

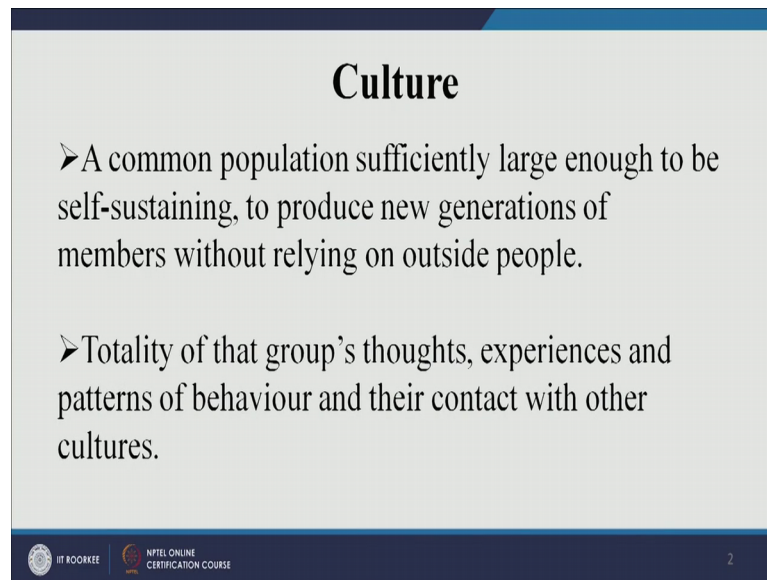
Soft Skills
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Lecture – 18
Culture as Communication

Good morning friends, you have been listening to series of lectures on Soft Skills. And the two lectures that follow will be based on culture as communication. As professionals in a global world and as key players, all of us come across people with whom we have to exchange, and these people sometimes happen to be people from other cultures. While communicating with them, there are times when we feel either our cultures threatened or we feel that we are endangering their cultures. Hence, the importance of culture in communication becomes significant.

You might be thinking why people of other countries sometimes respond to you in a very different manner when you are communicating. The same may be true of you also. Your reaction to a particular communication may appear quite different to them. Here lies the question of culture as an ingredient part in communication. Now, you would like to know what is culture, and how does it affect our communication. Every now and then, the way you behave, the way you respond, the way you think of people is because you have been trained in such a way you have been trained in such a culture, where you are aware of your culture only. But the problem occurs when you are exposed to a different culture, because as humans we think the world goes according to us; something that may be true in one culture, may be different in other culture. Hence, we need to develop a sort of cultural sensitivity while we are communicating with people from different cultures.

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Culture

- A common population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining, to produce new generations of members without relying on outside people.
- Totality of that group's thoughts, experiences and patterns of behaviour and their contact with other cultures.

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Culture can be defined as a combination of certain traits, certain behavioral aspects, values, myths, traditions, and hence people of one culture whatever they practice that is confined to their culture only, the same may not repeat or occur in other culture. A common population sufficiently large enough to be self-sustaining to produce new generations of members without relying on outside people. As we have just said we think that the world and the people of the world behave the same way as we behave to a particular incident, but that is not true.

The culture is the totality of a groups thoughts experiences and patterns of behavior and their contact with other culture. Imagine, you and your brother though born in the same country being educated in the same school, but after years when your brother goes to a different country and leaves there for some years only because of the education that he had to learn there. On his return to India, you will find lot many differences in his thoughts, in his process, in his behavior. You find that he is not the same person as he was when he was here. And hence we can say that cultures vary. And when a person leaves in a surrounding, he actually tries to learn the rules of another culture.

Now, today in a world that we are living, we say that this world is a global village nowadays. You actually have your breakfast in Kuala Lumpur, and you have your dinner in Delhi and you also find the difference. The breakfast that you had in Kuala Lumpur and the food that you had there has a different taste, when you have it in India. Now, in a

way, culture also denotes about eating habits, culture also denotes our living ways. We have to admit the fact that the world is full of cultures and professionals when you are working in an organization you will find there are people of different cultures. Even in your own country, you will find people of one state behave differently from people of other states. People of one state have different food habits than people from other states. They celebrate different festivals and you celebrate different festivals.

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Now, this is a sort of cultural exchange, but the question is culture does it affect a person's behavior? Of course, when you are born in particular culture you actually learn the ways and means of a particular culture, but you are exposed to a different culture you see the differences. And if you happen to live in another culture for a long time, you happen to develop the taste and habits of that said culture.

