ROSE
COLLEGE
SPRACHEN & TRAINING

SPEZIELL. INDIVIDUELL. EFFEKTIV.

Welcome to your culture specific training Australia over three days!

October 2025

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

What is culture: Some definitions

Cyriac Roeding: Culture is a reference / framework for decisions.

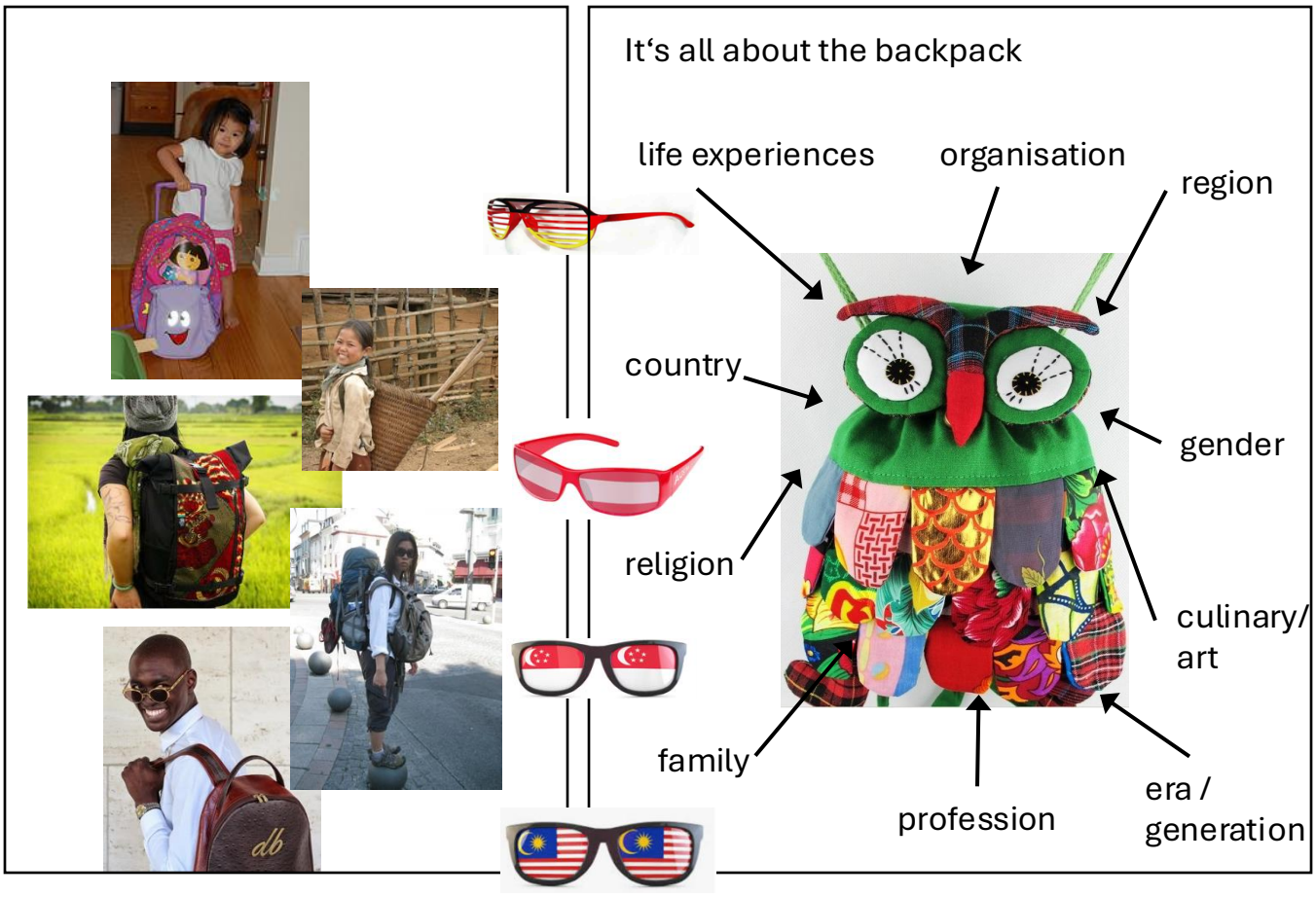
Alexander Thomas: Culture is an orientation system that is passed on from generation to generation and helps us to master the challenges of our surroundings.

Fons Trompenaars: A fish only discovers its need for water when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. We live and breathe through it.

Geert Hofstede: Culture is the programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group. "Software of the mind”.

Bary Tomalin: Culture is the way we do things here.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer



Culture is often defined by national culture. In fact, each of us is part of multiple cultures that influence us.
Depending on context, we navigate between the different collectives we are a part of. Sometimes we adapt more to a group, sometimes less. All of it together forms our identity, orientation, stability.
When we meet other people, we first look for commonalities. Once we've found them, we can build trust. Psychological tests have shown that we see somebody in a positive light that resembles us in some aspect.
In intercultural context, commonalities aren't often visible straight away. Differences are more visible. This means that we need to look harder for commonalities to build trust.
Tip: Take time to build relationships with your international partners. Talk about family, everyday topics, hobbies…

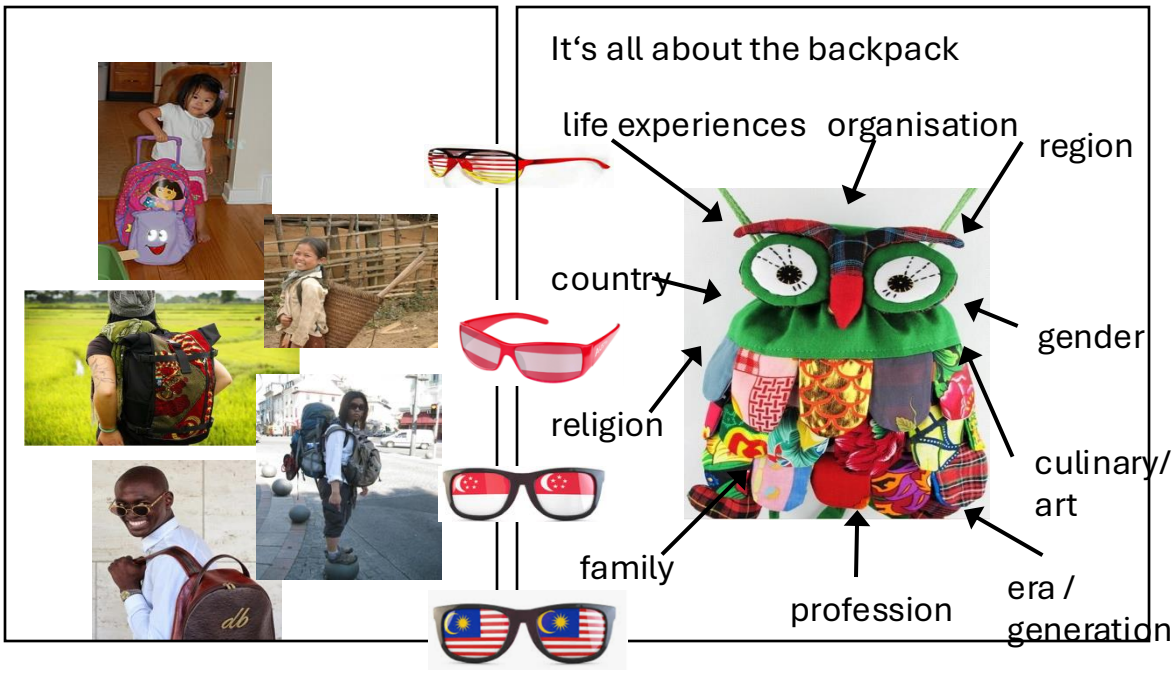
© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

The intercultural lens

Our knowledge is shaped by culture, and hence is our perception. This knowledge inventory gathered throughout life filters information and influences the way we see things. This is our cultural lens.
Psychological studies have shown that we can mainly see what we know and what we like. We filter out what we don’t know or don’t like.
There is no neutral perception. Cultural differences are the source of diverse interpretations.

