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**Intellectual Output 1**



**The Language of Negotiations for Engineering Students**

**A guidebook for English learners with theoretical and diverse hands-on activities focusing on innovative cross-cultural communication practice for engineering schools and technical universities. The course embraces diplomatic language, bargaining, active listening, self-assertion practice, and much more. It is based on authentic sources.**

**IO1: LANGUAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS**

**Written by MAŁGORZATA TOMAL**

**SJO AGH UST, KRAKÓW**

***SECTION FOUR***

***DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE***

***PART ONE: HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES***

**STUDENTS**

**I. OBJECTIVES – HOW YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM THE “DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE” SECTIONS:**

ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED ALL TASKS CONTAINED IN THE NEXT TWO LESSONS YOU SHOULD:

* *Expand your knowledge of cultural differences between the so called high and low-context cultures and realize how it affects the business environment communication-wise*
* *Be able to distinguish between the language of negotiations pertaining to each of those cultures*
* *Expand your language capacity related to diplomacy in the business environment*
* *Boost your skills to cope with potential conflicts across high and low-context cultures*

**II. WARM UP QUESTIONS**

1. Could different cultures and civilisations in the world be roughly divided into types? How would you classify them?

2. Can you guess which cultures could be categorized as high-context and which as low-context ones? On what grounds would you classify them as such?

3. What could be the direct and indirect implications of this disparity between cultures, business-wise?

Read the following section to find out if you were right.

**III. DID YOU KNOW?**

The concept of high and low-context cultures was first introduced by the [anthropologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropologist) [Edward T. Hall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_T._Hall) in his 1959 book [*The Silent Language*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Silent_Language&action=edit&redlink=1).

**High-context cultures** often exhibit ***less-direct verbal and nonverbal communication****, utilizing small communication gestures and reading more meaning into these less-direct messages*. **Low-context cultures** do the opposite: ***direct verbal communication is needed*** *to properly understand a message being communicated and it relies heavily on explicit verbal skills*.

Understanding the broad tendencies of predominant cultures can help inform and educate individuals on how to better facilitate communication between individuals of differing cultural backgrounds.

**IV. READING**

**READ THE TEXT AND DO THE FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES.**

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWO TYPES OF CULTURES

(1) In [anthropology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology), **high-context culture and low-context culture** are ends of a continuum of how explicit the [messages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Message) exchanged in a [culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture) are and how important the [context](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Context_(language_use)) in [communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication) is. The continuum pictures how people communicate with others through their range of communication abilities: utilizing [gestures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestures), [body language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_language), verbal or [non-verbal messages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal_communication).

(2) "High-" and "low-"context cultures typically refer to [language groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_family" \o "Language family), [nationalities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationality), or regional communities. However, the concept may also apply to [corporations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporation), [professions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Profession) and other [cultural groups](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_group), as well as to settings, such as [online](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet) and offline communication.

(3) Cultures and communication in which the context of the message is of great importance to structuring actions are referred to as **high context**. High context defines cultures that are usually *relational and collectivist, and which most highlight interpersonal relationships, usually formed in close-knit communities*. Hall identifies high-context cultures as those in which harmony and the well-being of the group is preferred over individual achievement.

(4) In **low context**, members' *communication must be more explicit, direct, and elaborate* because individuals are not expected to have knowledge of each other's histories or background, and communication is not necessarily shaped by long-standing relationships between speakers. Because low-context communication concerns more direct messages, the meaning of these messages is more dependent on the words being spoken rather than on the interpretation of more subtle or unspoken cues.

(5) Cultural contexts are not absolutely "high" or "low". Instead, a comparison between cultures may find communication differences to a greater or lesser degree. Not all individuals in a culture can be defined by cultural [stereotypes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype), and there will be variations within a national culture in different settings. For example, Hall describes how Japanese culture has both low- and high-context situations.

