures (linguistic and cultural backgrounds). As Kramsch (2009: 190) argues in relation to foreign language teaching, this has fundamental implications:

> the goals of traditional language teaching have been found wanting in this new era of globalization. Its main tenets (monolingual native speakers, homogeneous national cultures, pure standard national languages, instrumental goals of education, functional criteria of success) have all become problematic in a world that is increasingly multilingual and multicultural.

This is even more so for ELT in environments where English functions as a lingua franca with no native speakers.

The use of English globally as a contact language has been addressed extensively, and at times controversially, in the field of ELF (English as a lingua franca) research (see for example, Seidlhofer 2005; Jenkins 2007).[1] While the native speaker is generally not considered to be excluded from ELF communication, the norms of such communication are not driven by native speakers. Rather ELF communication is seen as emergent and situated with common features negotiated by the participants. For users of English to communicate effectively, they will need a mastery of more than the features of syntax, lexis, and phonology that are the traditional focus in ELT. Equally important is the ability to make use of linguistic and other communicative resources in the negotiation of meaning, roles, and relationships in the diverse sociocultural settings of intercultural communication through English.

To address communication in these kinds of multilingual and multicultural settings, the skills of multilingual communicators are needed. These include the role of accommodation in adapting language to be closer to that of one's interlocutor in order to aid understanding and solidarity. Negotiation and mediation skills are also key, particularly between different culturally based frames of reference, which have the potential to cause misunderstanding or miscommunication. Such skills result in the ability of interlocutors to adjust and align themselves to different communicative systems and cooperate in communication.

Culture, language, and ELT

As already noted, knowledge of the lexis, grammar, and phonology of one particular 'linguistic code' (for example Standard British English) is not

adequate for successful intercultural communication through English. This needs to be supplemented by an understanding of the sociocultural context in which communication takes place and an understanding of the sociocultural norms of one particular native-speaker community, for example the United Kingdom or United States, is clearly not sufficient for global uses of English. A more extensive treatment and understanding of the varied cultural contexts of English use is necessary (see for example Porto 2010; Suzuki 2010).

However, we are faced with a difficulty. If, as has been suggested above, the global uses of English detach it from the traditional native-speaking countries, how are we to make sense of the cultural contexts of English communication? Is English inevitably linked to these native-speaker contexts even when used in very different settings, as in the strongest forms of linguistic relativity where our world view is determined by linguistic boundaries? Alternatively, is English as a lingua franca a culturally neutral language? Neither of these views is adequate for explaining the relationship between the English language and its sociocultural settings in global lingua franca uses. The diverse forms, meanings, and uses of different Englishes, as documented by World Englishes studies (for example Kachru op.cit.), have demonstrated that English is not restricted to the linguistic or sociocultural norms of the traditional native-speaker countries. Furthermore, language, even used as a lingua franca, can never be culturally neutral. Language used for communication always involves people, places, and purposes, none of which exist in a cultural vacuum.

To understand the sociocultural contexts of English as a global lingua franca, we need to approach culture in a non-essentialist and dynamic manner. It should be seen as an emergent, negotiated resource in communication which moves between and across local, national, and global contexts (Baker 2009b). One way of conceiving of this relationship is the influential notion of a 'third place' in L2 use (see Kramsch op.cit. for a discussion of its influence and current relevance), in which communication takes place in a sphere that is neither part of a first language/culture (L1/C1) or a target language/culture (TL/TC). Rather culture is something freer and more fluid in the sense of creating something new and different. Importantly though, Kramsch also recognizes the continued influence and pull of the L1/C1 and TL/TC. This results in a tension between established fixed forms of communicative practice and the more situated dynamic communicative practices of an L2.

In specific relation to the English language, Pennycook (2007) has described the manner in which both linguistic and cultural forms and practices of English exist in global flows. They move through both local and global environments being influenced and changed by both. The importance of being able to negotiate these complex and dynamic cultural references in communicating successfully across cultures underscores the need to incorporate this into our understanding of communicative competence and subsequently ELT.

Cultural awareness

An approach to conceptualizing the kinds of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to undertake successful intercultural communication, which explicitly recognizes the cultural dimension of communicative competence,

has been CA (see for example Tomalin and Stempleski 1993; Byram 1997). At the most basic level, CA can be defined as a conscious understanding of the role culture plays in language learning and communication (in both first and foreign languages). The details of CA are conceived of and implemented in teaching practice in a number of different ways. Nevertheless, many of the approaches agree on the importance of a systematic framework for teaching culture and language together, in which the relationship between them is explicitly explored with learners. Conceptions of CA also stress the need for learners to become aware of the culturally based norms, beliefs, and behaviours of their own culture and other cultures. Furthermore, all share a goal of increased understanding of culture and language leading to successful intercultural communication.

The most detailed account of CA is that offered by Byram (ibid.). as part of a framework of intercultural communicative competence. The crucial component of this 'critical CA' is an understanding of the relative nature of cultural norms which leads to 'an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries' (ibid.: 101). Moreover, in examining the learner's culture and foreign cultures, as well as different perspectives of them, Byram highlights the need to understand the multi-voiced 'diglossic' nature of culture, which contains conflicting and contradictory views. Finally, CA, as conceived here, rejects the monolingual native speaker as the ideal model and instead proposes the intercultural speaker and intercultural citizen as an alternative. This alternative acknowledges the importance of identity and affiliation in the negotiated communication of intercultural communication, with no one interlocutor providing the norms or ideal model to which the other has to conform. Most importantly, what Byram's and many other accounts of CA share is a notion of CA as knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed by the language learner, which can then be utilized in understanding specific cultures and in communicating across diverse cultures.

