

Bridging Cultures in Business

Workshop GGI '06 World Conference,
New York, NY, USA

KEES VAN OOSTEN

TeekensKarstens Law Firm,
The Netherlands

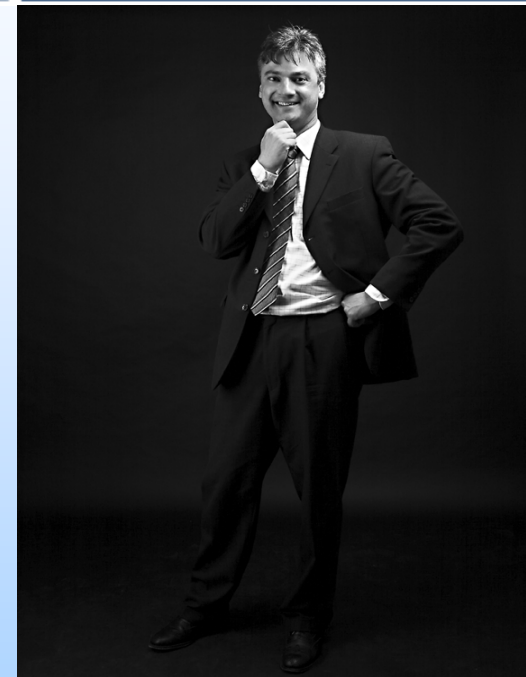
www.teekenskarstens.net

vanoosten@teekenskarstens.nl

Tel +31(0)71 5358069 (direct dl secr)

Fax +31(0)71 5358125

Cell +31(0)6 54661924



Bridging Cultures in Business

- Languages
- Cultural conditioning
- Categorizing cultures
- Time
- Listening Habits
- Manners
- Management and leadership

Languages

- Language straitjacket
- Thought = Internalized Language
- Languages differ in the way things are being expressed
- Perception is different in native speakers from different languages
- In-depth knowledge of another languages provides clearer insight in perception

Use of Language (examples)

- French: quick, exact, logical, arguing, like a rapier
- English: understatement and reservation, vaguenesses, indirect meanings
- Spaniards and Italians: eloquently, expressively, body language
- Germans: logic, laboring on evidence and arguments, like a leopard tank
- Scandinavians: justifying standpoint by pros and cons
- Americans: quick, mobile, opportunistic, wisecracks
- Japanese: what is actually said has hardly any meaning or significance whatsoever

Cultural conditioning

- Inevitable
- Inflexible
- Must know what effects are on others
- concepts and notions: truth, contract, common sense, gossip, silence, humor