(6) Although the concept of high- and low-context cultures is usually applied in the field of analysing national cultures, it can also be used to describe scientific or corporate cultures, or specific settings, such as airports or law courts. A simplified example mentioned by Hall is that scientists working in exact, or "[hard science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_science)" fields (like [chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemistry) and [physics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physics)) tend to have lower-context cultures: because their knowledge and [models](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_modelling) have fewer variables, they will typically include less context for each event they describe. In contrast, scientists working with [living systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_systems) need to include more context because there can be significant variables which impact the research outcomes.

(7) Culture influences communication style (high/low context) preference. Data was gathered in many countries and the results confirm that "high-context nations prefer the avoiding and obliging conflict styles more than low-context nations, whereas low-context nations prefer the uncompromising and dominating communication style more than high-context nations."

**V. ACTIVITIES**

**A. READING COMPREHENSION. LOOK BACK AT EXERCISES III AND IV AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN PAIRS. The numbers of paragraphs in brackets should be helpful.**

1. What are the main features of high and low-context communication? (“Did you know” Section and Paragraph 7)

2. In anthropology what is the element on which the distinction between cultures is based? (1)

3. Does the concept of context culture refer only to nationalities? (2)

4. How do the features “relational” and “collectivist” refer to the high-context culture? (3)

5. Why is communication more explicit and elaborate in low context? (4)

6. Is there a clear-cut distinction between high and low-context cultures? (5)

7. According to the text, which field will be higher context: hard or living science? (6)

8. Did you personally find any of the information in the text useful or interesting? What impact does this difference have on international business and personal relations? Can you provide some examples?

**B. WITH YOUR PARTNER COMPLETE THE TABLE BELOW, PUTTING ITEMS a-f LISTED BELOW IN APPROPRIATE COLUMNS. EACH TIME JUSTIFY YOUR DECISIONS.**

***a. problem solving, deadlines are important***

***b. group more important than individuals***

***c. relationship-building, time is flexible***

***d. direct, verbal, few non-verbal signals***

***e. individuals more important than the group***

***f. indirect, dislike conflict, avoid saying no***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURE** | **LOW-CONTEXT CULTURE** |
| **Focus of negotiations** |  |  |
| **Communication style** |  |  |
| **Business organization** |  |  |

**VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

Some ideas in Sections III and IV were sourced on 31.08.2020 from:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-context\_and\_low-context\_cultures.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High-context_and_low-context_cultures.%20Accessed%20on%2031.08.2020)

Some ideas in Section V were inspired by The Business B1+ Intermediate, by John Allison with Paul Emmerson, MACMILLAN 2017, pp. 106-107

***SECTION FOUR***

***DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE***

***PART ONE: HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES***

**TEACHER’S**

**I. OBJECTIVES – HOW YOU WILL BENEFIT FROM THE “DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE” SECTIONS:**

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* *Boost your skills to cope with potential conflicts across high and low-context cultures*

**II. WARM UP QUESTIONS**

1. Could different cultures and civilisations in the world be roughly divided into types? How would you classify them?

2. Can you guess which cultures could be categorized as high and low-context ones? On what grounds would you classify them as such?

3. What could be the direct and indirect implications of this disparity between cultures, business-wise?

***Unawareness of the differences could lead to misunderstandings, leading to conflicts or even rupture of business relations.***

Read the following section to find out if you were right.

**III. DID YOU KNOW?**

The concept of high and low-context cultures was first introduced by the [anthropologist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropologist) [Edward T. Hall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_T._Hall) in his 1959 book [*The Silent Language*](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Silent_Language&action=edit&redlink=1).

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(1) In [anthropology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology), **high-context culture and low-context culture** are ends of a continuum of how explicit the [messages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Message) exchanged in a [culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture) are and how important the [context](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Context_(language_use)) in [communication](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communication) is. The continuum pictures how people communicate with others through their range of communication abilities: utilizing [gestures](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestures), [body language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Body_language), verbal or [non-verbal messages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nonverbal_communication).