Perhaps the most significant limitation to CA, as it has just been described, is that it has commonly been conceived in relation to intercultural communication between defined cultural groupings, typically at the national level. This can be seen for example in Byram's association of CA with 'one's own and other *cultures and countries*' (ibid.: 101, my italics). Thus, CA is most usually related to developing an understanding of and comparisons between a C1 and a C2 or a number of C2s, for example, the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. This is not an appropriate aim in expanding circle environments. Given the variety and heterogeneity of English use in such settings, a user or learner of English could not be expected to have a knowledge of all the different cultural contexts of communication they may encounter and even less so the languacultures of the participants in this communication.

Therefore, while many of the attributes associated with CA may be relevant, they need to be developed in relation to intercultural communication and an understanding of the dynamic way sociocultural contexts are constructed. Knowledge of specific cultures may still have an important role to play in developing an awareness of cultural differences and relativization.

However, knowle dge of specific cultures has to be combined with an awareness of cultural influences in intercultural communication as fluid, fragmented, hybrid, and emergent with cultural groupings or boundaries less easily defined and referenced. Thus, what is needed for successful communication through English in expanding circle lingua franca contexts is not just CA but ICA.

ICA

ICA is best conceived as an extension of the earlier conceptions of CA that is more relevant to needs of intercultural communication in expanding circle and global lingua franca contexts, in which cultural influences are likely to be varied, dynamic, and emergent.

A basic definition of ICA, as envisaged here, is as follows:

> Intercultural awareness is a conscious understanding of the role culturally based forms, practices, and frames of understanding can have in intercultural communication, and an ability to put these conceptions into practice in a flexible and context specific manner in real time communication.

To better understand this definition and what it entails, a number of features of ICA can be identified and are listed below (Figure 1). These 12 components attempt to build on the previously discussed features of CA, especially those highlighted by Byram (op.cit.), and extend them to the more fluid conceptions of intercultural communication through English in global lingua franca settings.[2]

Level 1: basic cultural awareness

An awareness of:

1 culture as a set of shared behaviours, beliefs, and values;
2 the role culture and context play in any interpretation of meaning;
3 our own culturally induced behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to articulate this;
4 others' culturally induced behaviour, values, and beliefs and the ability to compare this with our own culturally induced behaviour, values, and beliefs.

Level 2: advanced cultural awareness

An awareness of:

5 the relative nature of cultural norms;
6 cultural understanding as provisional and open to revision;
7 multiple voices or perspectives within any cultural grouping;
8 individuals as members of many social groupings including cultural ones;
9 common ground between specific cultures as well as an awareness of possibilities for mismatch and misco mmunication between specific cultures.

Level 3: intercultural awareness

An awareness of:

10 culturally based frames of reference, forms, and communicative practices as being related both to specific cultures and also as emergent and hybrid in intercultural communication;
11 initial interaction in intercultural communication as possibly based on cultural stereotypes or generaliza tions but an ability to move beyond these through:
12 a capacity to negotiate and mediate between different emergent socioculturally grounded communication modes and frames of reference based on the above understanding of culture in intercultural communication.

FIGURE 1
Twelve components of ICA

These 12 elements of ICA delineate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that a user of English as a global lingua franca needs to be able to successfully communicate in these complex settings. They are presented in an order which builds from a basic understanding of cultural contexts in communication, particularly in relation to the L1 (Level 1: Basic CA, Figure 1), to a more complex understanding of language and culture (Level 2: Advanced CA, Figure 1), and finally to the fluid, hybrid, and emergent understanding of cultures and languages in intercultural communication needed for English used in global settings (Level 3: ICA, Figure 1).

However, it is recognized that learners of English may not develop these elements in this exact order. For example, it may well be that learners of English who have grown up in multilingual environments may be unconsciously or consciously aware of the later elements of ICA. Furthermore, the elements of ICA are deliberately general in nature since the details will inevitably depend on the particular contexts of English learning and use.

As with CA, knowledge of specific cultures and the influence this may have on communication is still a part of ICA (see Levels 1 and 2, Figure 1), and there is a recognition that participants may initially begin communication by making use of nationally based cultural generalizations (Figure 1, Feature 11). Crucially though, there is also an attempt to go beyond single cultural frames of reference in intercultural communication. The features of Level 3 (Figure 1) proposes that, in parallel to knowledge of specific cultures, an understanding of emergent cultural references and practices is needed and that this needs to be combined with the ability to negotiate and mediate between these dynamic resources in intercultural communication. Such abilities and awareness enable users to cope with the diversity and fluidity of intercultural communication in which cultural frames of reference cannot be defined *a priori*. ICA should thus be of direct relevance to users of English in global contexts, especially in expanding circle and ELF settings, both as an attempt to conceptualize the cultural dimension to communication and also as a set of pedagogic aims.

This emphasis on skills and the ability to view cultures as dynamic, diverse, and emergent raises a dilemma though. To develop ICA learners need to have an in-depth understanding of culture, and to achieve this, it is necessary for learners to have cultural knowledge, even if that knowledge is no longer the end product of learning. Choosing the content of that cultural knowledge brings us back to the problems already raised in settings associated with English in global contexts. Yet, if the final outcome is to develop skills in and an awareness of intercultural communication, then cultural knowledge and content more appropriate to those skills and the components of CA identified earlier can be selected.