So, nowadays we cannot ignore the fact that world is a global village, and there is a rich diversity that is why the food that you take in most of the hotels, you will find may not be Indian, only sometimes you may go for something that is foreign. And this is how cultures keep exchanging with each other. And because of the speedy ways of globalization, and because of several facilities which are available nowadays, the market place has also become a global place. There is a tendency among the youngsters and of course, even among adults to go for something that is foreign, because they feel it

empowers them it gives them a different sense, it gives them a different identity, culture in a way is related to your identity.

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If we look at the business trends today, various organizations, foreign organizations, various foreign companies, they have their markets in India and so many of our companies also have their organizations in other countries. This is the result of the globalization. And because of the technological revolutions, we have been able to see the things of other countries are easily available here. Now, take for example, even in your culture, even in your country, there can be some subcultures; and you develop taste habits food habits. For example, today idli and sambar and dosa which specifically is a food item of the south can be found easily available in most of the restaurants even of the north. So, this is how cultures exchange.

And at the global level because of the signing of certain treaties say for example, the GATT and then NAFTA, the General Agreement on Trade and Tariff, and North American Free Trade Agreements. Things of one country move to other countries, this is how we help each other grow, and this is how we help each other learn, this is how we help each other imbibe that is why we say that the workplaces today have become a multicultural workforce.

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Technological Advancements

- New transportation and information technologies
- Availability of fresh flowers and fruits
- Choices to have our own pick
- Online store making business more smooth

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The various ways of new transformation and information technology help by transportation facilities allow us to get fresh flowers of a country in some other country. Fresh fruits of a country you know Indian mangoes are gaining popularity in some other countries, how is that possible and this in a way helps you get an identity. Culture and identity are interrelated. Because of the delouse of online shops, we are able to get we are able to pick and choose the products that suit our best depending upon our part depending upon our choice. But at times it so happens that when a person who is rigidly rooted in once own culture, and he gets a chance to expose himself to other cultures, these differences actually affect. And then how it effects at work place is a paramount importance.

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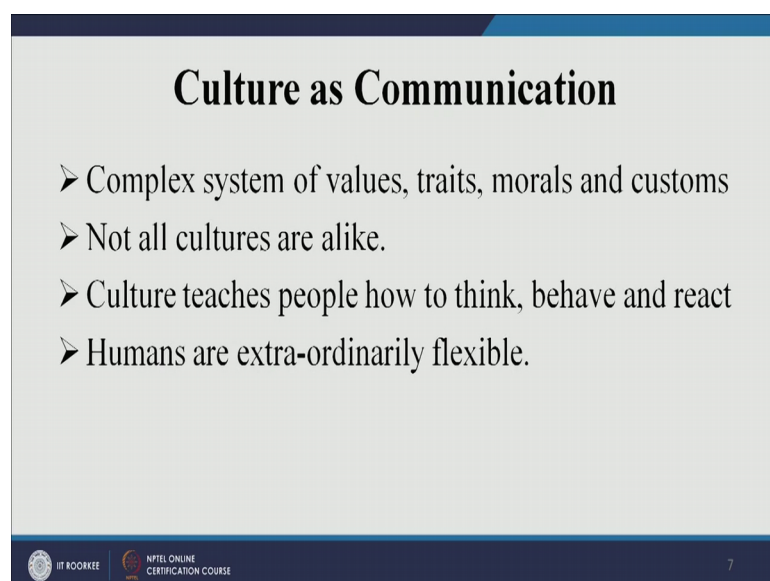
Multicultural Workforce

- Prospects of peace, prosperity and education
- Immigration on move
- Multicultural Communication
- Cultural Diversity

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Though because of the exchange of cultures worldwide, there has been a prosperity, peace and education this in a way is helping the entire will grow as a global one. Every now and then you will find that many of our Indians also when they go to some foreign countries and they start living there, they start learning their culture, many of them settle their and then they actually say and they actually have a different sort of opinion about our cultures. So, culture is a thing that can be learnt and in order to survive in a global world, in a world where globalization is the need of the art, we need to invite a sort of cultural diversity.

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Culture as Communication

- Complex system of values, traits, morals and customs
- Not all cultures are alike.
- Culture teaches people how to think, behave and react
- Humans are extra-ordinarily flexible.

