

Chapter 4:

Communicating Across Cultures

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Chapter Learning Goals

1. Recognize the cultural variables in the communication process and what factors can cause “noise” in that process.
2. Develop an awareness of differences in non-verbal behaviors, context, and attitudes and how they affect cross-cultural communication.
3. Understand the complexities of Western-Arab communications.
4. Be aware of the impact of IT on cross-boarder communications.
5. Learn how to successfully manage cross-cultural communications.



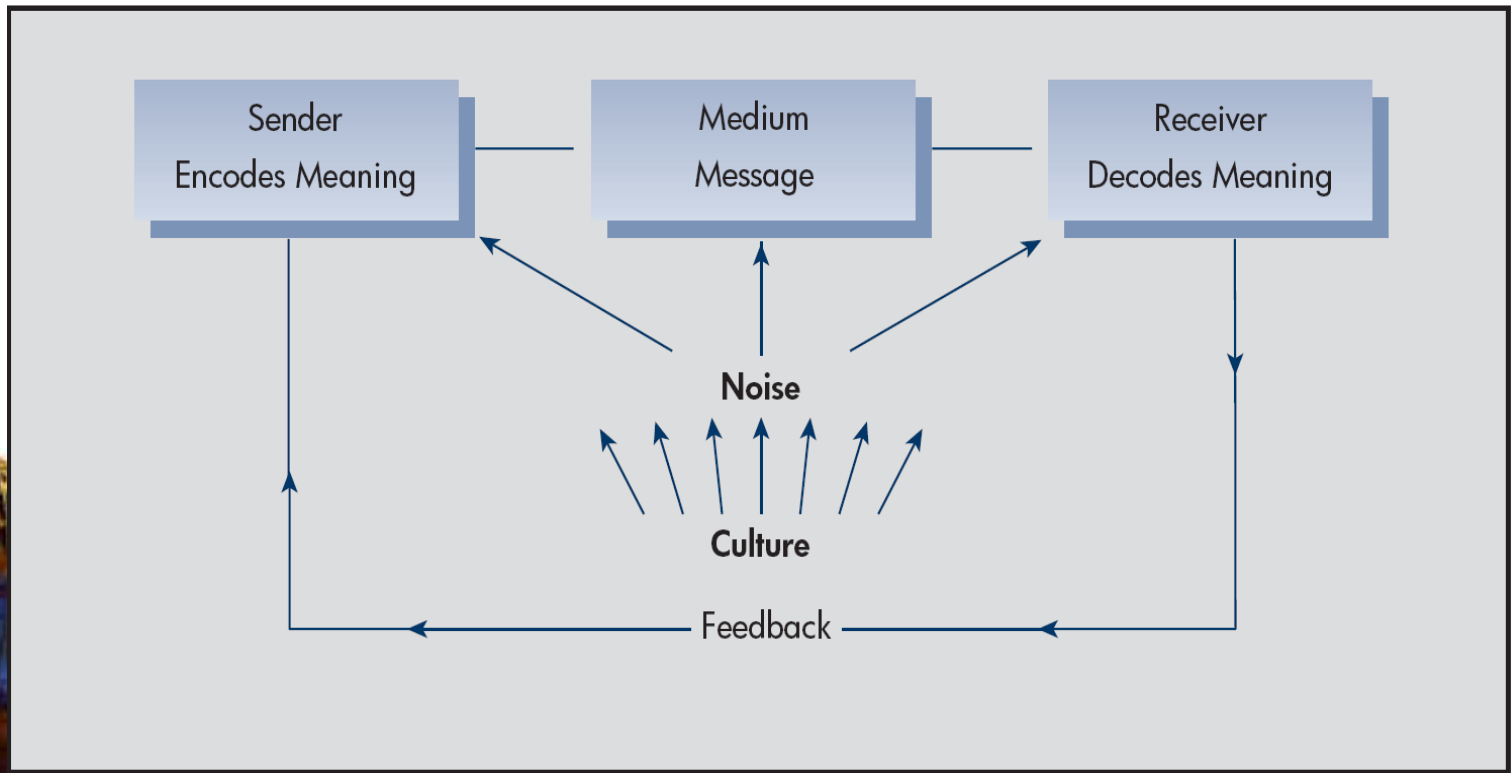
Opening Profile: Google's Internet Communications Clash with European Culture