It is not necessary to focus exclusively on one culture, for example the typical focus on the United States or United Kingdom in English; instead cultural content appropriate to the variety of intercultural interactions a learner may encounter in their environment can be selected, which highlight the different components of ICA. In particular, it is necessary to focus on intercultural encounters themselves and examine the different ways in which culturally influenced behaviours are manifested in such

communication and the way these are negotiated by the participants in the exchange.

None of this denies the importance of knowledge of other cultures or rejects the idea that detailed knowledge of a specific culture is valuable in developing ICA. Rather, it recognizes the limitations of this kind of knowledge and incorporates the need for a more wide ranging understanding of culture for intercultural communication in the expanding range of contexts in which it occurs for global languages such as English. Thus, the knowledge, awareness, and skills associated with ICA will be constantly under revision and change based on each new intercultural encounter and as such are never a fully formed complete entity but always in progress towards a goal that is constantly changing.

Applying ICA in classroom teaching

While, as indicated above, the manner in which ICA can be made relevant to different learning contexts will depend partly on that context, there are a number of broad areas, which can be used to develop ICA within the ELT classroom. These are presented here as a set of suggestions, not all of which will be relevant in all settings. Equally, there may be other opportunities not presented here which can be used to develop ICA in specific settings. These proposals can be divided into six strands as follows.

Exploring local cultures

This begins with learners exploring the diversity and complexity of different local and national cultural groupings. This should lead to an awareness of the multi-voiced nature of cultural characterizations. It should also highlight the manner in which cultural groupings can cut across national cultures and the way in which local communities may connect with global communities, whether it is religious or ethnic groups, identifying with other learners and users of English or groups such as music or sports fans. A discussion between the students within any class, even in supposedly monolingual and monocultural settings, often reveals a surprising diversity of linguistic and cultural influences.

Exploring language-learning materials

These can be used to critically evaluate images and descriptions of cultures in locally produced textbooks and images of other cultures in local and imported ELT textbooks. For instance, learners can explore how well the images of their own culture presented in their textbooks (if there are any) match their own experiences.

Exploring the traditional media and arts through English

This can include film, television, radio, newspapers, novels, and magazines and can be used in a similar manner to the second strand to critically explore the images of local and other cultures. For example, literature has been extensively used for such purposes, although English language literature should clearly extend beyond that produced in the inner circle countries.

Exploring IT/ electronic media through English

The internet, email, chat rooms, instant messaging, and tandem learning can be used in a similar manner to the previous two strands to explore cultural representations. Furthermore, these resources can be used to engage in actual instances of intercultural communication, enabling students to develop ICA and reflect on its relevance to their experiences.

These may include asynchronous email exchanges and synchronous chat room-type communication with language students and teachers in other countries.

Cultural informants

Non-local English-speaking teachers and local English teachers with experience of intercultural communication and other cultures can be used to provide information about these experiences and cultures. This can also provide another chance to reflect upon the relevance of different elements of ICA in these situations. Teachers can present their experiences of other cultures as content for the classroom through, for example, reading texts or discussion topics.

Face-to-face intercultural communication (often with non-local English teachers)

These are valuable both in themselves as offering opportunities to develop and put ICA into practice and for providing materials and experiences to reflect on in the classroom that can further aid in the development of ICA. In situations where there are non-local teachers or non-local students (as may be the case in further education settings), opportunities for intercultural communication clearly exist. Even where such opportunities do not exist, students and teachers can bring their own experiences of intercultural communication to the class for discussion and reflection, for example considering what was successful or not successful or how they felt about the experience.

These strands attempt to utilize all the resources available in the language classroom including the textbook and teacher, as well as those resources that may be available to learners outside the classroom, such as the internet, but can then be reflected on in the classroom. The six strands provide opportunities to gain the necessary experience of intercultural communication and investigating local and other cultures. This is balanced with the equally important task of exploring and evaluating those experiences. It is important to recognize that all of these sources will only provide partial accounts of cultures and will inevitably be biased. However, as long as this is made clear and learners and teachers approach the cultural images and information presented in a critical manner, these can provide valuable opportunities for experience of and reflection on intercultural communication and contact with other cultures that can aid in the development of ICA.

Conclusion

The use of English as the global lingua franca highlights the need for an understanding of cultural contexts and communicative practices to successfully communicate across diverse cultures. Yet, it also raises the problem of naively associating the English language with a specific culture or nation. Traditional conceptions of communicative competence and CA in ELT have focused on an understanding of particular cultures and countries such as the USA or UK and their associated sociocultural norms. English as a global lingua franca forces us to go beyond notions of teaching a fixed language and cultural context as adequate for successful communication.

Most significant when examining culture in ELT are the types of knowledge, skills, and attitudes envisaged in ICA. These relate to understanding culture, language, and communication in general, as well as in relation to particular contexts, and an awareness of the dynamic relationship between

English and its diverse sociocultural settings. An awareness of the multilingual and multicultural settings of English use, therefore, should be a key element of any attempt to teach communication. The ELT classroom is a site in which learners, and ideally teachers, are necessarily engaged in multilingual and multicultural practices and thus provides the ideal environment in which to develop ICA and to prepare users of English to communicate in global settings.

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Notes

1 ELF is also sometimes referred to as English as an international language; although, there is some debate as to whether the two terms are interchangeable (see Jenkins op.cit.).
2 These are based in part on an earlier empirical study of English use in an expanding circle setting (see Baker 2009a for a more detailed explanation of this).

