



# Kis

**International School**  
*Knowledge Inspiration Spirit*

**Cross-Cultural Communication**

# *We and They*

- Father, Mother and me,
  - Sister and Auntie Say
- All the people like us are We,
  - And everyone else is They
  - And they live over the Sea,
  - While we live over the way,
- But – would you believe it? – They look upon We
  - As only a sort of They!

Rudyard Kipling

We and They

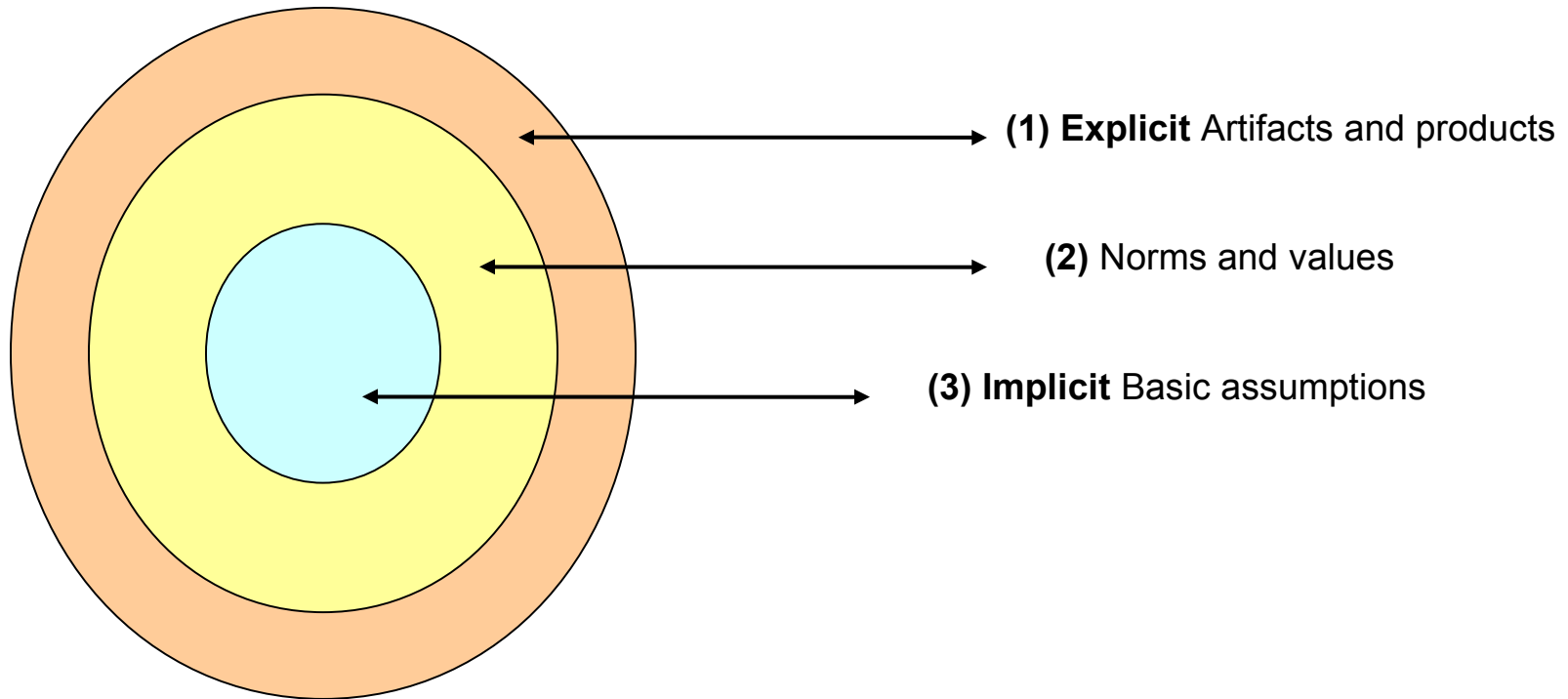
# *Defining Western/Thai*

For the purpose of this study Thai parents are identified as Thai nationals, the native people of Thailand, with an ancestry of either Thai or Thai Chinese descendants. Western teachers are those coming from Western societies. The term Western society “frequently refers to the societies of Europe and their genealogical, colonial, and philosophical descendants”, it is in contrast to Eastern societies; “those of Asian origin, and their descendant cultures” (www.Factindex.com, 2006).

