

High and low context culture essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



In a high context culture, many things are left unsaid, letting the culture explain. Words and word choice become very important in higher context communication, since a few words can communicate a complex message very effectively to an in-group (but less effectively outside that group), while in a lower context culture, the communicator needs to be much more explicit and the value of a single word is less important.

Association

- Relationships depend on trust, build up slowly, are stable. One distinguishes between people inside and people outside one's circle.
- How things get done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process.
- One's identity is rooted in groups (family, culture, work).
- Social structure and authority are centralized; responsibility is at the top. Person at top works for the good of the group.

- Relationships begin and end quickly. Many people can be inside one's circle; circle's boundary is not clear.
- Things get done by following procedures and paying attention to the goal.
- One's identity is rooted in oneself and one's accomplishments.
- Social structure is decentralized; responsibility goes further down (is not concentrated at the top).

- High use of nonverbal elements; voice tone, facial expression, gestures, and eye movement carry significant parts of conversation.
- Verbal message is implicit; context (situation, people, nonverbal elements) is more important than words.
- Verbal message is indirect; one talks around the point and embellishes it.
- Communication is seen as an art form—a way of engaging someone.
- Disagreement is personalized. One is sensitive to conflict

expressed in another's nonverbal communication. Conflict either must be solved before work can progress or must be avoided because it is personally threatening. Interaction

- Low use of nonverbal elements. Message is carried more by words than by nonverbal means.
- Verbal message is explicit. Context is less important than words.
- Verbal message is direct; one spells things out exactly.
- Communication is seen as a way of exchanging information, ideas, and opinions.
- Disagreement is depersonalized. One withdraws from conflict with another and gets on with the task. Focus is on rational solutions, not personal ones. One can be explicit about another's bothersome behavior.

Territoriality

- Space is communal; people stand close to each other, share the same space. Territoriality
- Space is compartmentalized and privately owned; privacy is important, so people are farther apart. Temporality
- Everything has its own time. Time is not easily scheduled; needs of people may interfere with keeping to a set time. What is important is that activity gets done.
- Change is slow. Things are rooted in the past, slow to change, and stable.
- Time is a process; it belongs to others and to nature.

Temporality

- Things are scheduled to be done at particular times, one thing at a time. What is important is that activity is done efficiently.
- Change is fast. One can make change and see immediate results.
- Time is a commodity to be spent or saved. One's time is one's own. Learning

- Knowledge is embedded in the situation; things are connected, synthesized, and global. Multiple sources of information are used. Thinking is deductive, proceeds from general to specific.
- Learning occurs by first observing others as they model or demonstrate and then practicing.
- Groups are preferred for learning and problem solving.
- Accuracy is valued. How well something is learned is important. Learning

- Reality is fragmented and compartmentalized. One source of information is used to develop knowledge. Thinking is inductive, proceeds from specific to general. Focus is on detail.
- Learning occurs by following explicit directions and explanations of others.
- An individual orientation is preferred for learning and problem solving.
- Speed is valued. How efficiently something is learned is important.

EXAMPLE:

I think that the Philippines, in general, acquire a high context culture. We have developed some words and gestures that only we Filipinos can understand. For example, we are used in saying the following phrases:

“ kunin mo nga yun ano”

“ diba may ano si ano kay ano?”

“ okay na ba yung ano?”

We always use the word “ ano” and we can still manage to understand what the other is talking about.

Aside from verbal communication, we also create lots of non-verbal messages that foreigners would have a hard time understanding. For example, the use of our mouth in pointing directions, that is a culture of the Filipinos, but if a foreigner will ask for directions, we say it accurately and with details.