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Module 12 – Cultural Awareness in the Classroom

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I. The cultural challenges of teaching English

This module is designed to give you an insight into how culture impacts on English language teaching, both in English speaking countries and in places where English is a second or foreign language.

When we teach a class of students brought up in a different culture from ours, we have two main aims:

- To teach them the English language
- To make them aware of the differences between the culture of the English-speaking countries and the culture of their native country.

Culture includes traditions, customs, assumptions, expectations and common points of reference.

However, during the process of this, we may have to deal with a variety of false assumptions that are easily made, and less easily overcome.

For example, in many non-English speaking cultures, students are brought up with more passive behaviours when interacting with adults. A student may be less willing to ask a teacher for extra help or to admit that they don't understand. This can lead to assumptions that non-English speaking students are less intelligent than their native English speaking peers.

At the same time, non-English speaking students can quickly absorb cultural biases against English speakers who come from a more driven and ambitious educational community than they maybe accustomed to. The teacher's attitude may be perceived as aggressive by some students, who will then be even less willing to participate or ask questions.

We should try to overcome preconceived notions about different cultures and also help our students to overcome biases against our culture. In that way we will create a learning environment where everyone is valued for their unique heritage.

II. A theory of culture

1. Hofstede's five dimensions of culture

There are many academic studies on international culture. To help us understand the different elements that make up the mixing pot of culture, we are going to look at the work of **Geert Hofstede.**

Hofstede's ideas were first based on a large research project into national cultural differences across a multinational corporation, and later expanded to cover students and other professions and to cover more than 70 countries.

From the initial results and later additions, Hofstede developed a model that identifies five **'dimensions of culture'**.

1) Power Distance

- In the EFL classroom the teacher is likely to be seen as a powerful person.
- In those countries where there is a large 'power distance', it is natural for students to be deferential towards the teacher and unwilling to joke with them.
- Students from cultures where the power distance is large may not participate much or make decisions.
- Your students will recognise that their teacher comes from another culture and make allowances when you laugh and joke with them but be aware that their normal expectation of a teacher is someone they respect, defer to and obey.
- Power Distance scores are high for Latin, Asian and African countries and smaller for Germanic countries.

2) Individualism

- There is always one person who will volunteer answers, come up with new ideas and comments or points of view.
- This person is unlikely to come from a culture where individualism is low. If you are teaching in a more collectively orientated culture, you can be less reliant on the individual who will always answer your questions or volunteer a viewpoint.
- In more collective cultures it is not normal to deliberately be different or to try to stand out from the crowd. This can be very frustrating if you ask students for an opinion or to debate.
- Individualism prevails in developed countries and Western countries, while collectivism is more common in less developed and Eastern countries. Japan is somewhere in the middle.

3) Masculinity

- So called 'masculine' cultures value competitiveness, assertiveness, ambition, and the accumulation of wealth and material possessions, whereas 'feminine' cultures place more value on relationships and quality of life.
- In a more masculine society women may be expected to be quiet and more deferential to men. This becomes evident in the classroom.
- Masculinity is high in Japan, in some European countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland and moderately high in Anglo countries. In contrast, masculinity is low in Nordic countries and in the Netherlands and moderately low in some Latin and Asian countries like France, Spain and Thailand.

4) Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

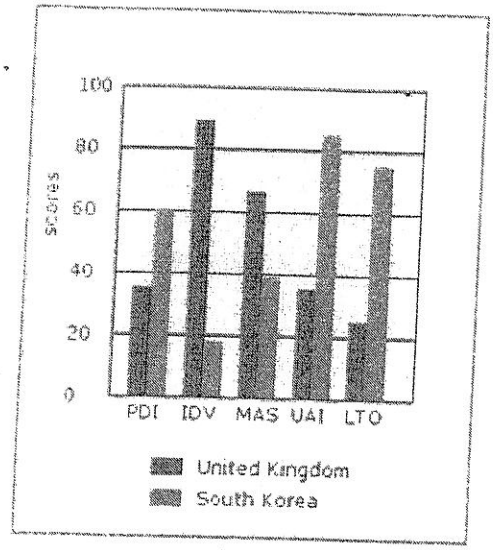
- The Uncertainty Avoidance Index indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel comfortable in unknown or surprising situations.
- The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible.They tend to be more contemplative, rarely expressing their emotions.
- Uncertainty avoiders are going to like planned and structured activities and will seek rules for the language you teach them. They may also be more intolerant of the views and cultures different from theirs.
- Uncertainty avoidance scores are higher in Latin countries, in Japan and in German speaking countries. They are lower in Anglo, Nordic and Chinese culture countries.

5) Long-Term Orientation (LTO)

- In the classroom environment those with a stronger long-term orientation may seem 'serious' or formal. They may struggle with the concept of learning by playing games.
- The more long-term orientated students will be very concerned about losing 'face'. Expect them to be reticent about speaking out for fear of making a mistake. You may also find that they excel in writing but feel less comfortable about speaking.
- A long term orientation is mostly found in East Asian countries, in particular China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

2. Comparing two cultures

It compares UK and South Korean cultures across the 5 dimensions. The teacher in this class is British and the students are Korean.



Power Distance

The UK teacher is happy for students to treat him or her informally and to treat the students as equals. Korean students expect the teacher to be formal and will seek to treat him or her with respect and deference, rather than as an equal.

Individualism

The British teacher comes from a highly individualistic culture where doing your own thing and finding yourself (for example by travelling to Korea to teach), is applauded.