# *What is Culture?*

- **Connected system of meanings**
- **“The software of the mind” (Hofstede 91)**
- **Behaviours learnt over time**
- **The basic assumptions of a culture are implicit and are an inherent part of every day life.**
- **Invokes routine responses and actions that are so intrinsic that they are no longer questioned**

# *Model of Culture*



# *The explicit*

- Language
  - Architecture
  - History
  - Politics
  - Economy
  - Religion
  - The arts
  - Customs/celebrations
- These are accessible to the outsider. Reading, research, investigation and contact with the host community will allow the outsider to feel knowledgeable and understand these aspects of culture.

# *Norms and values*

- Embedded in a culture
- Learnt from childhood
- Taught and modeled behaviours
- Ensure a common union and solidarity emphasize that values are consciously or unconsciously chosen, adopted and developed as a means of defining ideals.
- Define what is 'good from bad' and 'right from wrong'
- Provides the norms, standards and rules by which groups of people define what is acceptable and what is not, how they should behave and how they should not
- Offer familiar, comfortable, common ground for interactions and relationships within a group or culture.

# *Implicit basic assumptions*

- The basic assumptions of a culture are implicit and are an inherent part of every day life. They invoke routine responses and actions, being so intrinsic a part of the culture that they are no longer questioned, but inherited and built into the cultural expectations of shared existence (Trompenaars and Turner, 1997). These assumptions are difficult for members of the group to explain. They are handed down generation to generation (Ting-Toomey, 1999), and are virtually inaccessible to non-members of the culture.

# *Cultures at play*

- **Personal teacher culture**
- **Teacher country culture**
- **School culture/ethos**
- **Parent/student cultures**
- **Host country culture**

# *Defining your own culture?*

- Without identifying and understanding your own culture it is impossible to view other cultures from different perspectives – point of reference
- Identify aspects of your countries culture
- What has worked to shape your culture over time
- Identify aspects of your own culture, what has been added that shapes your personal culture
- What makes you proud of your culture

# *Stereotyping*

- Occurs when one cultural group identifies and labels differences within another culture group
- It assumes that all members of a cultural group act, think, or behave in the same way
- It is often negative, bias and narrow minded

# *Cultural generalizations*

- Ting Toomey (1999), argues that there are differences between “mindless stereotyping and mindful stereotyping”. The first being negative, over exaggerated, laden with bias and providing typecasts, and the later consisting of thoughtful comparisons between ones self and others, placed in context, respecting similarities and difference with an open mind to new information.