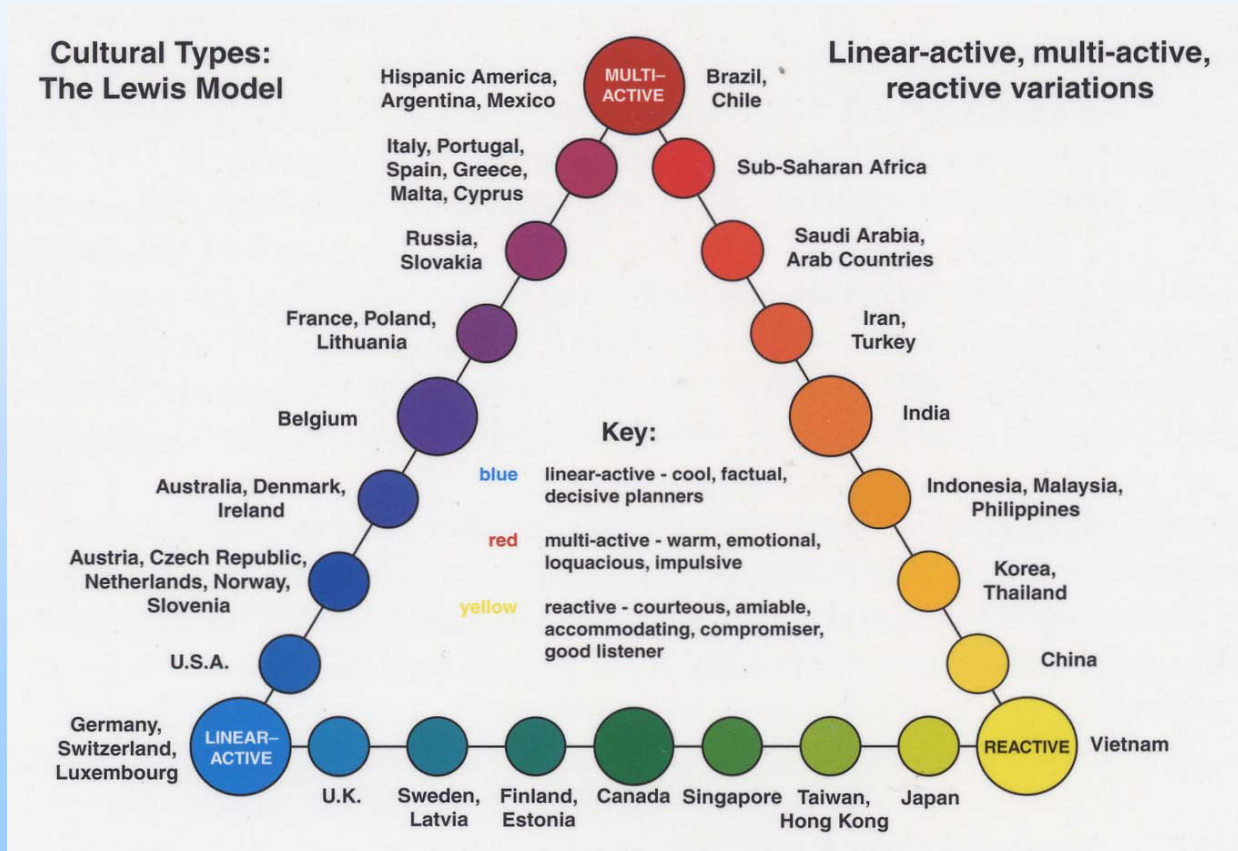
Categorizing Cultures

- Why?
- Linear-active
- Multi-active
- Reactive

Why Categorizing Cultures

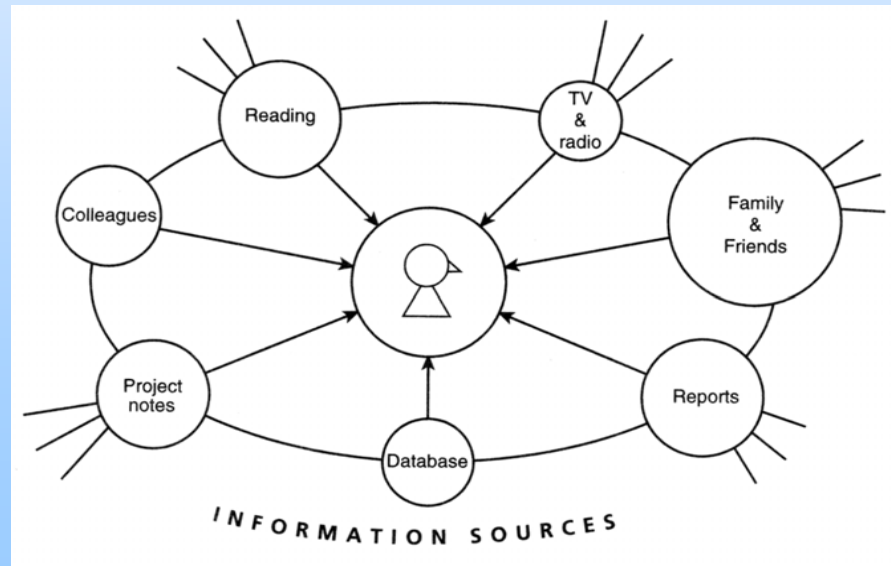
- Predict a culture's behavior
- clarify why people do what they do
- avoid giving offense
- search for some kind of unity
- standardize policies

Linear-Active	Multi-active	Reactive
introvert	extrovert	introvert
patient	impatient	patient
quiet	talkative	silent
minds own business	inquisitive	respectful
likes privacy	gregarious	good listener
plans ahead methodically	plands grand outline only	looks at general principles
does one thing at a time	does several things at once	reacts
works fixed hours	works any hours	flexible hours
punctual	not punctual	puntual
dominated by timetables and schedules	timetable unpredictable	reacts to partner's timetable
compartmentalizes projects	lets one project influence another	sees whole picture
sticks to plans	changes plans	makes slight changes
sticks to facts	juggles facts	statements are promises
gets information from statistics, reference books, database, internet	gets first-hand (oral) information	uses both first-hand and researched information
job-oriented	people-oriented	people-oriented
unemotional	emotional	quietly caring
works with department	gets all around departments	considers all departments
follows correct procedures	pulls strings	networks
accepts favors reluctantly	seeks favors	protects face of other
delegates to competent colleagues	delegates to relations	delegates to reliable people
completes action chains	completes human transactions	reacts to partner
likes fixed agendas	interrelates everything	thoughtful
brief on telephone	talks for hours	summarizes well
uses memoranda	rarely writes memos	plans slowly
respects officialdom	seeks out (top) key person	ultra-honest
dislikes losing face	has ready excuses	must not lose face
confronts with logic	confronts emotionally	avoids confrontation
limited body language	unrestricted body language	subtle body language
rarely interrupts	interrupts frequently	doesn't interrupt
separates social/professional	interveaves social/professional	connects social and professional