Entrepreneurs are highly valued and differences are celebrated. This is fairly alien to Korean students. They tend to seek the right way to do things rather than wishing to be different. As a rule, they do not want to be different and do not admire those who are.

Masculinity

The UK teacher is from a culture that encourages competition. The Korean students prefer to collaborate and nurture.

Uncertainty Avoidance

The teacher is likely to enjoy new challenges and changes. The students prefer traditional ways.

Long Term Orientation

Again the teacher and the students are poles apart in their values.

III. How to avoid making cultural mistakes

Every EFL teacher who has ever taught overseas has made a cultural faux-pas at some time. Such faux-pas may concern the following aspects among others:

- Use of inappropriate body language
- Bringing up topics that are taboo
- Dressing in an inappropriate way
- Failing to greet a person or bid them farewell in the right way

1. Anecdotes of cultural faux-pas

Here you can see three student stories with explanations of what caused the embarrassment or misunderstanding. These examples demonstrate how important it is to be aware of the differences between the culture of your students and your own culture.

Story 1

"I was teaching in Indonesia, and I found it very difficult to pronounce their names. Sometimes I just touched them individually on the arm or back either with my right or my left hand when I wanted them to speak. Imagine my horror when gradually week by week the students stopped coming because of this!"

Explanation: It is inappropriate for anyone in Indonesia to touch another person with their left hand.

Story 2

"I was teaching irregular verbs to my students in Saudi Arabia during one lesson, and to help get the concepts across we were playing bingo with the verbs! To spice up the activity I asked all the students to put a very small sum of money into a kitty – but many of my students refused point blank!"

Explanation : Gambling is prohibited in Saudi Arabia.

Story 3

"In an English lesson with my Japanese students, there was a short discussion about the treatment of animals. One of the students commented that bull fighting was cruel. Another mentioned that circuses were guilty of animal cruelty and that zoos could be too. I asked them what they thought about Japanese tuna fishing, and one student mentioned that it was damaging the dolphin population. The class then settled down to a new activity.

The next day I was summoned into the director's office to be told that one of the students had complained that her teacher did not like Japanese students. She had moved classes and I couldn't understand why!"

Explanation : The student had taken a criticism of Japan very personally! He thought that by mentioning tuna fishing the teacher encouraged criticism of their country.

2. Examples of cultural differences

Let's take a look at some important cultural differences to be aware of and potential cultural pitfalls you could fall foul of in your first teaching position.

Shaking hands

There are different traditions of greeting people in different countries. For example, in Russia men usually shake hands when they see each other for the first time during the day (whereas women never shake hands). You may see your male students shake hands with each other, however the teacher (male or female) is not expected to shake hands with students.

How are you

If you ask a Russian 'How are you?' they may take the question too literally and launch into a lengthy account of their latest achievements or family problems. They are unlikely to ask 'How are you?' in return because it is not a traditional greeting in their culture. A good idea is to explain the English custom of asking 'How are you?' to your students from the start. Tell them what the usual responses to the question are.

A Chinese greeting

When Chinese people meet each other, they often say, "Have you had your meal yet?" which is more of a friendly greeting than of a question of concern, but foreigners, not familiar with such a form of greeting, tend to find it rather awkward. Another common form of address if you meet someone in the street is asking 'Where are you going?' instead of 'hello'. If your students ask you these questions you need to be aware that they are attempting to greet you rather than being nosey or impolite.

Manners

Sniffing, spitting, blowing your nose are acceptable in some cultures and very inappropriate in others.

Entering and leaving the classroom

Certain rituals may be involved and greetings are necessary in many cultures.

"Yes"

"Yes" may mean, "I hear you" more than "I agree".

Length of pleasantries
Length of pleasantries and greetings before getting down to business may vary.

Level of tolerance
Level of tolerance for being around someone speaking a foreign (not understood) language may also vary.

Celebrations
Not all cultures and religious groups celebrate birthdays e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses. Even though Christmas has by and large become a secular holiday, not everybody in the world celebrates it. In some countries, such as Russia, it has a solemn religious meaning.

3. Taboos, gestures, and giving praise

Getting together with your students to discuss a topic is a great way to encourage conversation skills, but be careful to choose a suitable subject. Remember that each culture has certain taboos.

Unless you really know your class, you should avoid discussing any contentious subjects. The discussion about who should stay at home and look after the housework is a non starter in many countries, as is the discussion about the merits of cohabiting before marriage.

Some other likely taboo subjects might include:

- Sex, drugs and alcohol
- Any criticism of a country which appears in the international press, e.g. human rights issues in China
- Wars and political unrest
- Some aspects of history
- Homosexuality in some cultures
- Religion
- Challenging cultural norms
- The value of honesty
- Attitudes toward children
- Attitudes toward animals

Gestures and body language are thought by some to convey more meaning that the actual words spoken. Naturally just as languages differ so do body languages.

In many cultures certain things may be inappropriate or disrespectful.

Here are a few examples:

- Touching the head, shoulders or back of an older person.
- The thumbs up gesture is considered obscene in many countries.
- For a man to make any comment about a woman's appearance can be considered inappropriate.
- Pointing with one's index finger is considered impolite, especially when pointing at people.
- Politeness measured in terms of gallantry or etiquette is important e.g., standing up for a woman who approaches a table, giving a seat on the train/bus to an older person.

Whereas giving praise can show natural warmth in some cultures, the following example shows a different perception of praise:

A British professor once saw a Chinese wearing a pretty dress, so she said to her, "You look very beautiful today". To her surprise, the student blushed and said timidly, "No, no. This is an ordinary dress".