# *A framework for comparison*

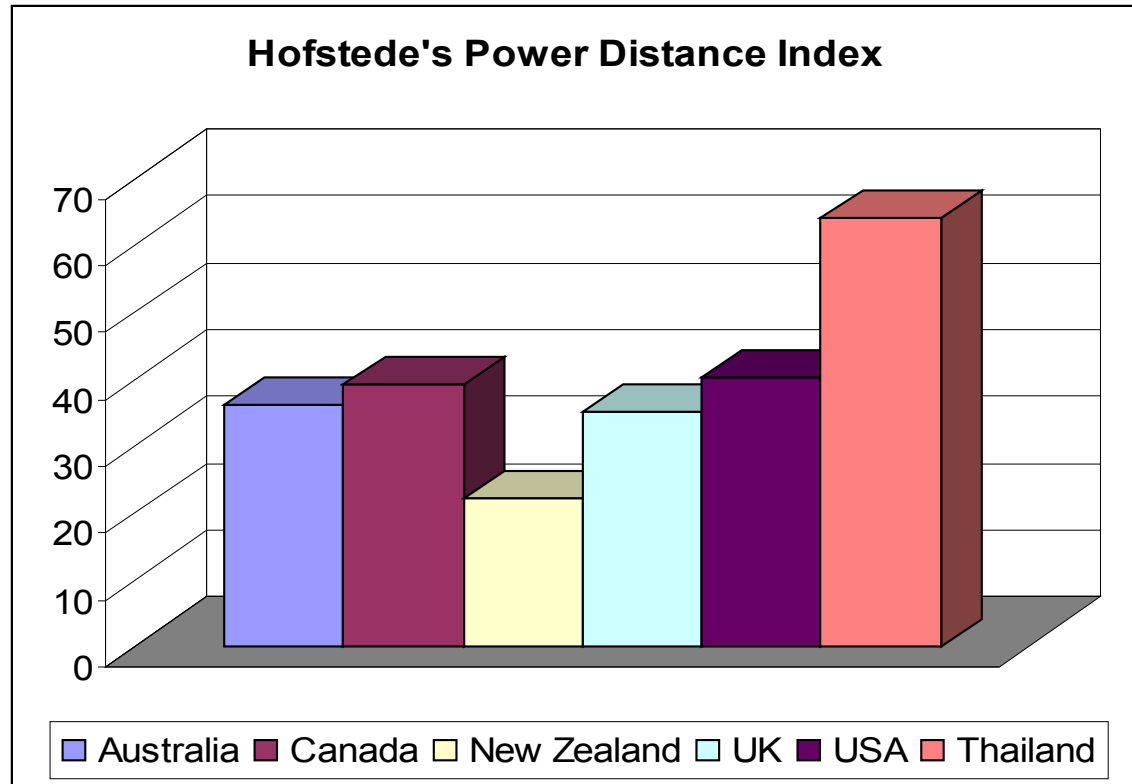
**Hofstede's cultural index: five categories;**

- 1. Individualism-Collectivism (IDV)**
- 2. Power Distance (PDI)**
- 3. Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI)**
- 4. Masculinity-Femininity (MAS)**
- 5. Confucianism-Dynamism (CD)**

# *What is Power Distance?*

- Viewed as a continuum
- outlines “the degree to which power, prestige and wealth are unequally distributed in a culture” (Andersen et al. 03)
- “Power distance dimension focuses on the relationships between people of different status” (Gudykunst, 03)
- helps us to understand the “dependence relationships” within a culture, and identify how power is accepted and received (Hofstede,91)

# Power Distance Index



# *Comparisons*

## **Low Power Distance:**

- **Power legitimate, valued and justified**
- **Shared decision making**
- **Children able to challenge and oppose ideas**
- **Viewed as equals in their own right able and encouraged to inquire and question**
- **Teachers encourage responsibility for own learning, two way communication**
- **Workplace autonomy, negotiation**
- **Western cultures**