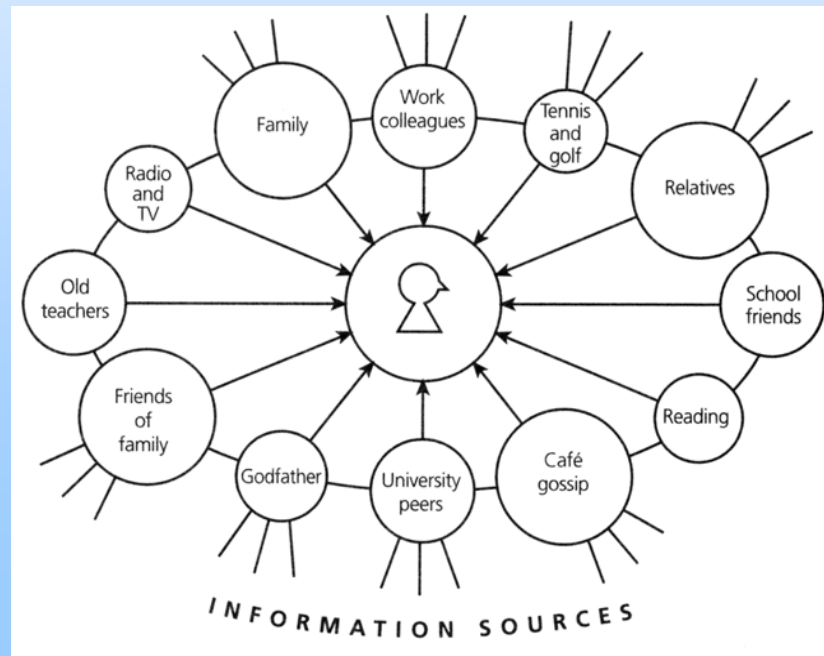
Data-oriented, Dialogue-oriented, and Listening Cultures

- Data-oriented: Germans, Swiss, Finns, North Americans, New Zealanders, South Africans, Scandinavians, British, Australians, Benelux, American Sub-cultures



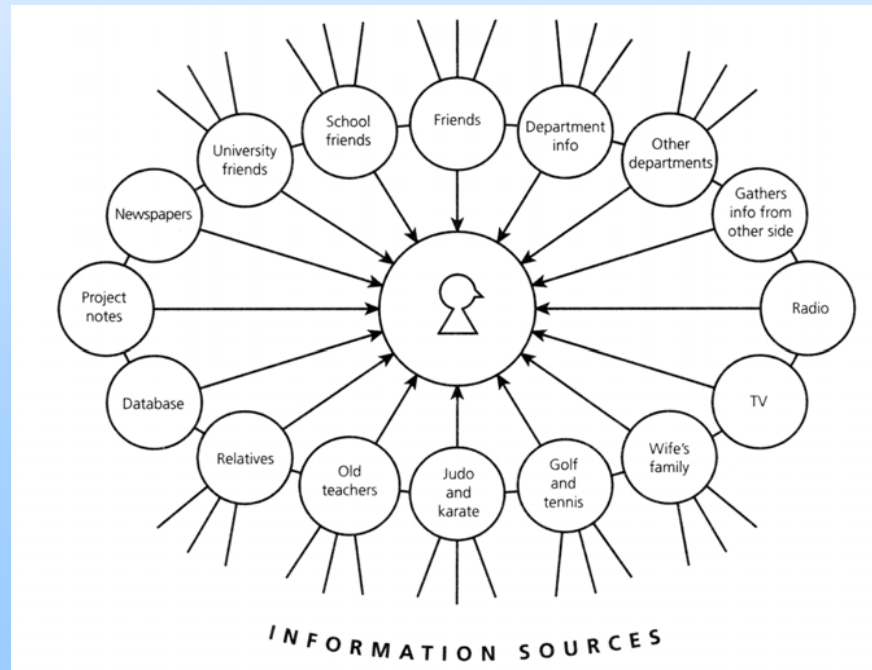
Data-oriented, Dialogue-oriented, and Listening Cultures

- Dialogue-oriented: Latin Americans, Italians, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Mediterranean peoples, Arabs, Africans, Indians, Pakistanis, Chileans, Hungarians, Romanians, Slavs



Data-oriented, Dialogue-oriented, and Listening Cultures

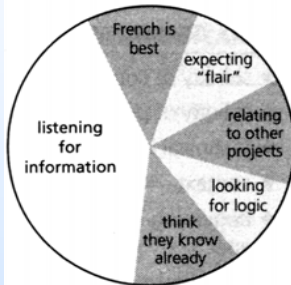
- Listening Cultures: Japan, China, Finland, Singapore, Koreans, Taiwan, Hong Kong