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Now, the question is can culture affect our communication and if it does so how does it do? Culture, since it is a complex system of values, traits, social morals and customs, it is some way or the other keeps in interfering with our everyday affairs and the way we communicate. Sometimes you use a word which is not of your culture, but because of your being or because of your stay in a particular culture, you get accustomed to the uses of such words, your vocabulary, your language your ways of dressing, your ways of eating that also get changed.

But remember no cultures are always alike, no two cultures are always the same. And if you want to have a transaction with people of other cultures, we have to remember the fact that every culture has its own significance every culture has its own beauty. In many of the cultures you will find were a sort of logical reasoning about a particular way of thought about a particular way of dressing about a particular way of behaving about a particular way of celebrating and all. So, to say that one culture itself or your culture itself is sufficient will be a very early statement. Culture teaches people culture makes people learn how to think, how to behave and how to react. As humans since we are flexible creatures, we actually need to integrate ourselves with the culture that we are living in.

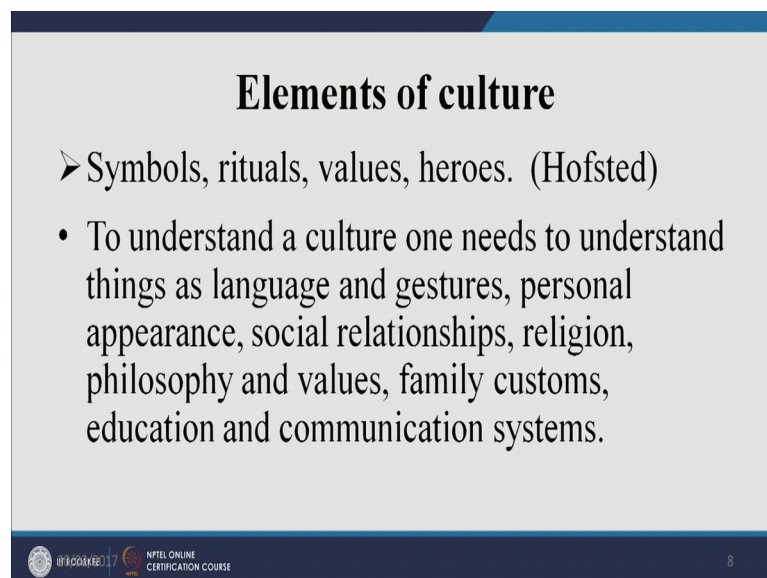
The problems nowadays many of us are aware of the diasporic reality many of our Indian people going to settle in some other countries. Initially, they may have a sort of difference, initially they may come across a sort of conflict, but as they stay for a long time in a particular culture, they get used to. And what actually makes them feel terribly low at times is the cultural shock; and this cultural shock arises when you are not familiar with a particular way of living, with a particular style of living, with a particular response to a particular situation, and then you start feeling like an isolated being like a loner.

You know there is one very famous novel which has been transformed in the shape of a film also and that is Namesake. Many of you might have watched that movie. And in that movie you find the heroine, who goes to settle who goes to live with her husband in US, and when she is expecting a baby in a hospital, she is reminded of her own country where when women had to give birth to a baby they had so many people with them. But here in a country like US she feels quiet alone, and she also there are there some very beautiful lines where says giving birth to a baby in a country alone. So, this is one way

how we feel a sort of cultural shock, but if we actually try to reconcile, I think the world will become a beautiful place to live with.

We need to understand the culture; and in order to understand the culture, we need to know the symbols, the rituals, the values, the heroes, the worlds shape and all. Because you know if we are going to stay if you are going to have a sort of sustenance in a different world you know most of the problems arise when we actually show our difference. The need of the ours is not so the difference, but to show the difference, I mean the respect.

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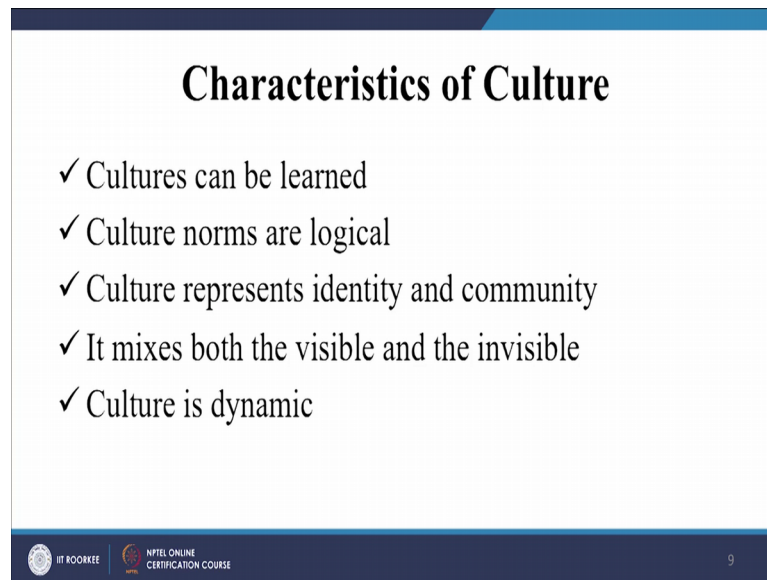
Elements of culture