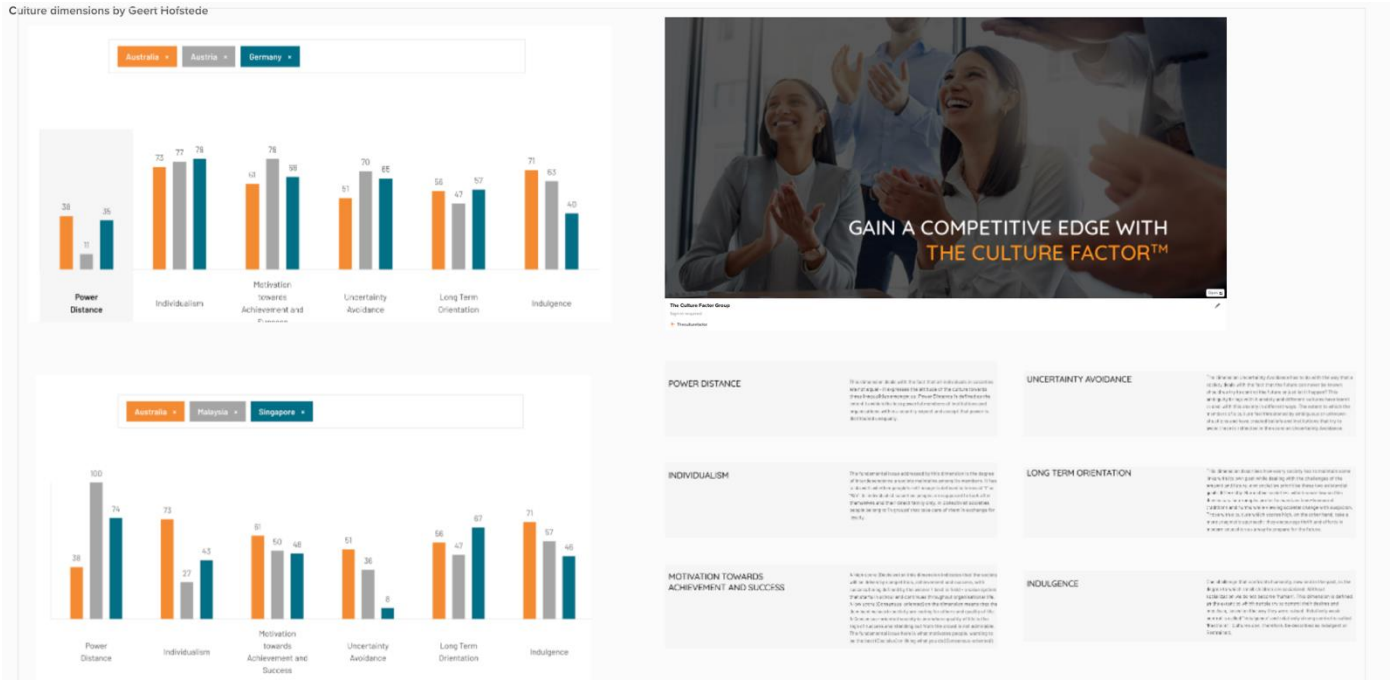
© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

The intercultural lens



© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

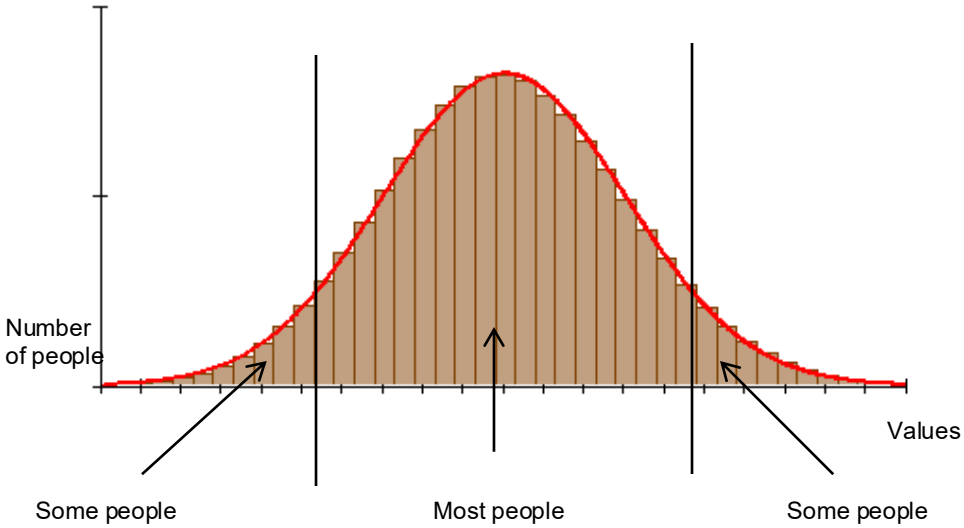
Culture dimensions by Geert Hofstede



Reference:
https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

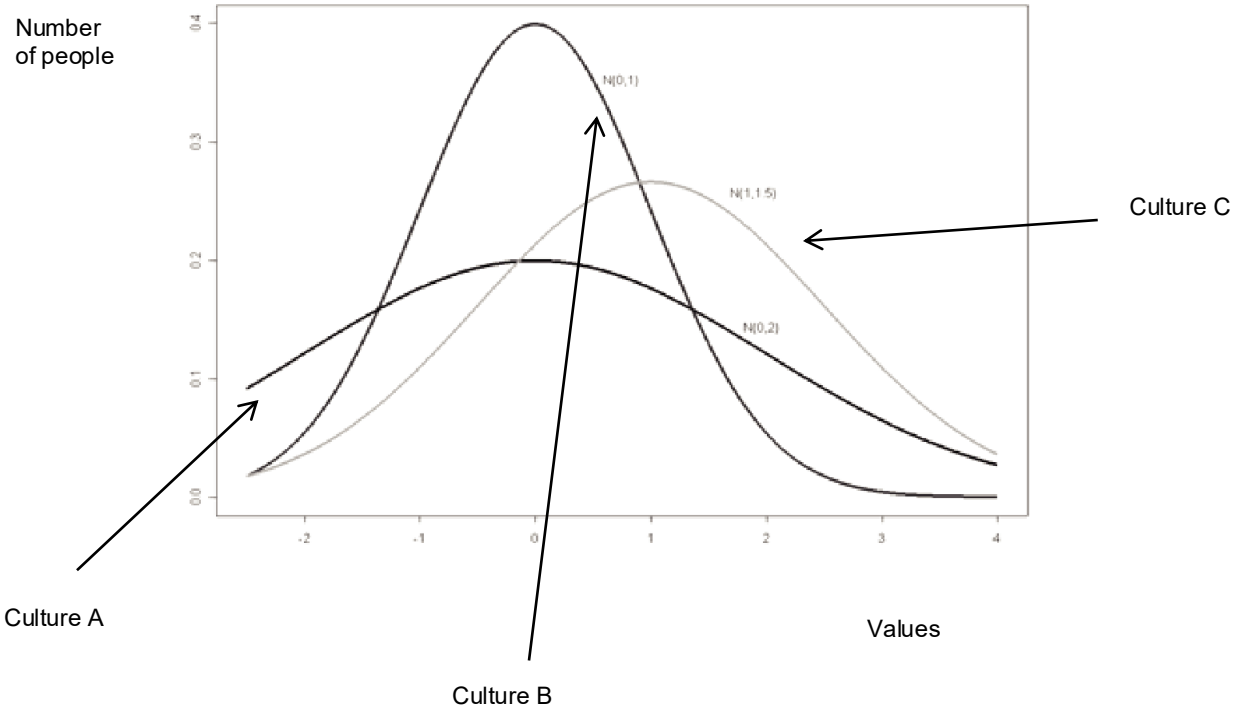
Stereotypes: Cultural profiles yes – blanked judgments no!!



