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Global communication
CT334/434 CSCW

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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

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- 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

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

– YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL

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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

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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)

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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

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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 Dr De Angeli,
 - Hi

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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

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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

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Useful resource

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

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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

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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

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On-line self-presentation

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

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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?

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Self-construal: Markus and Kitayama

- Self-concept = set of cognitive representations of self available to a person
- Culture provides conventions to people to sample information in their environment

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Table 1
Summary of Key Differences Between an Independent and an Interdependent Construal of Self

Feature compared	Independent	Interdependent
Definition	Separate from social context	Connected with social context
Structure	Bounded, unitary, stable	Flexible, variable
Important features	Internal, private (abilities, thoughts, feelings)	External, public (statuses, roles, relationships)
Tasks	Be unique Express self Realize internal attributes Promote own goals	Belong, fit-in Occupy one's proper place Engage in appropriate action Promote others' goals
Role of others	Be direct; "say what's on your mind" <i>Self-evaluation</i> : others important for social comparison, reflected appraisal	Be indirect; "read other's mind" <i>Self-definition</i> : relationships with others in specific contexts define the self
Basis of self-esteem*	Ability to express self, validate internal attributes	Ability to adjust, restrain self, maintain harmony with social context

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Summary

- Culture affects CSCW – CMC
- Awareness of cultural values is fundamental for the success of e-business
- 2 models to understand cultural differences
 - Hofstede cultural values
 - Independent / interdependent self

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