- Symbols, rituals, values, heroes. (Hofstede)
- To understand a culture one needs to understand things as language and gestures, personal appearance, social relationships, religion, philosophy and values, family customs, education and communication systems.

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In order to understand a culture one needs to understand things and what are these things involved language, gestures, personal appearance, religion, philosophy, values, family customs and even communication systems. It is always better to understand the culture in order to have a sort of authentic living many people often complain when they have to live a broad and when they have to live in a different country they feel as if they are a second rated citizen. Only because they actually do not go with the cultures, which are prevailing there.

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Characteristics of Culture

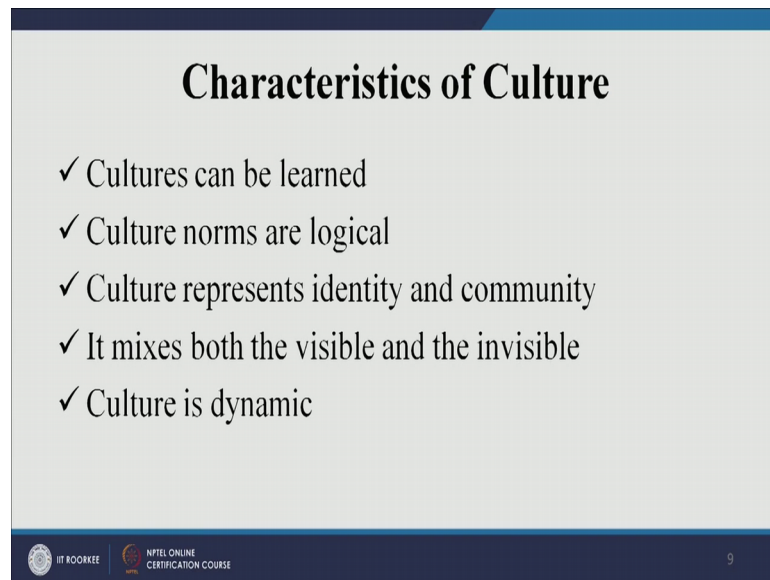
- ✓ Cultures can be learned
- ✓ Culture norms are logical
- ✓ Culture represents identity and community
- ✓ It mixes both the visible and the invisible
- ✓ Culture is dynamic

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But then what we should try to understand is that cultures can be learned, you know cultures are dynamic. Once you were in a different part of even your own country, you had a different culture, but over the years of you stay in that part you feel that you have imbibed culture and in your way when you start comparing, you feel the people of other culture they are not as sensitive as you. So, how does this happen this actually happens because of your way of reconciling with the culture where you are living.

Cultural norms are logical. If you go into the history of particular tradition and particular myth, you will find that certain practices are based on certain logic. You know as an Indian, while I was a traveling while I was riding a bike, and suddenly a cat came on the road, the cat crossed and I stopped for a moment. My foreign friend he started complaining why did you stop, because to him this was a sort of unusual thing to stop when something crosses your way. But in our culture we often feel that a cat crossing your way is a sign of misfortune, is the sign of evil, likewise other cultures also have their own believes which you may not feel yourself comfortable with it.