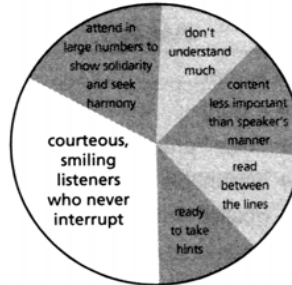
Time

- Linear
- Multi-active
- Cyclic
- Unfolding or unwrapping of time (Japan)
- Past and future

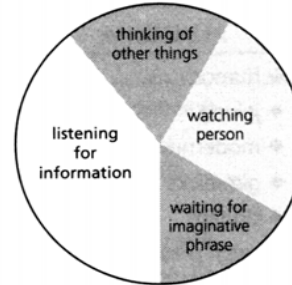
Listening Habits (Examples)



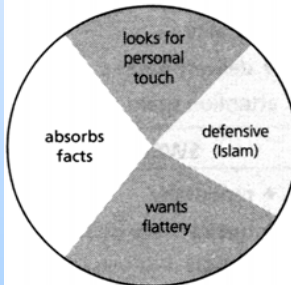
France Listening Habits



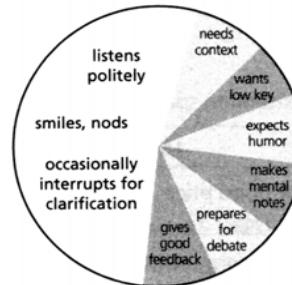
Japan Listening Habits



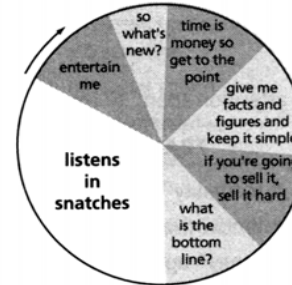
Spain Listening Habits



Arab Listening Habits



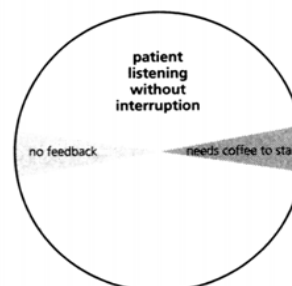
U.K. Listening Habits



U.S.A. Listening Habits



German Listening Habits



Finland Listening Habits



Sweden Listening Habits

Manners or mannerisms

- dining etiquette: arrival time, time spent, eating hours, Bon appetit, number of courses, slurping & belching, compliments, use of chopsticks/cutlery
- cocktails: arrival time, what to drink, how much, stand up or sit down, move about or not, when to leave
- small talk
- “space bubble” (1.2 m in linear active to 0.5 m in multi-actives)
- restaurant manners, paying and tipping
- gift giving and opening
- taboos

Management and leadership (examples)

- France: autocratic, charismatic, logic
- Germany: autocratic but tending to consensus
- Britain: diplomatic, tactful, pragmatic, casual, fair. Class system survives.
- USA: assertive, aggressive, goal and action oriented, ready for change
- Sweden: democratic
- Netherlands: merit, competence and achievement. Consensus is mandatory
- Japan: little involvement in everyday affairs, delegating, open for ideas from the work floor
- Russia: changing profoundly; from working by the “system” to using key people and personal alliances
- Finland: decisive in crunch time, shoulder to shoulder with staff in crises
- Australia: democratic (“mates”)
- Spain: autocratic and charismatic, intuitive
- India: nepotism, family relationships

Check list meetings/negotiations

- √ Intended purpose of meeting
- √ Best venue
- √ Attendees
- √ How long will it last
- √ Room size, seating, temperature, equipment, transportation, accomodation
- √ Appropriate entertainment arrangements
- √ Protocol (formality, dress, agendas)
- √ Which debating style to expect (deductive, inductive, free-wheeling, aggressive, courteous)?
- √ Who is decision maker
- √ How much flexibility can be expected during negotiations
- √ How sensitive is the other side
- √ How much posturing and body language may be expected
- √ What are the likely priorities of the other side
- √ How wide is the cultural gap (logic, religion, political, emotional)
- √ How acceptable are their etics to you
- √ Language problems (common language, interpreters?)
- √ What mechanisms exist for breaking deadlocks or smoothing over difficulties
- √ To what extant may humor, sarcas, wit, wisecracking and impatience be allowed?

Acknowledgements

The contents of this presentation lean for a great deal on
Richard D. Lewis's book
"When Cultures Collide, Leading across Cultures,"
Third Edition,
published in 2006 by Nicholas Brealey International

*Thorough study of this book is strongly recommended
to anyone taking international business seriously*