

Intercultural awareness report halls low and high context cultures

[Science](#), [Anthropology](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Explain Hall's low and high context cultures and Hofstede's cultural dimensions and discuss the relevance such theories have in developing appropriate business relations with other cultures. Your answer should also evaluate criticisms encountered by their respective cultural frameworks. Justify your answer with specific business related examples. This essay will be discussing, Halls theory of High and low cultural context and Hofsted's cultural dimensions will also be discussed, along with their relevance to the work place and business relations. When dealing with different cultures one must be careful with interactions. The wrong type of interaction could signal trouble for business's. " Wrong gifts may tick of potential trading partners" Philippidis (1999). According to Hall (1976) people of european heritage believe that what they live in is a word world. This is viewed as a mistake by Hall because words do , not always mean the way they are said or written and can easily be misinterpreted. In a high context communication situation, the subject already knows most of the information and there is very little hidden in the subtext of the message. In contrast in low context communication most of the information is coded and is not readily available in a person. For example if you were to visit a hotel in Japan or China, if you were from a low context culture, you could find yourself being moved around or asked to do things that would confuse you. You could find yourself upset with the lack of communication. The answer would be in Japan when a person joins a company, the person is seen to belong in a family way. Due to being seeing as a part of the family, your host's will not feel the need to explain what is going on to you. You would be expected to follow the crowd to be able to understand what is happening, like a family. With high context

cultures the meaning is often within the context of the communication and how it is delivered (Hall, 1976). In a high context culture you are often expected to understand the meaning of words or social cue's through the context of the message. High and low cultures can be set apart on four different elements, which would be emotions in a close relationship, use of nonverbal communication , the directness of the message conveyed and the use of digital or analogous language. In a situation involving high context communication, emotions are normally involved, on the other hand low context situations are less personal and use logics more (Hall, 1998) For example the Japanese like to offer tea and snacks to a guest to their home. The Japanese like their guests to feel comfortable and try and provide a hospitable atmosphere, this also applies to business building relationships with potential business partners, belonging comes before the business. Europeans tend to be more direct with their communication and like to start with business as soon as possible. There is no real emotional attachment with western business interactions, its just work. In western interactions rationale is preferred over emotions, people are encouraged to negotiate with a clear mind, without emotion clouding judgement. In accordance with Hall (1976) the Japanese would not be direct with their words or messages when they communicate. For example a high context individual would say they are hungry, but would not leave to go and get any food. For a low context individual it will mean that they're friend is going to just stay hungry, but for a high context individual its a cue to either buy food for their colleague or offer to buy some food for them. When dealing with business's one must be sensitive to different cultural cues. Giving the wrong gift such

as a clock to a Chinese business partner could potentially cost you a deal. In reverse with Asian high context cultures, prolonged indirectness could confuse, irritate or show lack of commitment when dealing with a low context culture. It is vital that whatever culture is being dealt with is understood and understand that the deliverance and context of a message is as important as the message itself. Two examples would be Japan having a high context culture and working to polychronic time and also has low territoriality in relation to space. In contrast to Japan, Germany has a low context culture and works to mono-chronic time and has high territoriality in relation to space. In conclusion a low context or high context culture is delivered through communication, the differences between the two are in a digital or an analogous language, directness and indirectness and verbal and non verbal behaviours. Although Hall's theories do not take into account that cultures change and within every culture there are individuals who may not think or behave in the same way as others. Hofstede created one of the most referred to studies of how values in the work place can be influenced by culture. Hofstede's model of cultural differences was created with the aim to communicate the differences in cultures between workers. Hofstede's models stated how cultures are different from each other, he created a model which consisted of 5 aspects. (David H. Brown, Alasdair I. Macbean, 2001) Distance/Power Individuality Masculinity Avoidance/Uncertainty High Long term orientation The power dimension talks about inequality and equality between people in a social situation. When a country has high power distance it accepts and condones inequality amongst people. Such a society would often follow a caste system where moving upwards can be very