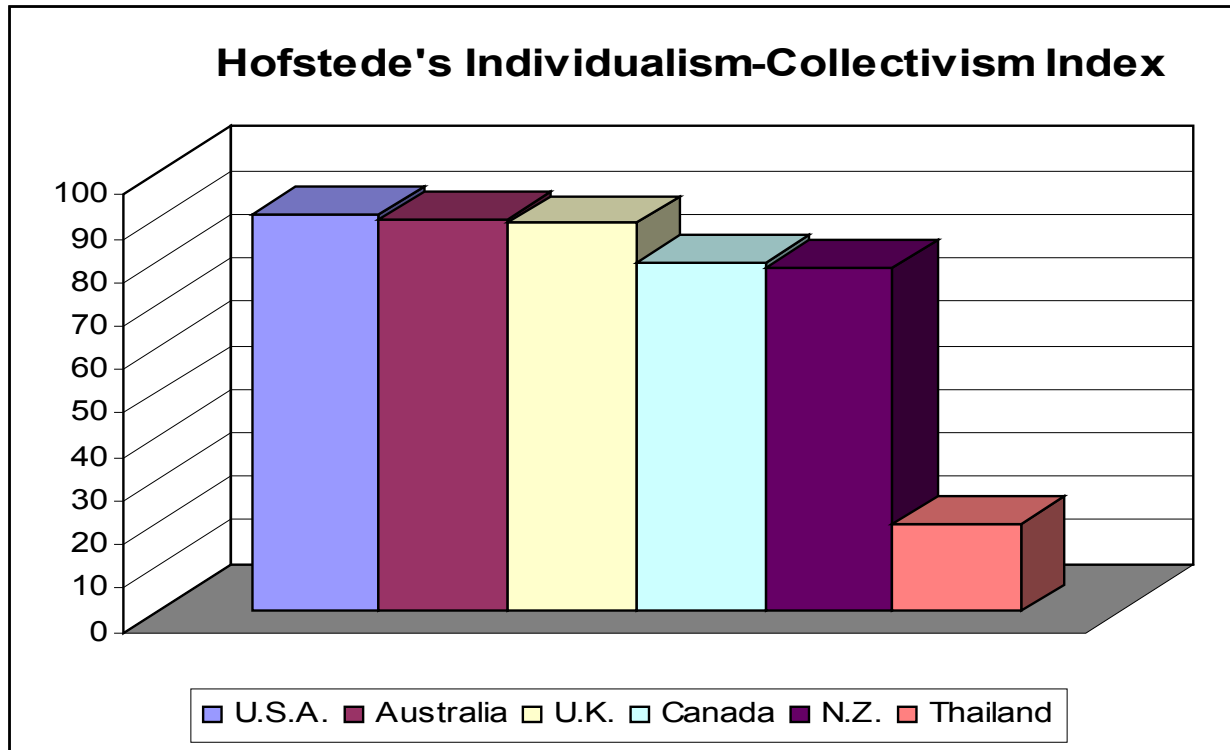
## **High Power Distance:**

- **Power is accepted and expected**
- **Hierarchy exists in relation to their rank**
- **Children are expected to show respect, listen to their elders and obey.**
- **Parents and grandparents take on the role of decision making**
- **teacher responsible for learning and communication in the classroom**
- **Adults at work know their place in the hierarchy, subordinates are told what to do and comply**
- **Asian cultures**

# *What is individualism and collectivism?*

- Represents the degree to which culture emphasizes individual choice and fulfillment over interdependent relations, social responsibility and the well being of the group
- Should be viewed as a continuum with cultures and individuals from cultures being placed along the line
- The difference between “standing out” and “fitting in” (Trumbull et al)
- 70% of the worlds cultures are collectivist
- Individualist cultures tend to be western or those with western influences

# Individualism-Collectivism



# *Comparisons*

## **Individualism:**

- The “I” culture
- Child as an individual
- Independence
- Speak ones mind
- Cognitive skills
- Oral expression
- Learning how to learn
- Parent role is to teach
- Personal property
- Communication is open, direct and to the point
- Low context

## **Collectivism:**

- The “we” culture
- Child is a part of a group
- Interdependence
- Harmony
- Social skills
- Listening to authority
- Learning how to do
- Teachers role is to educate
- Sharing
- Communication is interlaced with non verbal cues, harmonious
- High Context

# *The uniqueness of Thai Culture?*

- **Bunghun** - kindness and sincerity, helping someone, or doing them a favour, in return the receiver is indebted and feels obligated to ensure that they reciprocate the favour (Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 2003)
- **Saving face** - is seen as essential to the maintenance of relationships, the avoidance of conflict, awkwardness and embarrassment, and treating relationships with high regard and deference will ensure harmony and therefore honour between people (Niratpattanasai, 2004).
- **Sam-ruam** is a deep rooted value, meaning that anger should not be expressed, a show of temper is unacceptable
- **The Thai Smile** – there is a smile for all occasions, not always related to joy and happiness, non verbal communication
- **Jai - Nam jai** relates to genuine acts of kindness, **Hen jai** relates to sympathy and empathy, **Jai boon** is generosity, and **Jai dum**, black heart, relates to meanness or cruelty. These classifications of character are ingrained within the culture, and are often used to describe or even judge

