

ME290

Global Engineering Professional Seminar

Globalization, Cultural Difference and
Collaborating Across Cultural Boundaries

Lecture-1

Globalization, Cultural Difference and Collaborating Across Cultural Boundaries

Globalization the process by which businesses or other organizations develop international influence or start operating on an international scale.



Cultures

- Culture is the dominant set of behaviors, values, beliefs, and thinking patterns we learn as we grow and develop in our social groups.



In all but one of the following countries it is expected that you bring a gift to a business meeting. In which country is it not expected?

A. China

B. Czech Republic

C. Japan

D. Denmark

The correct answer is D. Denmark

Which of the following is associated with dead and should not be given as a gift in the Chinese culture?

A. Clocks

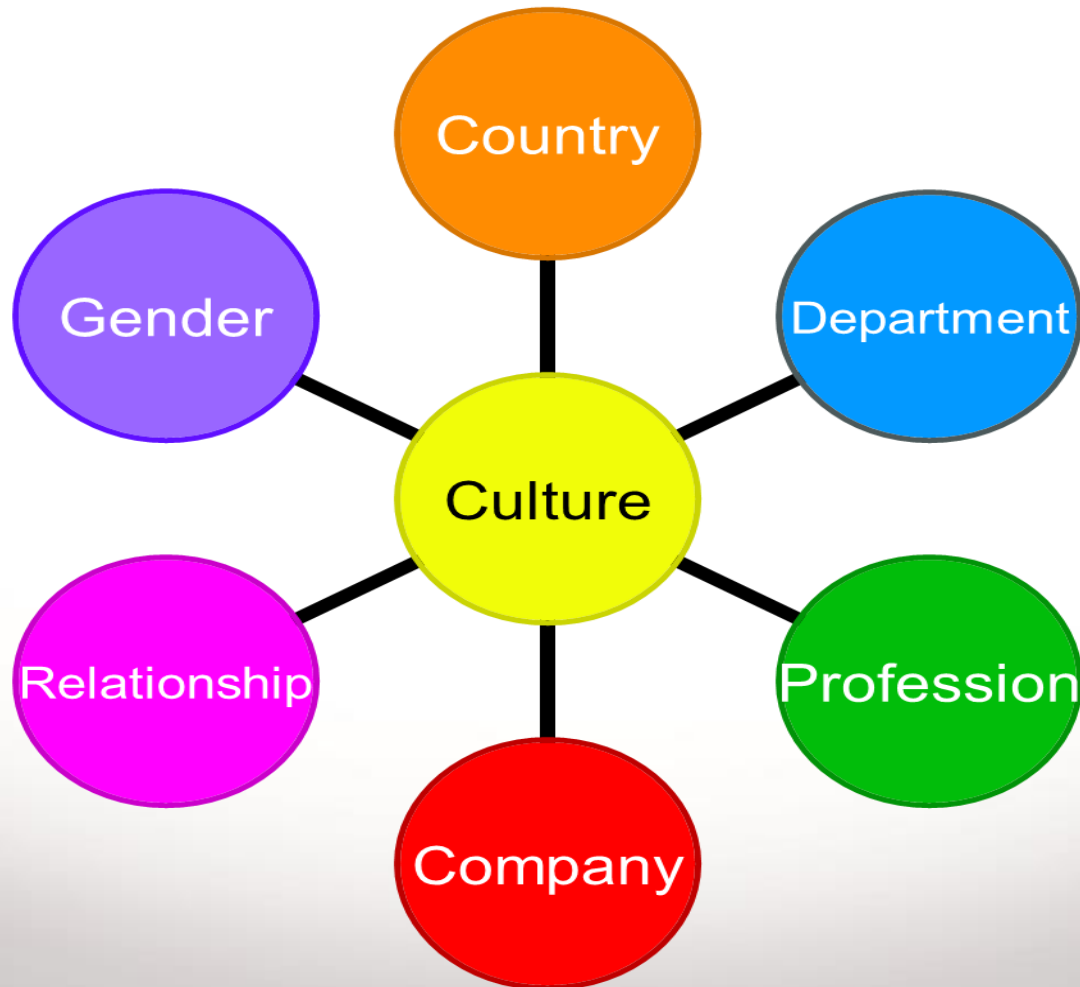
B. Straw sandals

C. Handkerchief

D. Crane

The answer is - All of the above!