From Nancy Adler: Communicating across Cultural Barriers:
Stereotyping involves a form of categorization that organizes our experience and guides our behavior toward ethnic and national groups. Stereotypes never describe individual behavior; rather, they describe the behavioral Communicating across Cultural Barriers for members of a particular group.
Stereotypes, like other forms of categories, can be helpful or harmful depending on how we use them. Effective stereotyping allows people to understand and act appropriately in new situations.
A stereotype can be helpful when it is
• Consciously held. The person should be aware that he or she is describing a group norm rather than the characteristics of a specific individual.
• Descriptive rather than evaluative. The stereotype should describe what people from this group will probably be like and not evaluate those people as good or bad.
• Accurate. The stereotype should accurately describe the norm for the group to which the person belongs.
• The first best guess about a group prior to having direct information about the specific person or persons involved.
• Modified, based on further observation and experience with the actual people and situations.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Cross-cultural misperception



From Nancy Adler: Communicating across Cultural Barriers:
Do the French and the Chinese see the world in the same way? No. Do Venezuelans and Ghanaians see the world in the same way? Again, no. No two national groups see the world in exactly the same way.
Perception is the process by which each individual selects, organizes, and evaluates stimuli from the external environment to provide meaningful experiences for himself or herself. For example, when Mexican children simultaneously viewed tachistoscopic pictures of a bullfight and a baseball game, they only remembered seeing the bullfight. Looking through the same tachistoscope, American children only remembered seeing the baseball game. Why didn't the children see both pictures? The answer lies in the nature of perception.
Perceptual patterns are neither innate nor absolute. They are selective, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate.
• Perception is selective. At any one time there are too many stimuli in the environment for us to observe. Therefore, we screen out most of what we see, hear, taste, and feel. We screen out the overload and allow only selected information through our perceptual screen to our conscious mind.
• Perceptual patterns are learned. We are not born seeing the world in one particular way. Our experience teaches us to perceive the world in certain ways.
• Perception is culturally determined. We learn to see the world in a certain way based on our cultural background.
• Perception tends to remain constant. Once we see something in a particular way, we continue to see it that way.
• We therefore see things that do not exist, and do not see things that do exist. Our interests, values, and culture act as filters and lead us to distort, block, and even create what we choose to see and hear. We perceive what we expect to perceive. We perceive things according to what we have been trained to see, according to our cultural map.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Are you a peach or a coconut?

(by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner)

From Harvard Business Review: https://hbr.org/2014/05/one-reason-cross-cultural-small-talk-is-so-tricky

In peach cultures like the USA or Brazil people tend to be friendly ("soft") with new acquaintances. They smile frequently at strangers, move quickly to first-name usage, share information about themselves, and ask personal questions of those they hardly know. But after a little friendly interaction with a peach, you may suddenly get to the hard shell of the pit where the peach protects his real self and the relationship suddenly stops.

"On the other hand, coming from a peach culture as I do, I was equally taken aback when I came to live in Europe 14 years ago. My friendly smiles and personal comments were greeted with cold formality by the Polish, French, German, or Russian colleagues I was getting to know. I took their stony expressions as signs of arrogance, snobbishness, and even hostility.

So what do you do if, like me, you're a peach fallen amongst coconuts? Authenticity matters; if you try to be someone you're not, it never works. So go ahead and smile all you want and share as much information about your family as you like. Just don't ask personal questions of your counterparts until they bring up the subject themselves."

In coconut cultures such Russia and Germany, people are initially more closed off from those they don't have friendships with. They rarely smile at strangers, ask casual acquaintances personal questions, or offer personal information to those they don't know intimately. But over time, as coconuts get to know you, they become gradually warmer and friendlier. And while relationships are built up slowly, they also tend to last longer.

Coconuts may react to peaches in a couple of ways. Some interpret the friendliness as an offer of friendship and when people don't follow through on the unintended offer, they conclude that the peaches are disingenuous or hypocritical.

"And for my coconut readers, if your peach counterpart asks how you are doing, shows you photos of their family or even invites you over for a barbecue, don't take it as an overture to deep friendship or a cloak for some hidden agenda, but as an expression of different cultural norms that you need to adjust to."

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

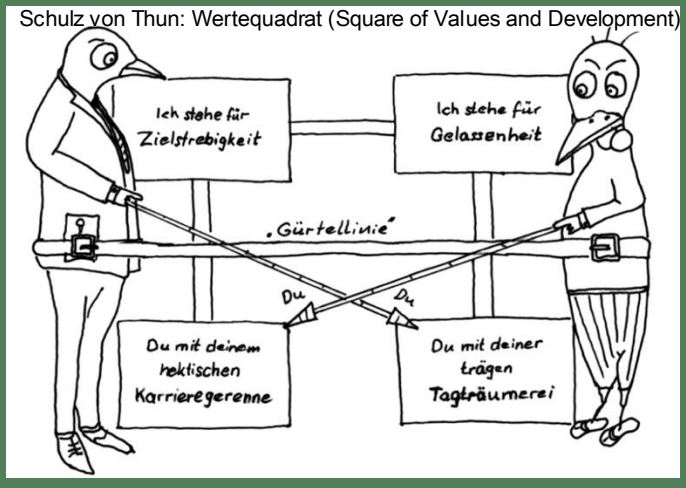
Are you a peach or a coconut?

(by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner)

Coconut
- Reserved, needs time to warm up with strangers
- Private and public life are strictly separated
- Social distance determined by profession, social role and status (Sie)
- Close, very intimate sharing of experiences with friends

Peach
- Extroverted with strangers
- Open and curious
- Makes —friends‖quickly
- Talks openly in public
- Private and public topics and behaviour are interwoven (profession, family, free time)

Schulz von Thun: Wertequadrat (Square of Values and Development)



Source: Heather Robinson of http://www.culturaldetective.com/

Coconut thinks peach is

Negative stereotype	Positive stereotype
Superficial	Informal
Childish	Open
Not to be taken seriously	Friendly
Slippery	Enthusiastic
Uncommited	Flexible
Blah, blah, blah	Humorous

Peach thinks coconut is

Negative stereotype	Positive stereotype
Overly reserved	Reliable
Stiff	Clear
Pompous	Trustworthy
Harsh	Orderly
Unfriendly	Honest
Aggressive	Punctual

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Are you a peach or a coconut?

(by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner)

Peaches effective with coconuts:

Active

Do your homework

Present only the facts – no opinion or personal stories

Present in a logical sequence

Offer as many empirical measures as possible

State your case dispassionately

Stop talking when you have presented your case

Give them time to think before asking for a response

Passive

Don‘t take criticism personally

Coconuts effective with peaches:

Active

Start softly, e.g., ask them how they are, what they did on the weekend, etc.