# Characteristics of Krenng Jai:

**Krenng Jai** - “refers to an attitude whereby an individual tries to restrain his own interests or desires in situations where there is potential for discomfort or conflict, and where there is a need to maintain a pleasant and cooperative relationship” Krenng jai is practiced at all levels of Thai society, but is especially practiced between those of lower status to their superiors

- **Complying with others wishes or requests**
- **Reluctance to disturb or interrupt others**
- **Resistance to one’s show of displeasure of anger so as not to cause discomfort to others**
- **Avoidance of asserting ones opinions or needs**
- **Reluctance to give instructions or pass orders to a supervisor, or to peers with more age or experience**
- **Avoiding the demands for one’s rights**
- **Reluctance to ask questions when one has not understood**

**Source: Holmes and Tangtongtavy, 2003, p.46-49**

# *School Culture*

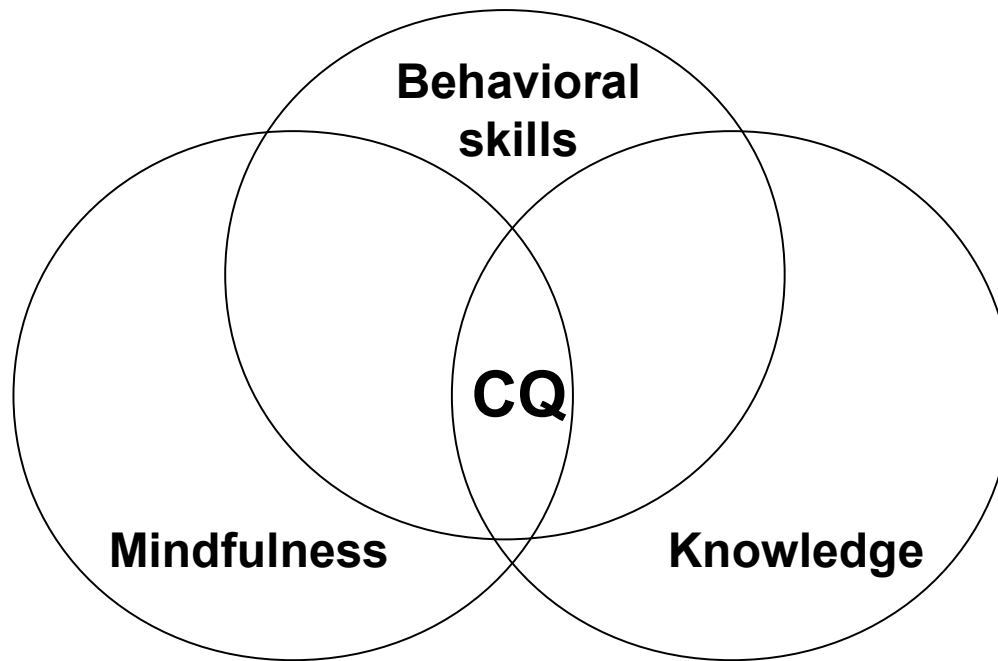
- **KIS mission statement**
- **IBO mission statement**
- **International mindedness**
- **Community service**
- **Team teaching and collaboration**
- **Leadership styles**
- **A sense of community**

# *Cross-Cultural Skills*

- **Knowledge** - of the culture in which the person is to be immersed, knowing what culture is, how cultures vary, and how culture affects behaviour.
- **Mindfulness**- the ability to pay attention in a reflective and creative way to respond to cues in the cross-cultural situations encountered and
- **Behavioral skills** – Expanding our repertoire and choosing the appropriate behaviour and skills to deal with different intercultural situations