On another occasion, she commended a student's spoken English, "Your English is quite fluent". The student was quick to respond, "No, no. My English is quite poor". Their responses confused and piqued the British professor, who might be thinking that the students just rudely questioned her judgement. In reality, they were responding according to their cultural values.

Explanation: Where Westerners say "Thank you very much", the Chinese feel they must disagree with the compliment as it reflects their perception of modesty as a principal value. This doesn't mean that we should avoid complimenting our students but we should not respond emotionally to their expression of modesty or try to convince them that they are underestimating themselves.

Another example is Arab countries, where it is not a good idea to praise an object someone owns because it will make them feel obliged to give it to you as a present.

4. Appearance and dress

Teachers should dress appropriately at all times. Depending where you are this will vary considerably.

In most schools, in most parts of the world, teachers are expected to dress smartly. If you want to play it safe, avoid the scruffy jeans and vest top. Be very careful about wearing modest clothing if you are teaching in a hot climate. Ask the school about the dress code beforehand so you can take appropriate clothes from home.

If you have visible body piercings do not be surprised if you are asked to remove them. In many countries it is considered inappropriate for a teacher to have any piercings!

If you have green hair styled in a Mohican, do not be surprised if you don't get the job you are after. As a tip, if a prospective employer asks for a photo, do yourself a favour and send one of your more conservative ones. If you don't look the part, you won't get the part!

5. Six top tips

Here are some ideas for how to avoid cultural howlers in the classroom:

- Thoroughly research the culture of the country you will be teaching in
- See if you can find out if there are any taboo subjects
- Speak to other teachers about any mistakes they made
- Ensure you understand the dress code and rules of the school you will be teaching in
- If in doubt, play it safe!
- Build a good rapport with your class. If they like their teacher they are more likely to forgive you any cultural faux-pas

IV. Monolingual vs multilingual

1. Teaching a monolingual class

If you are going abroad then it is most likely that you will be teaching a monolingual class. The advantage of this is that you will be able to read up on the typical differences in culture as well as pronunciation and grammar problems that your students may have trouble with on account of their first language.

You will soon learn whether your students are likely to be active and collaborative or quieter and more passive. Whatever you do, do not try to change your class. You are a teacher of the English language. It is not your job to educate your students on the merits of your culture or way of doing things, but it is likely that these will make great discussion topics. If you can find out about the national dishes, holidays, and customs of the country you are teaching in, you'll have some great material that every student knows something about. Many students enjoy teaching you about their culture.

Do bear in mind however that you may well have students in your class who are not nationals of the country you are teaching in or who have grown up in a different culture. This can require some delicate handling in some circumstances.

2. Teaching a multilingual class

The multilingual class is probably the preference of most teachers, given the choice. By multilingual we mean a mixture of nationalities. You are more likely to get this if you teach in your own country.

The main issue for the EFL teacher with a multilingual class is to ensure that everyone gets on and respects each other. This starts with the teacher doing just that and never showing a preference for any particular nationality. Each nationality will have its own pronunciation problems and in some cases, students will find it hard to understand each other. Do not tolerate any form of ridicule from other students when a student makes a mistake. Do not let your students make racist comments or at least signal your disapproval and move on.

The other issue is that there can be marked differences in your students' expectations and behaviour in the classroom. If you have a class comprised of, for example, outgoing Brazilians and Italians and a few quieter Taiwanese and Chinese, you need to bear this in mind when you allocate your students to groups. While the quieter students may be happy to listen, the more outgoing ones can become resentful as they feel they are doing all the work. So, occasionally it

is good to put the quieter ones into a group together and give them a chance to have their say. You may be very surprised by the output.

- On other occasions get your students to enjoy their diversity. Savvy teachers can arrange group projects designed to encourage students to share and explore one another's cultures. As a task based discussion, get the class, in small groups, to imagine that they are going to open a 'fusion' restaurant featuring starters, main courses and desserts from all the countries represented in the group. Your class will be describing national dishes and will leave the lesson with a good appetite for dinner!

Decorations such as country maps, flags, and pictures of prominent leaders can bring a taste of each nation into the ESL classroom in a positive way.

V. Understanding another culture

1. Bilingual and bicultural

While your ultimate goal of teaching English as a second or foreign language is to create bilingual students, an additional goal should be to create bicultural students. To do this, you should practise cultural sensitivity and encourage students to learn about new cultures.

As students learn to compare their native culture with the culture they are taught, they can gain an appreciation of both without minimising or denigrating either culture. Take a look at these activities that can help with this process.

Polls
Taking polls of students' assumptions and beliefs about English culture and discussing the results

Excursions
If you teach in an English speaking country, visiting museums, art exhibits, historical sites, etc

Films
Watching and discussing films which have become an important part of your culture and which illustrate some typical features of your culture

Q&A
Encouraging question and answer sessions about the new culture while comparing it to students' native cultures, such as discussing popular television shows, slang, or other lifestyle characteristics

Guest speakers
Inviting guest speakers who have successfully integrated into the new culture but who are still active. This will demonstrate how biculturalism can enrich your life.

2. Respect and adaptability

You are a representative of your culture and your students are representatives of theirs. We are all different and there is no sense in trying to decide which culture is better (even though humans are essentially conservative and will normally feel that their culture is 'right').

Be prepared to adapt the way you behave to be more acceptable to your students' expectations. Your students will expect you to be different but they will thank you for trying to fit in rather than glorifying in being a foreigner.