limited. A low power distance country does not put importance on the differences people such as wealth. Equality will often be seen as a joint effort from the society. When working abroad or with other cultures one has to be aware of their opportunities to be able to rise in the company or their position. For example if you were to send a representative from your company to another country, you have to make sure you send some one of equal stature as to not insult the other party. With individuality the degree to which a persons collective and individual achievements are focused upon. Countries with a high individualism score tend to have individuals who form relationships with big groups of people, but the relationships don't tend to last. Whereas countries with a low individualism score tend to have more of a community relationship. Masculinity has to do with the degree a country reinforces or does not reinforce the masculine role in their country. A country with a high masculinity score, tends to have males dominating the work place and have a significant part of the society's power and structure. A country with a low masculinity score has less of a difference in equality between the genders, females are often treated as equals. When dealing with a culture with a high masculinity score, caution must be made with how females within your company interact with the men. Great offence could be taken by having a female at a meeting or giving orders, in countries such as in Saudi Arabia. With the avoidance and uncertainty score, a country that has a high uncertainty avoidance score, may have a low threshold towards ambiguity, which could mean it is normally driven by a rule orientated society and follows established and defined laws and controls. A low uncertainty avoidance score shows a country, that is not concerned with

ambiguity and tends to tolerate variety and experimentation a lot more. This society is less focused on rules and accepts changes and is more than willing to take risks. High long term orientation is where a society attaches great importance to the future. They're values are geared towards rewards. In short term orientated societies the values promoted are related to the past and present. Hofstede's studies shows that mainland china is more of a collectivist community, whereas the british culture is more individualist. Studies found that mainland china ascribe status within the community based on several factors such as gender, age and social connections. Whereas british culture tends towards achieved status based on a persons personal achievements. Below is a table of the finding buy Hofstede of some asian countries in comparison to Britain. | Individualism index | Uncertainty avoidance index | Power distance index | | The PRC | 36c | 117c | 56c | | Honk Kong | 25 | 29 | 68 | | Taiwan | 17 | 8 | 58 | | Singapore | 20 | 69 | 74 | | Great Britain | 89 | 35 | 35 | |(Hofstede , 2001) There are a few disadvantages to Hofstede's key 5 principals, first of all there are different cultures living within every country. The average score that a country may come up with does not reflect or make up every single person in the country. The model of cultural dimension is more accurate when applied to a population as a whole, but it doesn't take into account the individuals who do not fit into the population. You can not also be sure if the data collected is correct. The data is collected through questionnaires and questionnaires have they're limits so the data can not be taken as accurately. Being able to tell if the data is on par with the country can also often prove difficult. Cultures often change due to different influences, therefore it can not be verified if the data is up to

date or not. Both theories attempt to categorize and individuals and societies based on certain cultural beliefs (Riad A. Ajami, G. Jason Goddard , 2006). Both theories also seem to simplify culture and makes such a complex subject seem less intricate. Halls and Hofstede's theories are both very useful in helping understand cultures, they are only one measure of culture and do not take several other factors into consideration. Other factors that may not have been considered, are influences by foreigners and other cultures. Both Halls and Hofstede's theories, especially when asian cultures are concerned are often applied to other asian countries, that do not share the exact same culture. This could be a problem because national culture is not learned it is inherited and therefore reflects the local history. (Bond, 1996). References David H. Brown, Alasdair I. MacBean (2005). Challenges For China's Development: An Enterprise Perspective. London: Routledge. 121. Hall, E. T (1976) Beyond Culture NY: Anchor Books Hall, E. T (1998). The power of hidden differences. In M. J. Bennet (Ed), Basic concepts of intercultural communication (p. 53 - 67) Maine: Intercultural Press Inc. Hofstede's consequences: The impact of his work on consulting and business practices, An Executive Commentary by John W. Bing, Academy of Management Executive,(2004) Vol. 18, No. 1 Philippidis, A (1999). The psychological process underlying Japanese assertive behaviour : Comparison of Japanese with Americans. International journal of intercultural relations (p. 47-56) Riad A. Ajami, G. Jason Goddard (2006). International Business: Theory and Practice. USA: M. E Sharp. 216.