Source: **Thomas and Inkson (1994, p. 15)**

# *Cultural Intelligence*



# *Definitions of Mindfulness*

- Being aware of our own assumptions, ideas, emotions values and beliefs (balanced)
- Being aware of those of others, tuning in to their words, behaviours and assumptions (principled)
- Using all our senses to be aware of others and not just listening to their words (communicator)
- Viewing the situation from several perspectives (open-minded)
- Attending to the context to help interpret what is happening (thinker)
- Investigate and develop new mental maps to determine how to respond (inquirer)
- Developing new categories, review and re-categorizing how we view others (reflective)
- Seek out fresh information to confirm or disconfirm our new mental maps (Knowledgeable)
- Use empathy – the ability to put ourselves in the shoes of others (caring)
- Risk taker.....

# *Cultural understanding*

- an ability to display respect for others;
- having the capacity to empathize with others;
- being more tolerant;
- respecting cultural differences; and
- having enthusiasm for intercultural relations.

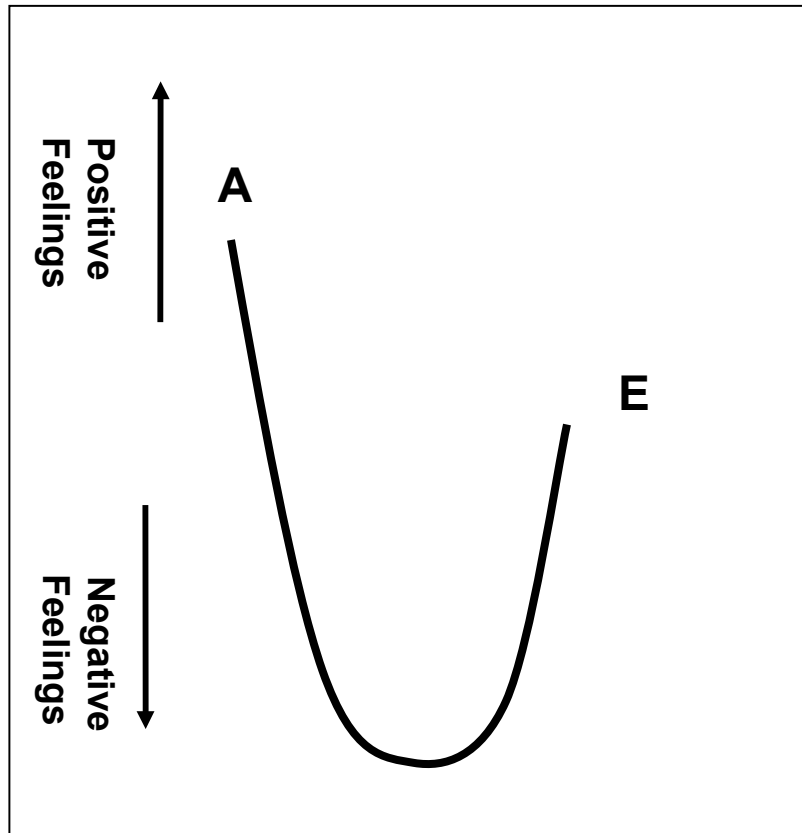
Journal of development and Learning in Organizations vol. 19, No. 4, (2005, pp.19)

# *What is Culture Shock?*

- Describes the uneasy transition from the familiar to the unfamiliar
- behaviours and self expressions that were perfectly acceptable at home may now be viewed as rude or hostile
- Personal cultural beliefs, values and assumptions are now redundant, the cultural “frame of reference” has disappeared, not knowing what to do or how to react causes a sense of defensiveness
- Causes disorientation, alienation, vulnerability, stress, frustration, helplessness, loneliness, depression etc.
- Experienced by almost all at varying degrees
- U curve of adjustment

# *U curve of Adjustment*

Source: Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963, cited in Brislin and Yosheda, p.79, 1994).



A The honeymoon period, the beginning of the adventure, everything is new and exciting,

B Newcomers begin to realize that things are very different from home and begin to criticize the host culture and resent the host country nationals; this can appear between a few weeks and a few months after arrival.