Acknowledge them/compliment them on s omething you sincerely appreciate about them

Tell them who is effected by the issue and how tell them how you feel about the issue

Look at them

Smile

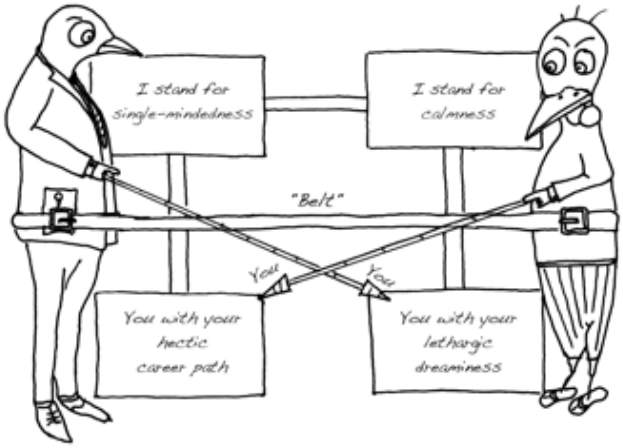
Passive

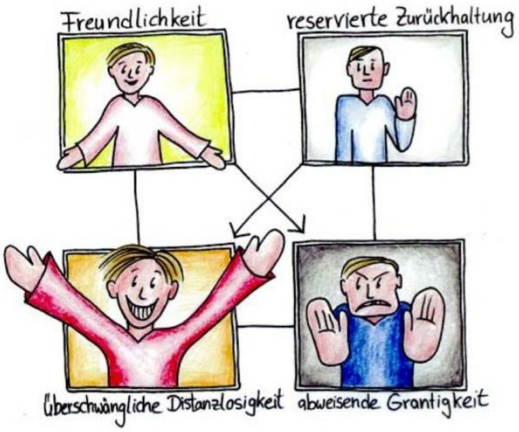
Let them talk

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Square of Values, Virtues and Development

by Friedemann Schulz von Thun



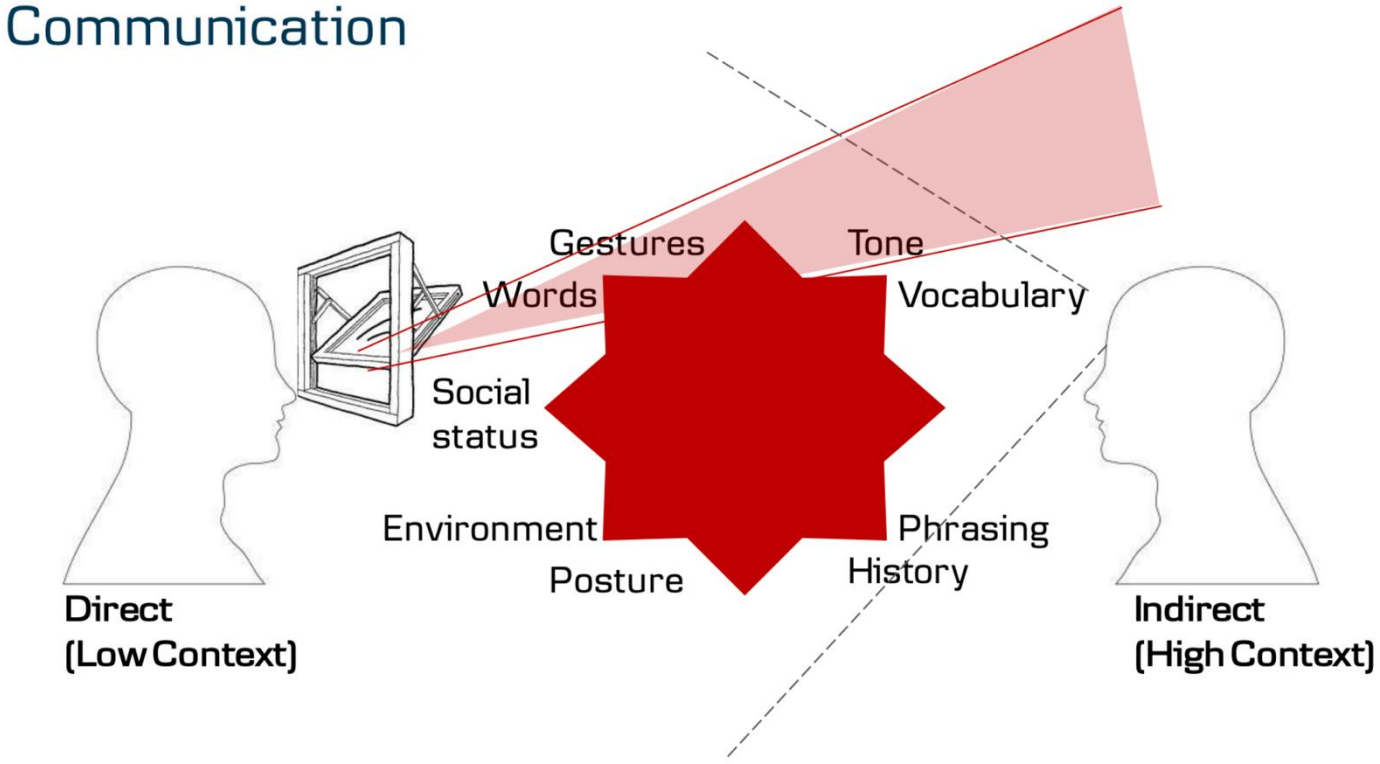


Friedemann Schulz von Thun's Value and Development Square is a communication model. The premise is that every value (every virtue, every leading principle, every human attribute) has a constructive effect only in connection with a positive contrasting value, a "sister-virtue". Without this balance, a value is easily devalued to an exaggeration of itself.
Thriftiness is a positive attribute, stinginess is not. You need a bit of generosity to balance stinginess, and a bit of thriftiness to avoid extravagance, always depending on your point of view.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

High context and low context

(By Edward T. Hall)



Adapted from "Managing intercultural Differences, by Claire B. Anderson

In a low-context society, communication is meant to be clear, to the point, and transparent. Low-context communicators say precisely what they mean. Words carry meaning and the speaker assumes others have a low shared understanding of the context of the conversation. That means the speaker is obligated to explain very explicitly and clearly what they mean. Low-context communication is often identified as a direct communication style. Meaning lies predominantly in what is said, written and spoken communication often have the same value in carrying meaning.

In a high-context society, speakers and listeners assume that there is a great deal of shared context and mutual, unspoken understanding. Communication is layered, nuanced, and implicit. The speaker doesn't have to say exactly what they mean because gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions, and even status and environment add meaning to the message. This means that high-context communication is often identified as an indirect communication style. Meaning lies in what is said, how it is said, who is saying it, and even by what is left unsaid. In other words: silence has meaning.

Text from: https://whatisculture.org/?page_id=77

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Richard D. Lewis: How different cultures perceive time

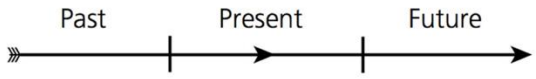


Figure 4.1: American flow of time. Richard Lewis

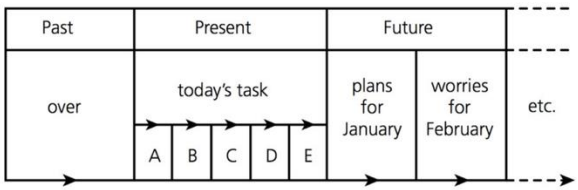


Figure 4.2: Carving up American time. Richard Lewis

The American concept of time **is the most expensive**, as anyone who has had to deal with American doctors, dentists or lawyers will tell you.

For an American, time is truly money. In a **profit-oriented society, time is a precious, even scarce, commodity**. It flows fast, like a mountain river in the spring, and if you want to benefit from its passing, you have to move fast with it. **Americans are people of action; they cannot bear to be idle. The past is over, but the present you can seize, parcel and package and make it work for you in the immediate future.**

The Americans are not the only ones who sanctify timekeeping, for it is practically a religion in Switzerland and Germany, too. These countries, along with Britain, the Anglo-Saxon world in general, the Netherlands, Austria and Scandinavia, have a linear vision of time and action. **They suspect, like the Americans, that time is passing (being wasted) without decisions being made or actions being performed**.