While you adapt yourself, teach your students about your own culture, to help them acclimatise to the English-speaking world. If your students are already in an English-speaking country, teaching them about the local culture is vital.

Given the close association of language with culture, it is no exaggeration to say that only when our students get fully acquainted with English culture can they be expected to have a satisfactory command of the English language.

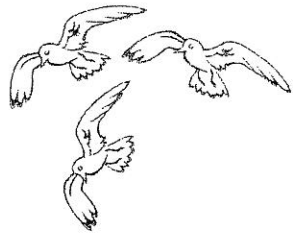
When it comes to cultural awareness, it is likely that some of the greatest lessons learned in the TEFL classroom will be learned by you as the teacher. If you make mistakes, your best bet is to apologise and explain the cultural difference.

Remember that cultures are different from each other but that there is no correct or right culture. Don't therefore try to convert your class or question their norms; Respect and learn.

If you make a cultural blunder, pass on your experience to others so we can all learn from one another's mistakes.

The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.



Surface Culture
Above sea level
Emotional load: relatively low

food ▪ dress ▪ music ▪
visual arts ▪ drama ▪ crafts
dance ▪ literature ▪ language
celebrations ▪ games

Unspoken Rules
Partially below sea level
Emotional load: very high

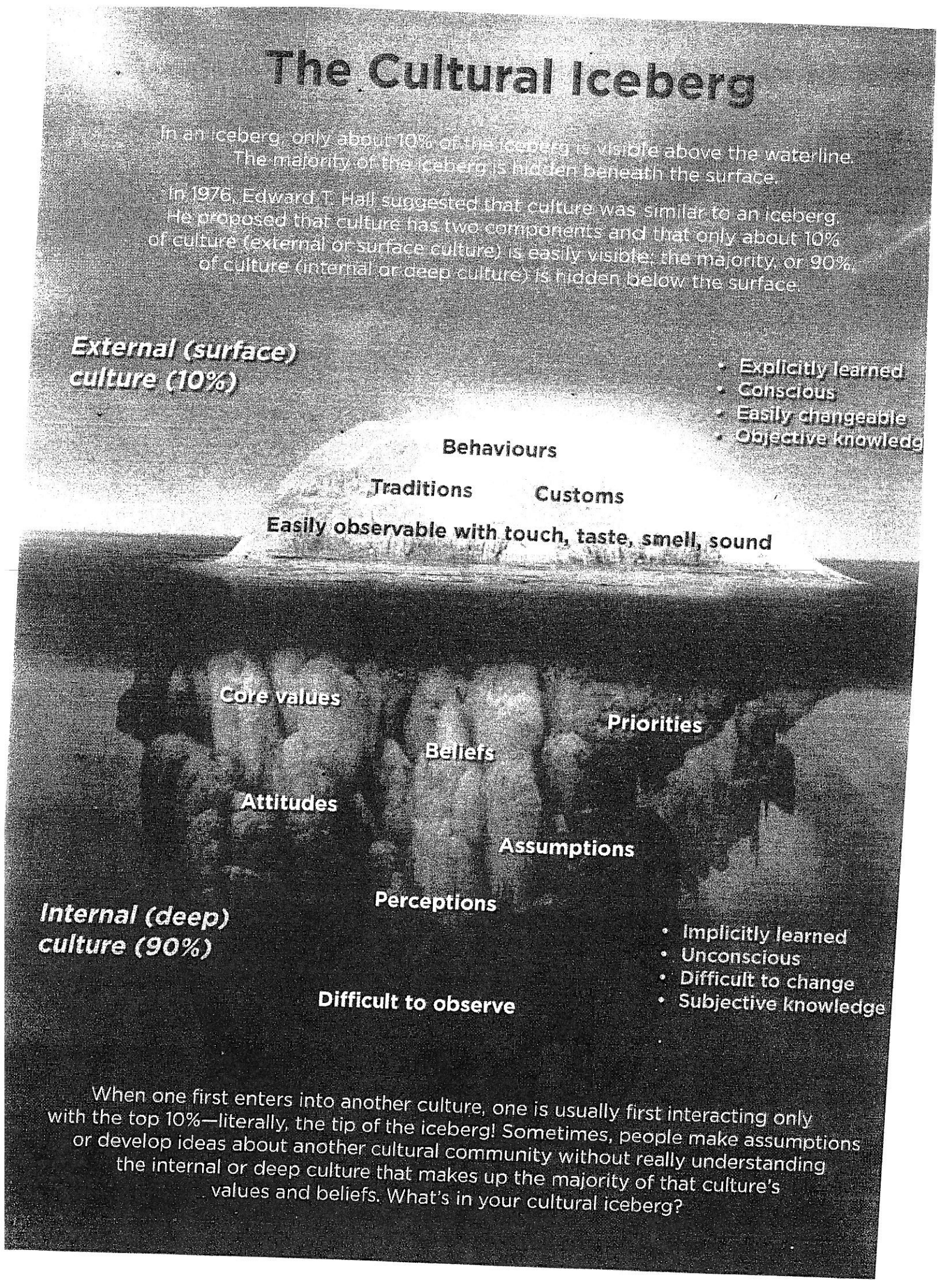
courtesy ▪ contextual conversational patterns ▪ concept of time
personal space ▪ rules of conduct ▪ facial expressions
nonverbal communication ▪ body language ▪ touching ▪ eye contact
patterns of handling emotions ▪ notions of modesty ▪ concept of beauty
courtship practices ▪ relationships to animals ▪ notions of leadership
tempo of work ▪ concepts of food ▪ ideals of childrearing
theory of disease ▪ social interaction rate ▪ nature of friendships
tone of voice ▪ attitudes toward elders ▪ concept of cleanliness
notions of adolescence ▪ patterns of group decision-making
definition of insanity ▪ preference for competition or cooperation
tolerance of physical pain ▪ concept of "self" ▪ concept of past and future
definition of obscenity ▪ attitudes toward dependents ▪ problem-solving
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