- Google expansion in Europe and is now getting caught in a cultural web of privacy laws.
- Google's plan to introduce "Street View" is challenged by the privacy laws in Switzerland and Germany.
- The EU has fired a warning shot across the bows of search-engine companies.
- The EU's Article 29 Data Protection Working Group is contesting Google's practices of holding personal information about its customers and would institute policy changes related to Google's server.



The Communication Process

EXHIBIT 4-1 The Communication Process



Cultural Noise in the Communication Process

Behavior	Attribution
American: “How long will it take to finish this report?”	American: I asked him to participate. Greek: He is the boss. Why doesn't he tell me?
Greek: “I don't know, How long should it take?”	American: He refuses to take responsibility. Greek: I asked for an order.



The Culture-Communication Link: Trust in Communication

- **Business transactions based on long-standing versus arm's length relationships**
- **High propensity to trust:**
 - Nordic countries
 - China
 - Canada
 - United States
 - Britain
- **Low propensity to trust:**
 - Brazil
 - Turkey
 - Romania
 - Slovenia and Latvia



The Culture-Communication Link:

The Globe Project

High
Performance
Orientation:
United States

- Present objective information directly and specifically

Low
Assertiveness:
Sweden

- Two-way discourse and friendly relationship

High Human
Orientation:
Ireland

- Avoid conflict, be supportive



Cultural Variables in Communication

Attitudes

Stereotyping

Social
Organization

United Auto
Workers
(UAW)

Thought
Patterns

The meaning
of double
lines



Cultural Variables in Communication

Roles

Decision making
and Responsibility

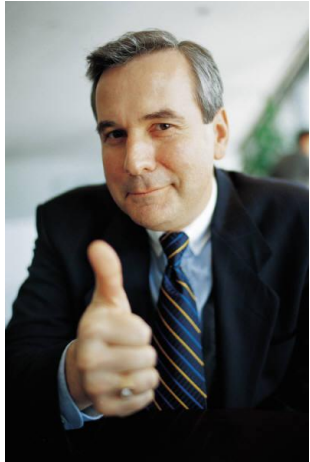
Language

“come out of the
grave with Pepsi”
When “yes” doesn’t
mean “yes”



Cultural Variables in Communication

Nonverbal Communication



- **“A picture is worth a thousand words.”**
- **Subtle messages account for between 65 to 93 percent of interpreted communication.**
- **Minor variations in body language, speech rhythms, and punctuality often cause mistrust and misperception of the situation among cross-cultural parties.**

The Media for Nonverbal Communication

- **Kinesic behavior**—communication through body movements
- **Proxemics**—the influence of proximity and space on communication—both personal space and office space or layout
 - **High-contact cultures:** prefer to stand close and to experience a “close” sensory involvement
 - **Low-contact cultures:** have a “distant” style of body language
- **Paralanguage**—how something is said rather than the content