Text from: https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Richard D. Lewis: How different cultures perceive time

Figure 4.4: How the Spaniard actually sees. Richard Lewis

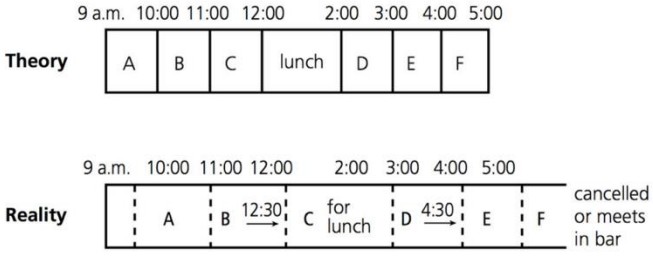


Figure 4.5: Spanish schedules: in theory, in reality. Richard Lewis

Southern Europeans are multi-active, rather than linear-active. **The more things they can do at the same time, the happier and the more fulfilled they feel.** They organize their time (and lives) in an entirely different way from Americans, Germans and the Swiss. Multi-active peoples are not very interested in schedules or punctuality. **They consider the present reality to be more important than appointments. In their ordering of things, priority is given to the relative thrill or significance of each meeting.**

Spaniards, Italians and Arabs will **ignore the passing of time if it means that conversations will be left unfinished. For them, completing a human transaction is the best way they can invest their time.**

The business we have to do and our close relations are so important that it is irrelevant at what time we meet. The meeting is what counts.

In countries inhabited by linear-active people, time is clock- and calendar- related, segmented in an abstract manner for our convenience, measurement, and disposal.

In multi-active cultures like the Arab and Latin spheres, time is event- or personality-related, a subjective commodity which can be manipulated, molded, stretched, or dispensed with, irrespective of what the clock says.

Text from: https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Richard D. Lewis: How different cultures perceive time

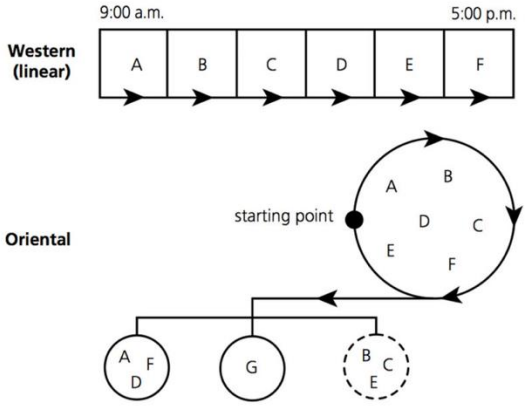


Figure 4.6: Western action chains/Asian reflection. Richard Lewis

Western action versus Asian reflection. The American, German and Swiss go home satisfied that all tasks have been completed. The French or Italian might leave some "mopping up" for the following day. The Thai attitude toward time can be seen as a **pool one could gradually walk around**. This metaphor applies to most Asians, who, instead of tackling problems immediately in sequential fashion, **circle around them for a few days or weeks before committing themselves. After a suitable period of reflection, tasks A, D and F may indeed seem worthy of pursuing. Tasks B, C and E may be quietly dropped. Contemplation of the whole scene has indicated, however, that task G, perhaps not even envisaged at all earlier on, might be the most significant of all.**

In some Eastern cultures, time is viewed neither as linear nor event–relationship related, but as **cyclic**. Each day the sun rises and sets, the seasons follow one another, the heavenly bodies revolve around us, people grow old and die, but their children reconstitute the process. We know this cycle has gone on for 100,000 years and more. Cyclical time is not a scarce commodity. **There seems always to be an unlimited supply of it just around the next bend. As they say in the East, when God made time, he made plenty of it.**

In a Buddhist culture (e.g., Thailand, Tibet), not only time but also life itself goes around in a circle. Whatever we plan, however we organize our particular world, generation follows generation; governments and rulers will succeed each other; crops will be harvested; monsoons, earthquakes and other catastrophes will recur; taxes will be paid; the sun and moon will rise and set; stocks and shares will rise and fall. Even the Americans will not change such events, certainly not by rushing things.

Text from: https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Richard D. Lewis: How different cultures perceive time

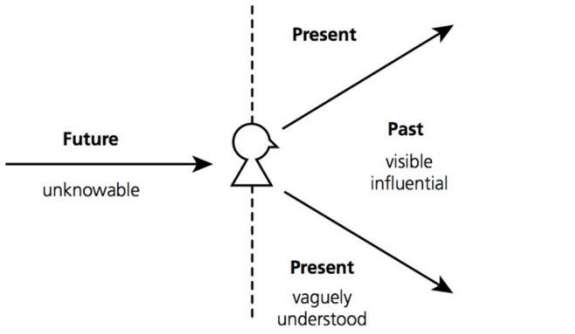


Figure 4.7: Malagasy concept of time. Richard Lewis

The Malagasy consider **the future unknowable. It is behind their head where they do not have eyes. Buses in Madagascar leave, not according to a predetermined timetable, but when the bus is full.**

The situation triggers the event. Not only does this make economic sense, but it is also the time that most passengers have chosen to leave. **Consequently, in Madagascar stocks are not replenished until shelves are empty, filling stations order gas only when they run dry, and hordes of would-be passengers at the airport find that, in spite of their tickets, in reality everybody is wait-listed. The actual assignation of seats takes place between the opening of the check-in desk and the (eventual) departure of the plane.**

Text from: https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Edward Hall, Gert Hofsteede, Fons Trompenaars, Erin Meyer: perception of time in different cultures

Edward Hall (1914-2009)
is recognized as the founding father of intercultural communications. In his most popular book, The Silent Language, Hall explains his concept of chronemics (how our relationship to time affects communication) and sites many cross-cultural comparisons, among others in planning of buildings and cities.

- **Monochromic time:** In monochromic cultures things happen sequentially and great attention is paid to planning and scheduling.
  -> Examples: Australia, US, UK, Germany
- **Polychromic time:** In polychromic cultures many things happen at once and there is less emphasis on „getting things done" linearly.
  -> Examples: Italy's „L'arte di arrangiarsi" (the art of getting by, the art of making do, i.e. talent of survival mixed with staying grounded and authentic), Spain, Brazil, Argentina.

Geert Hofstede (1928-2020)
is a Dutch social psychologist who focuses his work on the study of cultures across nations and developed the concepts of **short-term** (fast results) and **long-term** orientation (over generations).

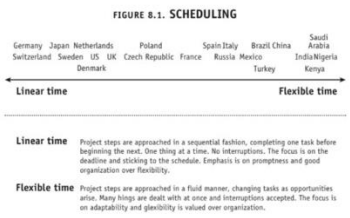
Fons Trompenaars (1952-)
is a Dutch organizational theorist, management consultant, and author in the field of cross-cultural communication.
He is known for the development of his model of national culture differences, which has seven cultural dimensions:

Sequential / linear
Time is linear and can be measured. Schedules, timeliness are more important than relationships.

Synchronic / cyclical
Time is circular and consists of events happening simultaneous
Time „breaths". It is more impor
to dedicate time to people and
ur

be

punctual.

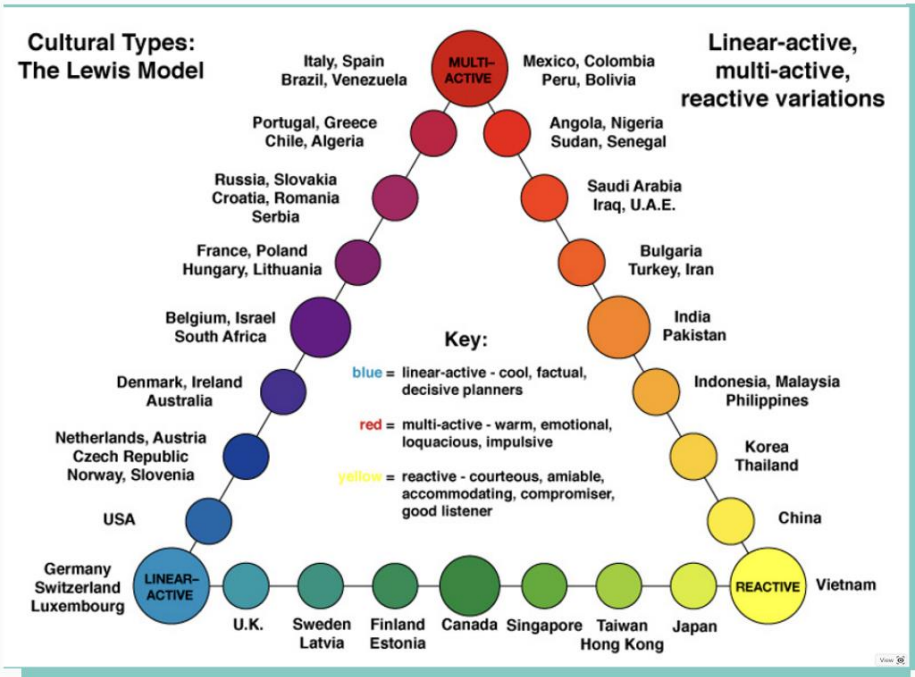


Erin Meyer (1971-)
Author of "The Culture Map" looks at time as **linear vs flexible**. See image to the right.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Richard Donald Lewis

Different perception of time



Richard Donald Lewis (1930-)
is a British polyglot, cross-cultural communication consultant, and author. He developed the Lewis Model of Cross-Cultural Communication
The core of the model classifies cultural norms into Linear-Active, Multi-Active and Re-Active, or some combination.