C The negative feelings increase until the situation is viewed more realistically and positive aspects can be found

D Positive feelings and contentment with the new surrounding begin to take action

E Mastery and comfort in the new culture

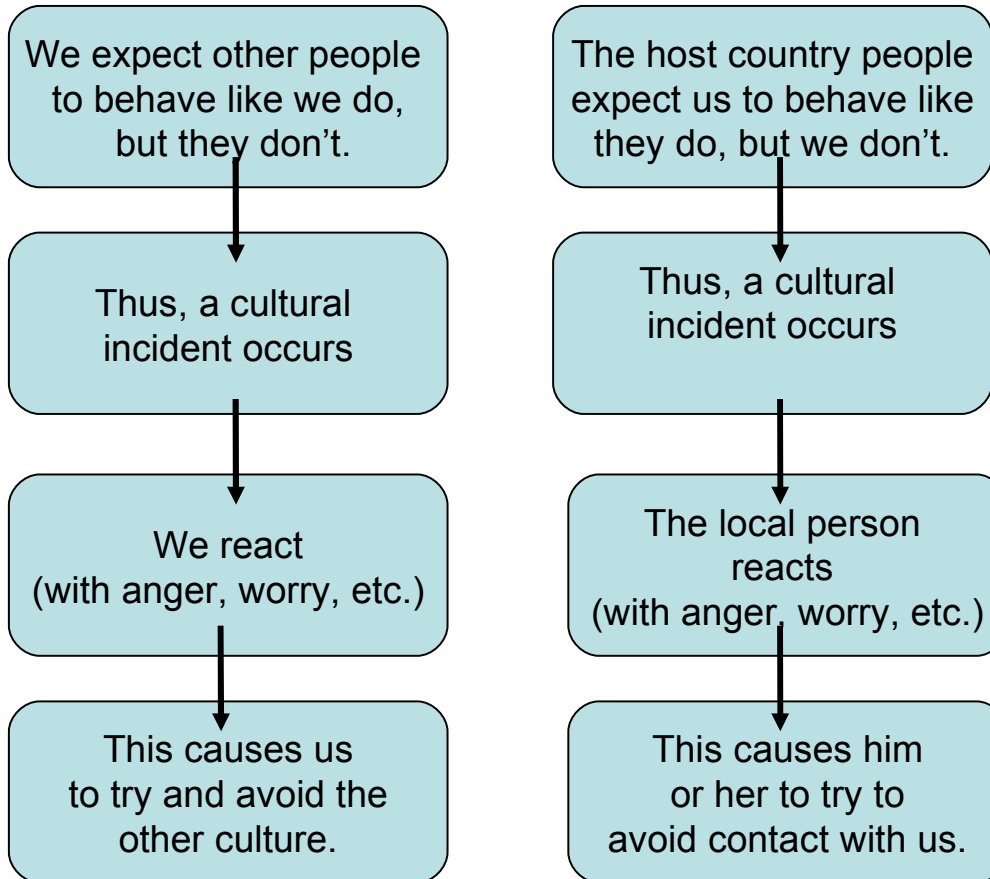
# *High/Low Context Communication*

- High Context communicators express themselves through the context of the message and the situation using indirect conversation and non verbal channels of communication;
- HC communication tends to be more prevalent in collectivist cultures
- Low Context communicators tend to express themselves best through “explicit verbal messages” being direct and to the point,
- This style of communication is more prevalent in individualist cultures

# *Language*

- **The role of language is essential in any communication**
- **A common language is a fundamental requirement for communication**
- **Brislin and Yoshida (1994) warn that language alone does not create cultural understanding**
- **“Understanding the words is not the same as understanding the message”.**
- **includes variations in patterns of thought, beliefs and values; even with fluency**

# *What is a cross cultural incident?*



# *How can they be avoided?*

- Review samples
- Identify areas of cultural difference
- How do you think these came about?
- What could the teacher/Principal have done?
- How could these be avoided in the future?
- What type of training/skills do you think is necessary?