



Global communication

CSCW



Learning Outcomes

- After attending this lecture and reading the additional literature, you should be able to:
 - Understand cross-Cultural differences in thinking, feeling, action, and motivation
 - Understand how these differences can affect computer-mediated communication
 - Reflect on the conflict between globalisation and localisation in Internet technology, CSCW and CMC

- A small Texan corporation seeking to elevate productivity told its employees to look in the mirror before coming to work every morning and say 100 times
 - I AM BEAUTIFUL

- Employees of a Japanese supermarket were instructed to begin the day by holding hands and telling each other
 - YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL

Culture

- Set of knowledge, beliefs and values which distinguishes the members of one group from another and shapes people's interaction with their social and physical world
- Cognitions and practices

Culture & Technology

- Culture affects users' expectations and behaviour
 - Usability of design elements is cultural dependent
 - Chinese languages (top to bottom) suit vertical menus, western languages (left to right) suit horizontal ones
 - Americans favour alphanumeric labels, Chinese pictorial icons
 - E-commerce: bargaining suits countries which negotiate prices in real life, (e.g., Turkey)

Culture & the Internet

- The Internet is a global medium: but its users and creators have different backgrounds, live in different environments, and belong to different cultures.
- Different styles of communication can lead to misunderstandings and problems
 - More complex than in face to face encounters
- Standards for writing time, dates, addresses, and numbers can also cause confusion
- Differences in symbols, colors, and metaphors.
- Style of writing may be considered friendly in one culture and offensive in another

Culture & CSCW

- The way we interact with other people, the definition of ‘group vs. individual responsibility’, are very different among cultures
- Communication styles also vary
 - Dear Prof. De Angeli,
 - Hi

Cultural values

- Gert Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1984, 1991)
- global studies on how a business “culture” (IBM) interacted with the local cultures of some 70 different countries
 - useful starting point to understand cultural differences in business context
 - five useful dimensions for comparing and contrasting cultures
 - important limits

Cultural values - Hofstede

- Power distance: Extent to which the weaker members of a society accept inequality in power distribution
- Uncertainty avoidance: Extent to which a society feels comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity
- Individualism/collectivism: Individualistic cultures expect individuals to look after themselves; collective cultures expect group members to support each other
- Masculinity/femininity: Masculinity stands for a society where gender roles are clearly distinct; femininity for a society where social gender roles overlap
- Long/ short-term orientation: Long-term orientation encourages virtues oriented towards future rewards; short-term encourages virtues related to present rewards

Useful resource

- <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>

Other forms of cultures

- Nationality may NOT be the most important variable
- Socio-economic, gender, and ethnicity differences within national countries
 - E.g., White middle-/upper-middle class males vs. females / African-Americans / Asian-Americans / Hispanics/ Native Americans
 - Within country differences

Self-presentation

- Self-presentation and self-disclosure processes are fundamental aspects of social interaction
- Selves are construed, enabled and modified in relations to other people
- Goffman(1959) link self-presentation to theatre:
 - People play different roles for different audiences
 - self-enhancement trying to fit the audience values
 - Driver of self-presentation is to maintain a positive self-image

On-line self-presentation

- The audience may be unknown
 - Its fundamental feedback is
 - Mediated
 - Delayed
 - Lost

Questions

- How do people compensate for a reduced audience feedback in virtual spaces?
- What is the influence of the author's personality and cultural background on self-presentation?

- Tomorrow there will be a mandatory revision lecture from 6 AM to 8 AM
 - Room A 211

How to say no

- Direct
 - Performative (e.g., “I refuse.”)
 - Non-performative statement: (1) “No”, (2) Negative willingness (e.g., “I can’t.” “I won’t be able to do.’)
- Indirect
 - Statement of regret (e.g., “I’m so sorry.”)
 - Reason (e.g., “I have other plans.” “I’m going to be studying until late tonight.”)
 - Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., “Oh, if you said it before, I wouldn’t have made other plans”)
 - Promise of future acceptance (e.g., “I’ll do it next time”; “Let’s make it another day”)
 - Criticize the request/requester (e.g., “Who do you think you are?”)
 - Postponement (e.g., “I need to think about it.”)
 - Statement of empathy (e.g., “While I appreciate your proposal..)
 - Gratitude (e.g., “Thanks, but....”)
 - Hedging (e.g., “Oh, I’m not sure.”)

Differences in communication

- Edward Hall (1976, 2000) proposed a cultural framework based on communication context
 - Context has to do with how much you have to know before you can communicate effectively - the degree to which speakers rely on factors other than explicit speech to convey their messages
 - Low-context cultures (individualistic): the mass of information is vested in explicit statements
 - emphasis on speaker skills and strategies for effective communication
 - High-context cultures (collectivistic): greater confidence is placed in the non-verbal aspects of communication than the verbal aspects
 - emphasis on receiver skills to interpret,
 - Information is also in the physical context, use of silence, body languages, indirect communication

Low-context cultures

- North America and much of Western Europe
- Logical, linear, individualistic, and action-oriented
- value logic, facts, and directness.
- Solving a problem means lining up the facts and evaluating one after another.
- Decisions are based on fact rather than intuition.
- Discussions end with actions.

Low context culture

- communicators are expected to be straightforward, concise, and efficient in telling what action is expected.
- strive to use precise words and intend them to be taken literally.
- Explicit contracts conclude negotiations.

High-context cultures

- much of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America)
- relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative
- emphasize interpersonal relationships.
- Developing trust is an important first step to any business transaction.

High context culture

- collectivist, preferring group harmony and consensus to individual achievement.
- People are less governed by reason than by intuition or feelings.
- Words are not so important as context, which might include the speaker's tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, posture—and even the person's family history and status.

High-context culture

- A Japanese manager talking to an American: “We are a homogeneous people and don’t have to speak as much as you do here. When we say one word, we understand ten, but here you have to say ten to understand one.”
- More indirect and formal.
- Flowery language, humility, and elaborate apologies are typical.

High context culture

- depend less on language precision and legal documents.
- High-context business people may even distrust contracts and be offended by the lack of trust they suggest.

Misunderstanding

- Low context → high context
 - Are evasive
 - Are dishonest
 - Cannot take a stand
 - Have no opinion
 - Increase tension by not dealing with issues directly

Misunderstanding

- High context → Lowcontext
 - Are insensitive
 - Are Insulting
 - Are rude
 - Are full of themselves
 - Increase tension by not dealing with issues in a direct matter

Summary

- Culture affects CSCW – CMC
- Awareness of cultural values is fundamental for the success of e-business
- 2 models to understand cultural differences
 - cultural values
 - High vs. low context communication