- Linear-active: **follow tasks sequentially**. Drivers are facts, tasks and efficiency. Communication follows clear structures - „question – answer".
  -> Examples: Northern Europe, North America and related countries.
- Multi-active: **pursue multiple goals simultaneously**. People, relationships and flexibility are the driver. Communication is dialogue-focused and simultaneous. Body language is important. Information is passed on in personal and informal networks.
  -> Examples: Southern European, Latin America, Africa, Middle-East
- Re-active: follow harmonising, solidarity-based strategies. These cultures have a **cyclical understanding for time** following the Buddhist concept of reincarnation. All events, challenges, opportunities will come back eventually. In business, people take a lot of time to make sustainable decisions for the future.

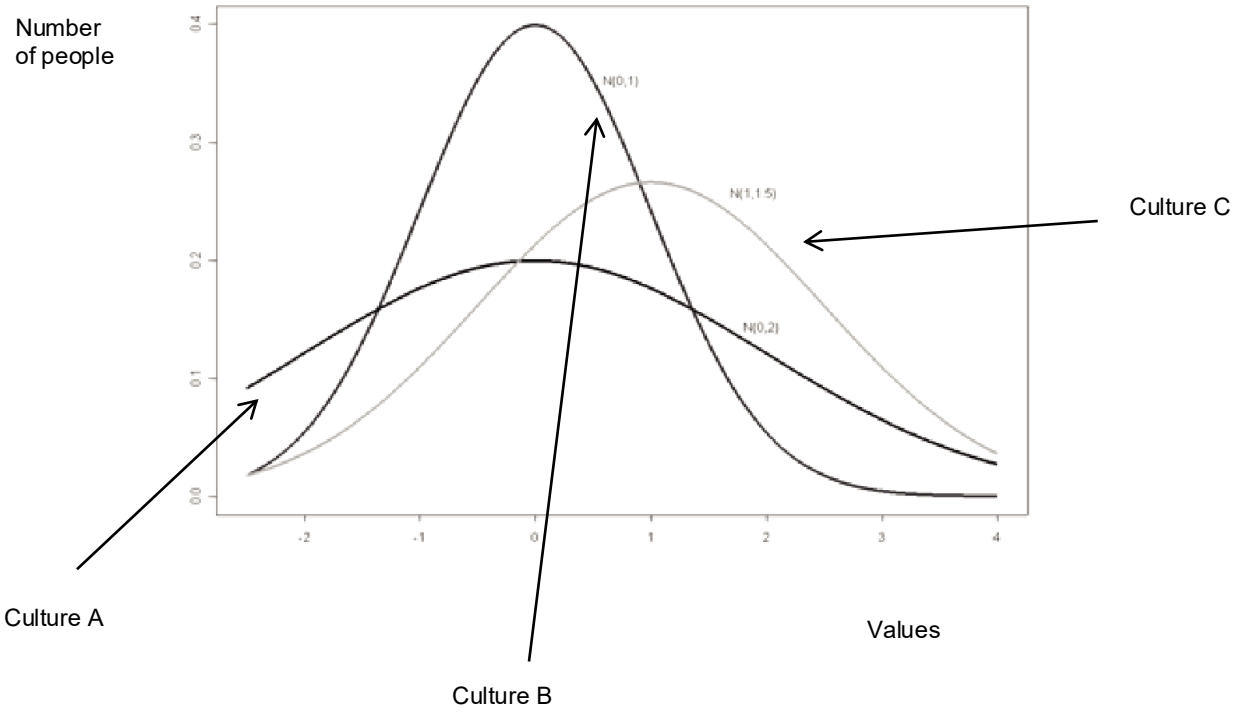
1.	Germans, Swiss	Linear-active
2.	US-Americans	
3.	Scandinavian, Austrian	
4.	Brits, Canadian, NZ	
5.	Australians, South Africans	
6.	Dutch, Belgian	
7.	US subcultures	
8.	French, Belgian	
9.	Czech, Croatian, Hungarian, Slovenian	
10.	North-Italian	
11.	Chilean	
12.	Russians, other Slavish	
13.	Portuguese	
14.	Polynesian	
15.	Spanish, South-Italian	
16.	Indian, Pakistani	
17.	Latin-American, Arabs, Africans	Multi-active

1.	Japanese*	highly re-active
2.	Chinese	
3.	Taiwanese	
4.	Singapore, Hongkong Chinese*	
5.	Finns*	
6.	Korean	
7.	Turkish+	
8.	Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laos	
9.	Malaysian, Indonesian	
10.	Pacific Islands+	
11.	Swedish*	
12.	Brits*	occasionally re-active

* linear-active tendencies
\+ multi-active tendencies

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Alexander Thomas: Cultural standards



According to Thomas, cultural standards are the central characteristics of a culture. They function as an orientation system for perceiving, thinking and acting. Cultural standards can be understood as all kinds of perception, thinking, judgements and actions, that are considered normal, natural, typical and compulsory by the majority of the members of a certain culture. Individual and public behaviour is evaluated and regulated on the basis of these standards.

Routine

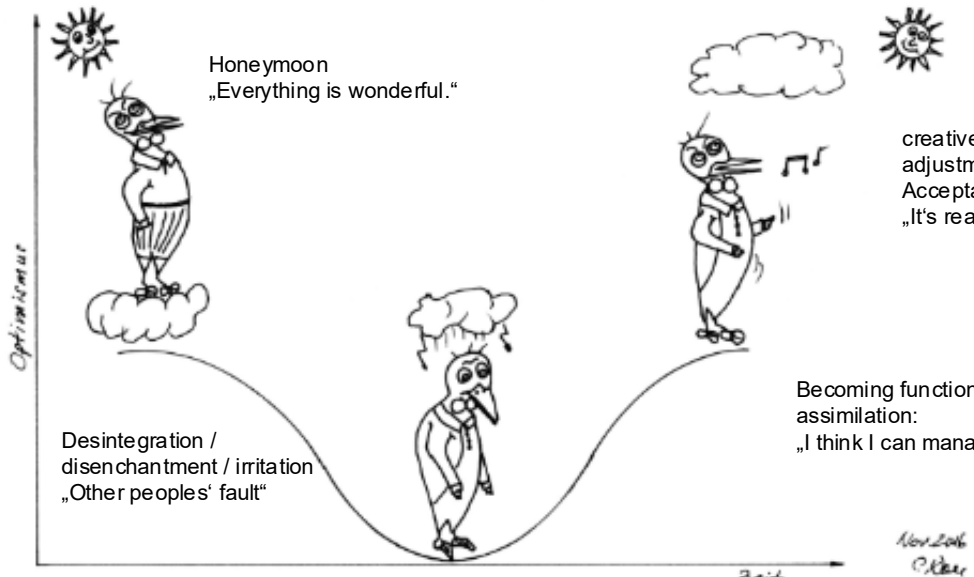
Once socialized, cultural standards are generally no longer consciously perceived by the members of a cultural group. They are routinized and only become apparent in overlapping situations with cultural standards of other cultural groups.