Unconscious Rules
Completely below sea level
Emotional load: intense

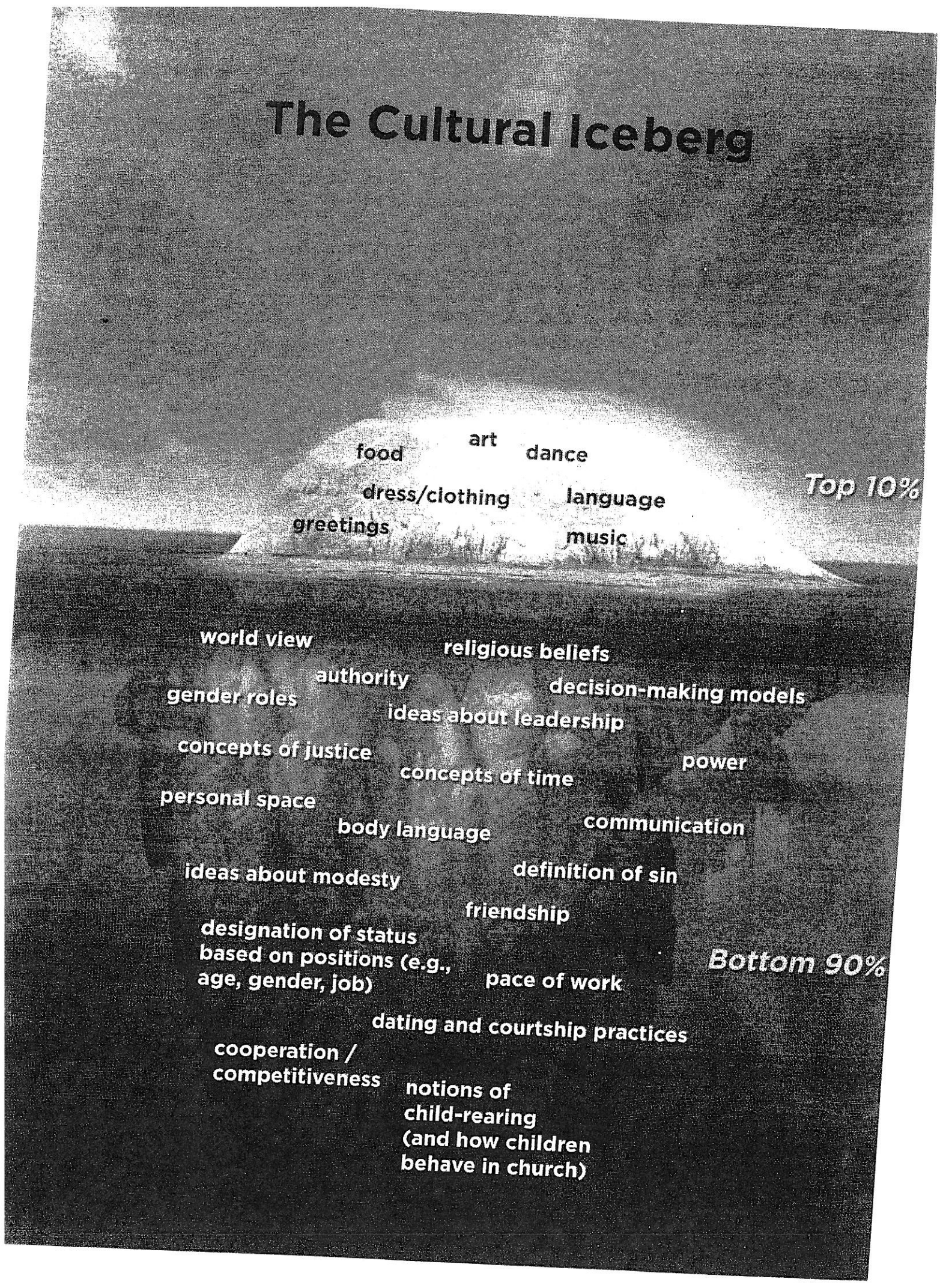
The Cultural Iceberg

In an iceberg, only about 10% of the iceberg is visible above the waterline. The majority of the iceberg is hidden beneath the surface.

In 1976, Edward T. Hall suggested that culture was similar to an iceberg. He proposed that culture has two components and that only about 10% of culture (external or surface culture) is easily visible; the majority, or 90%, of culture (internal or deep culture) is hidden below the surface.



When one first enters into another culture, one is usually first interacting only with the top 10%—literally, the tip of the iceberg! Sometimes, people make assumptions or develop ideas about another cultural community without really understanding the internal or deep culture that makes up the majority of that culture's values and beliefs. What's in your cultural iceberg?


The Cultural Iceberg
art
food
dance
dress/clothing
language
greetings
music
Top 10%
world view
religious beliefs
authority
decision-making models
gender roles
ideas about leadership
concepts of justice
power
concepts of time
personal space
communication
body language
ideas about modesty
definition of sin
friendship
designation of status based on positions (e.g., age, gender, job)
pace of work
Bottom 90%
dating and courtship practices
cooperation / competitiveness
notions of child-rearing (and how children behave in church)