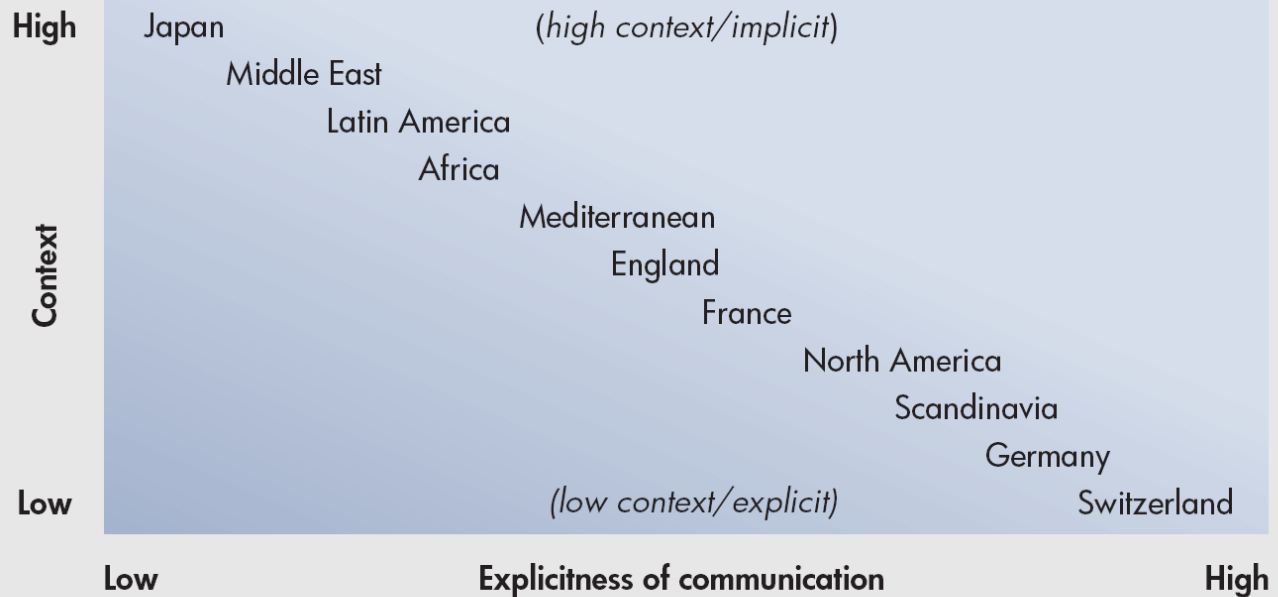
The Media for Nonverbal Communication

- **Object language/material culture**—the way we communicate through material artifacts
 - **Monochronic cultures** (Switzerland, Germany, United States): time is experienced in a linear way
 - **Polychronic cultures** (Latin Americans, Arabs): tolerate many things happening simultaneously and may focus on several things at once



Context

EXHIBIT 4-4 Cultural Context and Its Effects on Communication



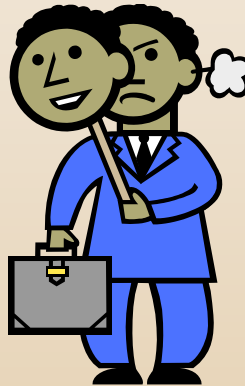
SOURCE: Based on information drawn from Edward T. Hall and M. R. Hall, *Understanding Cultural Differences* (Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1990); and Martin Rosch, "Communications: Focal Point of Culture," *Management International Review* 27, no. 4 (1987): 60.

Management Focus: Oriental Poker Face

- “Oriental poker face” and “idiotic Asian smile”



- American mask of confidence



Comparative Management in Focus: Communicating with Arabs

- Arabs are quick to “sound off”
- Communication is built on friendship, honor, hospitality
- Arabs are high-contact communicators
- Time is the key in communication process



Communication Channels



Information systems



Speed of information
flow and use



Informal sources of
information



Example

Japanese Ningensei vs.
American Adversarial

Information Technology: Going Global and Acting Local

- Global reach does not necessarily mean global business
- The Web is interpersonal, but may require greater cultural sensitivity
- There is a predicted annual growth rate of 70 percent for non-English-language sites and usage



Managing Cross-Cultural Communication

- **Develop cultural sensitivity**
 - Anticipate the meaning the receiver will get.
- **Careful encoding**
 - Use words, pictures, and gestures.
 - Avoid slang, idioms, regional sayings.
- **Selective Transmission**
 - Build relationships, face-to-face if possible.
- **Careful decoding of feedback**
 - Get feedback from multiple parties.
 - Improve listening and observation skills.
- **Follow-up actions**



Facilitating Intercultural Communication

Openness

- Open mindedness, tolerance for ambiguity, and extrovertedness



Resilience

- Having an internal locus of control, persistence, a tolerance for ambiguity, and resourcefulness