Different categories can be assumed for the classification. These categories can be described as normal, typical, still acceptable or to be rejected. A clear classification into the categories is possible because the cultural standards consist of a central norm and a tolerance range. The central norm indicates the ideal value of behavior that is shared by most members of the cultural group. The tolerance range, on the other hand, constitutes the deviation from the central norm that is still acceptable. The deviation arises from strongly heterogeneous views, which can also prevail within a cultural group. Cultural standards can include clear rules of behavior in addition to general values.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Culture Shock Curve

Willingness
to adapt



Honeymoon:
New experiences are exciting, you feel fortunate for having the opportunity of moving overseas. People are friendly and you smile a lot, you are in control, your own sense of culture is not threatened.
-> Be a tourist! Send postcards home while You‘re feeling so positive. Book a holiday six Months ahead for you to look forward to. Make contacts through clubs and associations Sign up for actuvities, join a language course

Creative independence:
You are generally successful in communications with locals, enjoying bein where you are, adapt at finding things, no longer stereotyping, understanding local customs.
-> Review your lifestyle for areas that need improving, if leaving, tie up any loose ends and farewell people properly, maintain key relationships.

Desintegration:
Daily frustrations can build into disillusionment, the big things of home loom large. Discussions with other expats reinforce the difficulties of the new culture. Self-doubt and depression may set in.
-> Look after yourself, treat yourself to a massage, exercise, avoid alcohol and over-eating, keep a journal, get out and be with people, continue language practice, keep busy, set daily goals, and make the effort to achieve them. List the goals you had for your Time overseas and get started.

Becoming functional:
Feeling in control and positive again about being where you are. Self-understanding and more tolerance of others, a sense of comfort operating in the host culture. You‘re helping others get through their adjustments.
-> Try new things and explore the culture, practice the language, buy some local home furnishings, do the things you intend to do while in this country before it‘s time to leave.

Reintegration:
A sense of standing up to the things and people that are frustrating you, racial generalisations and rejection of host culture, determination to work things out and get things done.
-> Build your network of friends, take that you booked before, continue language study, spend time with people to enjoy being there.

Source: Marx, E., Breaking through Culture Shock

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Case study

Intercultural Case Study: Project Planning & Decision-Making

Teams involved: Germany, Austria, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore

Starting Situation

A German and Austrian engineering consortium is working with an Australian construction company on the planning of a new production hall. The project also involves Malaysian and Singaporean partners....

Scene 1 – Kick-off Meeting

- The Austrian project leader presents a 120-page plan with milestones, responsibilities, and risk analyses.
- The German specialist insists this should be the baseline plan with strict change control.
- The Australian project leader shows a two-page Gantt chart: "This will guide us – no need to overcomplicate."
- Some Australians joke: "That's a lot of paper, mate — we'll need another project just to read it!"
- The Singaporean manager nods approvingly at the detailed plan and asks about approval steps.
- The Malaysian colleague stresses: "We must be sure the director signs off before we proceed."

Tension builds: The DACH team feels their thorough work isn't valued. Australians feel bogged down in paperwork. Malaysians/Singaporeans see the jokes as dismissive of formal process.

Scene 2 – Delivery Delay

A key supplier informs the team of a two-week delay.

- Germany: Calls an urgent change control meeting, insists on freezing dependent tasks.
- Austria: Suggests an informal workaround while documenting changes afterwards.
- Australia: "No worries, we'll just call another supplier."
- Singapore: Pushes to escalate to senior management for formal approval before switching suppliers.
- Malaysia: Warns against bypassing the director, worried about damaging trust and causing loss of face.

Tension escalates:

- The DACH side feels the Australians are reckless.
- Australians feel the others are slowing everything down.
- Singaporeans worry about accountability.
- Malaysians worry about hierarchy and harmony.

Scene 3 – Escalation

The conflict spills into a heated call:

- Germans stress rules and safety.
- Austrians try to mediate but insist on at least some formal process.
- Australians joke about "overthinking."
- Singaporeans emphasise accountability and risk.
- Malaysians express discomfort about open disagreement, preferring to take issues offline with senior figures.

Scene 4 – On-Site Decision Point (Faulty Component)

At the construction site, a component turns out to be faulty.

- German/Austrian project leader: "We must first get technical approval and management sign-off. Otherwise, we cannot proceed."
- Australian site manager: "Why wait? It's safe enough. Let's just repair it and keep going – it saves time."
- Singaporean manager: Voices concern: "If we take this decision without proper approval, who is accountable if something fails later?"
- Malaysian colleague: Avoids direct confrontation, but later suggests privately: "We should check with the director first. Making such a decision here could cause loss of face if it goes wrong."

Tension peaks:

- Germans/Austrians see Australians as careless.
- Australians see Germans/Austrians as rigid.
- Singaporeans see accountability gaps.
- Malaysians are concerned about hierarchy, harmony, and loss of face.

Reflection Questions (for participants)

1. At which moments did the misunderstandings become visible?
2. How do planning style, hierarchy, risk appetite, and communication style differ between the groups?
3. What values are in conflict here?
4. If you were the overall project lead, how could you:
   - define non-negotiable milestones (safety, regulatory, approvals)?
   - allow flexibility (suppliers, sequencing)?
5. What strategies could reduce frustration and build trust across the cultures?

Open Resolution Directions (Contextual)

Scene 1 – Kick-off Meeting: Teams might explore how different levels of detail serve different needs — some require documentation, others prefer quick overviews. The group could consider when each style is most effective.

Scene 2 – Delivery Delay: The delay raises the question: When does a change need formal approval, and when is pragmatism acceptable? Different thresholds for risk become visible.

Scene 3 – Escalation: The heated call highlights contrasting comfort levels with open disagreement vs. maintaining harmony. The team may need to reflect on how to disagree productively while keeping trust intact.

Scene 4 – On-Site Decision Point: The faulty component forces a choice: Decide quickly on site, or wait for approvals? The group could reflect on how accountability, safety, and hierarchy shape such decisions.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Contruction and trade

Intercultural lenses

From Austria/Germany

- Perception of Australians: Seen as too casual and not detailed enough. Flexible rule use and shortcuts may appear careless.
- Typical irritation: "They don't follow proper procedures."
- Learning potential: Germans/Austrians can benefit from adopting a more pragmatic, results-oriented mindset, while still ensuring safety.
- Key insight: It's not about perfect procedure but about safe enough and on-time completion.

From Malaysia/Singapore

- Perception of Australians: Work culture feels very informal and humorous, even with superiors. To Malaysians/Singaporeans, this may seem overly casual or lacking respect.
- Typical irritation: "They joke too much at work, even with bosses."
- Learning potential: Joining the informal style can build trust and rapport, while remembering that responsibility and accountability are still expected.
- Key insight: Hierarchies are flatter, but everyone is expected to speak up and contribute solutions, regardless of role.