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(3) Cultures and communication in which the context of the message is of great importance to structuring actions are referred to as **high context**. High context defines cultures that are usually *relational and collectivist, and which most highlight interpersonal relationships, usually formed in close-knit communities*. Hall identifies high-context cultures as those in which harmony and the well-being of the group is preferred over individual achievement.

(4) In **low context**, members' *communication must be more explicit, direct, and elaborate* because individuals are not expected to have knowledge of each other's histories or background, and communication is not necessarily shaped by long-standing relationships between speakers. Because low-context communication concerns more direct messages, the meaning of these messages is more dependent on the words being spoken rather than on the interpretation of more subtle or unspoken cues.

(5) Cultural contexts are not absolutely "high" or "low". Instead, a comparison between cultures may find communication differences to a greater or lesser degree. Not all individuals in a culture can be defined by cultural [stereotypes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotype), and there will be variations within a national culture in different settings. For example, Hall describes how Japanese culture has both low- and high-context situations.

(6) Although the concept of high- and low-context cultures is usually applied in the field of analysing national cultures, it can also be used to describe scientific or corporate cultures, or specific settings, such as airports or law courts. A simplified example mentioned by Hall is that scientists working in "[hard science](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hard_science)" fields (like [chemistry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chemistry) and [physics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physics)) tend to have lower-context cultures: because their knowledge and [models](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_modelling) have fewer variables, they will typically include less context for each event they describe. In contrast, scientists working with [living systems](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Living_systems) need to include more context because there can be significant variables which impact the research outcomes.

(7) Culture influences communication style (high/low context) preference. Data was gathered in many countries and the results confirm that "high-context nations prefer the avoiding and obliging conflict styles more than low-context nations, whereas low-context nations prefer the uncompromising and dominating communication style more than high-context nations."

**V. ACTIVITIES**

**A. READING COMPREHENSION. ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN PAIRS. The numbers of paragraphs in brackets should be helpful.**

1. What are the main features of high and low-context communication? (“Did you know” Section and Paragraph 7)

***“Did you know”: High: less-direct verbal and nonverbal communication, utilizing small communication gestures and reading more meaning into these less-direct messages***

***Low: communication must be more explicit, direct, and elaborate***

***Paragraph 7: Probably in high-context cultures a message or instruction is only suggested and implied, as the instructed person is supposed to read into the message the missing information. Conversely, in low context the briefing is supposed to be clear-cut and very specific, to avoid misunderstanding. Therefore, the conflict styles will differ, too.***

2. In anthropology, what is the element, on which the distinction between cultures is based? (1)

***How explicit the message is.***

3. Does the concept of context culture refer only to nationalities? (2)

***No, it applies also to*** [***language groups***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Language_family)***, regional communities;***[***corporations***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporation)***,***[***professions***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Profession)***and other***[***cultural groups***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_group)***, as well as to settings, such as***[***online***](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet)***and offline communication.***

4. How do the features “relational” and “collectivist” refer to the high-context culture? (3)

***Because in high-context the members form closely-knit communities, where communication is based on very specific, subtle data, understandable only for them.***

5. Why is communication more explicit and elaborate in low context? (4)

***Because there are no relations between the members, and no prior or deeper knowledge of one another.***

6. Is there a clear-cut distinction between high and low-context cultures? (5)

***No, the division is blurred. Some groups can be either, viewed from different perspectives. Also, there can be subgroups within groups.***

7. According to the text, which field will be higher context: hard or living science? (6)

***Living science will be higher context, as more variables and subtle differences will impact the study results.***

8. Did you personally find any of the information in the text useful or interesting? What impact does this difference have on international business and personal relations? Can you provide some examples?

***Students’ own answers. The impact is so serious that business people have to be trained before embarking on cross-cultural business communication***.

**B. WITH YOUR PARTNER COMPLETE THE TABLE BELOW, PUTTING ITEMS a-f LISTED BELOW IN APPROPRIATE COLUMNS. EACH TIME JUSTIFY YOUR DECISIONS.**

***a. problem solving, deadlines are important***

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| **Focus of negotiations** | **A** | **C** |
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| **Business organization** | **E** | **B** |

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