Typical Dimensions of Culture



Tree Model of CULTURE



AUM

American University Of The Middle East

Surface Culture

Language

Dress

Art & Music

Food

Gestures

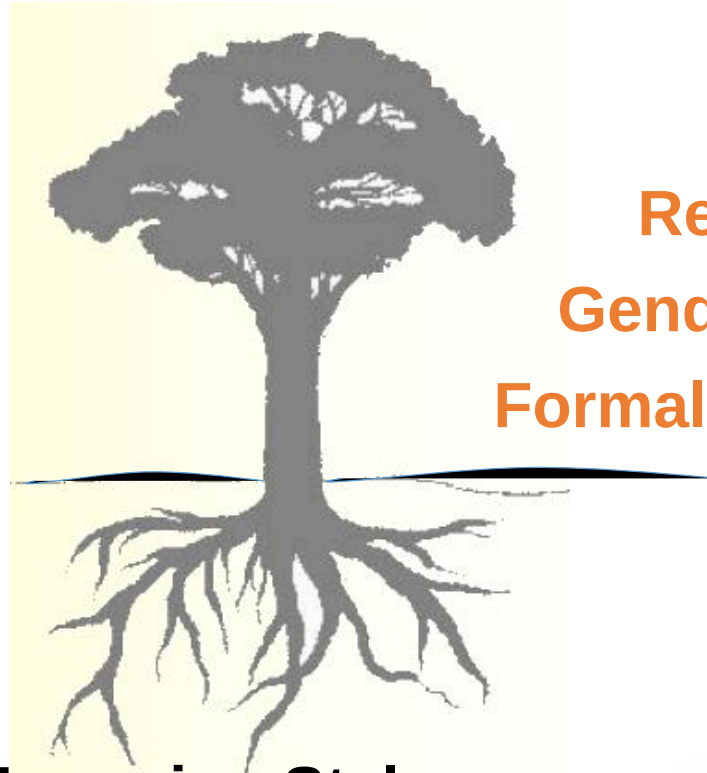
Personal Space

Holidays

Religion

Gender Roles

Formality



Time

Values

Communication & Learning Styles

Methods of Decision Making

Relationships

Attitudes

Work Ethic

Negotiating Styles

Deep Culture

Cultural Differences

Some main indicators of cultural differences are:

- Behavioral patterns: appearance vs. reality
- Non-verbal behavior: Gestures, signs, mimics
- Distance behavior: personal space vs. closeness

Behavioral Pattern

- If we don't know anything about other cultures, we tend to use stereotypes as our knowledge base – Is this a right approach?
- What are stereotypes?
 - Negative labeling of a certain group or culture based on the actions and/or appearances of a **few** individuals.

Lesson: Inquire into the stereotypes you have about a culture instead of assuming generality.

Non-Verbal Behavior

- Understood as the process of communication through sending and receiving wordless messages.
- Language is not the only source of communication; there are other means, including:
 - Gestures and touch
 - Body language or posture, facial expression and eye contact
 - Object communication such as clothing, hairstyles or even architecture and symbols
- Problems and conflicts can occur when expressing gestures or facial expressions in other cultures – messages can often be misinterpreted.

Lesson: Be aware of body language and facial expressions.

Distance Behavior

- The right personal distance when conducting business shows respect and acceptance.
 - Too much distance gives the impression of dislike and discomfort.
 - Too little will make the person draw back.

Lesson: Personal distances vary extremely from culture to culture. Find the appropriate distance.

Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity refers to differences (such as age, gender, ethnicity physical appearance, thought styles, religion, nationality, socio-economic status, belief systems etc.)

Inclusion refers to the creation of opportunities and the elimination of barriers that allow all people to participate in and contribute to ideation, planning, projects, programs, processes, teams, organizations, social activities, fun or any other opportunity that helps achieve successful outcomes.

Etiquette is the code of behavior that defines expectations for social behavior according to contemporary conventional norms within a society, social class, or group

Global Business Etiquette

- With the “shrinking world” effect of globalization, a critical element of success is the demonstration of respect and appreciation for cultural difference.
- it is a necessity to be able to manage and do business with people from different countries
- Future engineers should be prepared to work across cultural and geographic differences.

Communication differences (Example)

Perceived Western Norm

- Shaking head from side to side = "No".
- Personal space needed is 45 to 60 cm.
- Touching less common, considered inappropriate.

Perceived Indian Norm

- Shaking head from side to side = Yes
- Personal space needed is 15 to 45 cm.
- Touching during communication is common.

Interaction at work difference (Example)

Perceived Western Norm

- "Take charge" personality is valued.
- A frank debate is OK.
- Disagreement with superior is considered okay.
- Advancement is based on performance and demonstrated command of skills.

Perceived Indian Norm

- Defer to superiors
- Courteous & polite communication
- Disagreement with superior is considered disrespectful.
- Advancement is based in large part on seniority and longevity.

5 Keys to Doing Business Globally

1. Be aware of your own culture and its impact on you.
2. Don't expect others to think the same way you do.
3. Accept local customs and norms and try to adapt your behavior, but don't try to imitate or act against your own norms and values.
4. Be open, flexible, self critical, tolerant, sensitive and show willingness to get involved in another culture.
5. Open your senses--be attentive and stay patient! Listen, observe and try to understand before judging and evaluating other behaviors.

Working on Cross-Cultural Teams

- Working with foreign colleagues should not be regarded as a burden, but as an enrichment.
- Be helpful when recognizing language barriers, but don't be arrogant or correct every sentence.
- Take an interest in other cultures. Encourage colleagues to share their unique experiences.
- Be careful not to mock or joke about culturally sensitive issues. Humor is highly subjective and varies widely across cultures.

Conclusions

- Rules of conduct and business etiquette exist in every culture and help us to know how to behave in each situation.
- We know how to behave in our culture of origin, but we don't know how to behave in a foreign culture – there are no general international rules of etiquette.
- Global etiquette can make the difference between opening or closing doors to business opportunities.
- We need to build cultural awareness and seek specific knowledge of other cultures to navigate global business and partnership opportunities.