Construction & Trade Culture in Australia – Do's & Don'ts

This handout provides an overview of the main cultural characteristics of construction and trade work in Australia, with intercultural perspectives from Germany, Austria, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Topic	Do's ✅	Don'ts ❌
Work Attitude	Be pragmatic and solution-oriented: when a problem comes up, people expect you to find a workable solution, even if it isn't "perfect."	Excessive perfectionism is seen as impractical. If you insist on 100% detail-precision before acting, it slows things down.
Safety Culture	Safety rules (WHS – Work Health & Safety) are important: bring PPE (helmet, glasses, vest, boots), join toolbox talks. Even if not enforced to the letter, you should show you know and respect the rules.	Ignoring rules completely is unacceptable – it can mean heavy fines and loss of trust.
Communication	Speak directly and simply. Clear instructions, not long explanations. Humor and self-irony build trust.	Being too formal or lecturing – long monologues or "know-it-all" attitudes are quickly rejected.
Teamwork	Get involved and show initiative. Respect is earned by helping out and being reliable, not by titles. Most colleagues use first names; tone is casual.	Overemphasizing hierarchy or titles ("I'm the engineer, so…") or avoiding hands-on work comes across as arrogant.
Time	Be punctual and expect early starts (7am is standard). Breaks ("smoko") are important for team spirit.	Being late or skipping breaks is seen as disrespectful. "Working through" breaks goes against team norms.
Pragmatism vs. Rules	Use rules as guidelines, but look for practical solutions. The expectation is a balance of safety and efficiency.	Rigid rule-following when there is a workable shortcut is seen as impractical and "un-Australian."
Social Interaction	Be relaxed and open: talk about sports (Rugby, AFL, Cricket), the weekend, travel, or weather. Jokes and banter are welcome.	Being too serious or withdrawn. Avoid sensitive topics like politics or religion, which break the easy-going tone.

Cultural Contrasts with Australia (Summary)

🇩🇪Germany vs. Australia

👉Germany: strong rule orientation, detail-perfection.
👉Australia: pragmatic, solution-focused, humorous – rules exist, but are applied flexibly as long as the outcome is safe and works.

🇦🇹Austria vs. Australia

👉Austria: structured planning, careful preparation, formal respect for procedures.
👉Australia: relaxed planning, flexible rules, informality and humor are part of everyday work.

🇲🇾Malaysia vs. Australia

👉Malaysia: hierarchy and authority respected, formal communication, careful attention to senior approval.
👉Australia: flatter hierarchy, informal tone, responsibility lies with individuals regardless of title.

🇸🇬Singapore vs. Australia

👉Singapore: efficiency through clear processes, respect for hierarchy, precision in execution.
👉Australia: efficiency through pragmatism, flexible approaches, humor and informality woven into teamwork.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Videoconference Etiquette in Australia

Checklist

Do's ✅	Don'ts ❌
Log in on time (1–2 minutes before is fine).	Don't be overly formal (titles like "Mr./Ms." or stiff, bureaucratic language).
Switch on your camera, unless it's a very large group.	Don't keep your camera off permanently, especially if the goal is building team relationships.
Address people by first name – colleagues and managers alike.	Don't give long monologues or dominate – equality is valued.
Start off casually and friendly – small talk about the weather, weekend, sports, or travel works well.	Don't speak negatively about managers or colleagues – Australians place high value on "mateship" (camaraderie).
Test your audio and tech beforehand (microphone, camera, internet).	Don't brag or emphasize hierarchy – quickly seen as uncollegial.
Smart casual look – a clean shirt or polo is often enough.	Don't communicate in overly complicated or indirect ways – clarity beats diplomatic detours.
Give everyone a fair chance to speak – don't interrupt, listen actively.	
Keep your wording short and direct, but stay friendly.	
Allow a bit of humor, as long as it's respectful.	

Intercultural lenses

Seen from Austria

Formality & Titles
Australians skipping titles and using first names straight away feels especially casual to Austrians. Titles like "Mag.", "Dr.", or "Ing." are taken seriously and show respect. Dropping them can feel dismissive

Dress Code
Australians showing up in polos may seem underdressed – Austrians often expect a jacket and shirt in professional contexts.

Communication Style
Australians' relaxed, humorous exchanges can feel less structured compared to the Austrian preference for clarity and thoroughness.

Hierarchy
Australians treat managers almost like equals, which may feel unusual in Austria, where formal respect for hierarchy is stronger. and on-time completion.

Seen from Malaysia

Formality & Respect
Australians' use of first names right away may feel overly casual to Malaysians, where polite distance shows respect.

Camera & Participation
Australians expect equal participation, which can feel demanding for Malaysians, where juniors normally wait to be invited to speak.

Humor & Casual Tone
Australians lighten meetings with humor, which may seem unprofessional to Malaysians in formal business contexts.

Hierarchy
Australian flatness in hierarchy can be perceived as disrespectful by Malaysians, who are used to strong deference to senior roles.

Seen from Germany

Formality & Titles
Australians dropping formal titles may come across as disrespectful to Germans, who are accustomed to 'Herr/ Frau' and professional titles.

Dress Code
Polo shirts can seem too informal to Germans, who typically associate professionalism with business attire.

Communication Style
Germans may perceive Australian conversation as too short and casual – lacking the detail and structured arguments they value.

Hierarchy
Flat Australian hierarchies may look like a lack of respect to Germans, who expect visible acknowledgment of authority.

Seen from Singapore

Formality & Respect
Singaporeans may view Australians' immediate use of first names as too informal, since respectful address is standard in Singaporean business culture.

Camera & Participation
Australians expect everyone to speak up, which can feel uncomfortable in Singapore, where juniors are more reserved in front of seniors.

Humor & Casual Tone
The casual humor Australians bring into business meetings can feel risky or distracting to Singaporeans, who often keep meetings serious and efficient.

Hierarchy
Australians treat leaders as peers, which can strike Singaporeans as a lack of proper respect for authority.

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Email Etiquette in Australia

Checklist

Do's ✅	Don'ts ❌
Keep it short and to the point – clarity matters more than formality.	Don't overuse titles or very formal language ("Dear Mr. Smith" / "Yours faithfully") unless writing to government or very official contacts.
Use first names (even with managers or senior staff).	Don't get straight to the point without a line or two of warm-up.
Start with a friendly, casual greeting ("Hi Alex," or "Hello Sam,").	Don't write long, dense emails – they won't be read carefully.
Add a brief personal touch before business ("How are you?" / "Hope you enjoyed the long weekend").	Don't emphasize hierarchy ("As your manager…") – Australians value equality.
Reply relatively quickly (within 24 hours if possible).	Don't ignore humor or lightness – some informality is expected.
Use a positive, approachable tone.	Don't copy unnecessary people (avoid long CC lists).
End with simple closings ("Cheers," "Best," "Thanks").	

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Useful internet links

Sydney stereotypes
https://bigthink.com/strange-maps/524-here-be-bogans-four-miniatures-of-sydney-stereotypes/

Geert Hofstede Culture Dimension
https://www.theculturefactor.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=australia%2Caustria%2Cgermany

Life Swap Episode 6 – Just Sharon
https://vimeo.com/128709025

How good is Australia – Honest Government Ad
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6vvpQEaRdk

Australian values and workplace culture
https://www.migration.sa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-08/Australian-Values-and-Workplace-Culture.pdf

Life Swap Episode 9 – She'll be right
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiWgJcomGro

Slang: What Aussies call other Aussies
https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/history-culture/2013/05/slang-what-aussies-call-other-aussies/

Stella Ting-Toomey – Face negotiation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bQJcMas_dnw

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer

Useful internet sources

Fons Trompenaars: Riding the waves of culture – peaches and coconuts
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hmyfjKjcbm0

Local lingo
https://www.australian-information-stories.com/australian-slang.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWh9IGFbvls
https://nomadsworld.com/aussie-slang/
https://theconversation.com/togs-or-swimmers-why-australians-use-different-words-to-describe-the-same-things-52007

Australian food
https://australianfoodtimeline.com.au/tag/1770s/
Happy little vegemites: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5r3HAJh8es
Tim Tam Slam: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k8hEo4N8Nhs
https://nomadsworld.com/australian-food/
https://www.contiki.com/six-two/article/iconic-australian-foods/

Aboriginal culture
https://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/culture-and-empowering-communities
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cf-dK8HFP2c
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUIgkbExn6I
https://www.britannica.com/topic/Australian-Aboriginal/Beliefs-and-aesthetic-values
https://www.geo.de/reisen/reise-inspiration/aborigine--wo-man-in-australien-die-kultur-der-aborigine-sehen-kann-30518590.html

© Silke Noll, Certified Intercultural Trainer
and Accredited Kanban Trainer