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Characteristics of Culture

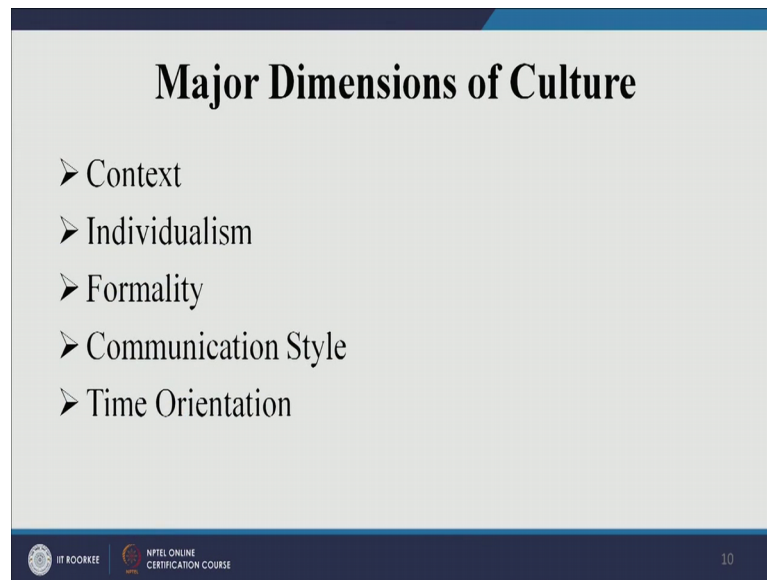
- ✓ Cultures can be learned
- ✓ Culture norms are logical
- ✓ Culture represents identity and community
- ✓ It mixes both the visible and the invisible
- ✓ Culture is dynamic

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Your culture represents identity and it gives you a sense of belonging you know many people when they go to a different country and they come back they feel after all we have come back to our own country, where we can realize our own food, where we can have the way of our own living. Now, this question arises, because you feel that other cultures all are threatening, this is not the case. Culture actually mixes the visible with the invisible and culture is dynamic.

Remember what used to be considered a myth in the olden days has completely changed. If you belong to a particular state or a particular community, you will find that you have a different faith. You know we also have to be very sensitive about other religion, other beliefs, other faiths because whatever you practice is not the ultimate reality. The world is a place where there is a rich diversity of cultures and here also there is a rich diversity of faiths know. Here I have to get reminded of what Mahatma Gandhi said about God then there are different ways to reach God, but then the ultimate aim is to reach God. Likewise there are different ways of a particular culture, the all is that you need to have a sort of faith to understand that every culture has its own beauty every, culture has its own significance.

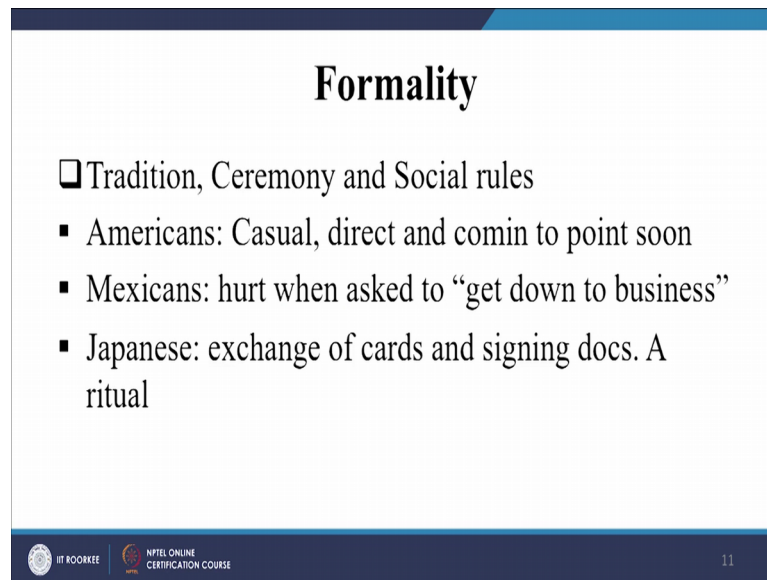
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What actually are the major dimensions of culture? The first is the context, and then there is individualism, formality, communication style, time orientation. You will find that all these they actually differ. Suppose, you are living in a country, since your birth in a particular part of the country, you actually learn certain traits, which are being practiced at your home. You actually start behaving the way you see your parents. After particular amount of time, when you are exposed then you perhaps realize the difference. So, every individual for that matter, every human being has to live in a particular context, and it is here that you will find that the entire world can be divided into two cultural context.

We shall discuss it later on, where we say that the world has two cultural contexts. The first is the high context, high cultural context, then we have low cultural context and people of both these contexts culture they actually react and differ differently. Now say for example, they respond to language in a different manner there is respond to a particular festival in a different manner, there is respond to time in a different manner, but all these have their own significance or all these have their own importance as humans. Next comes individualism, then formality, communication style, and time orientation.

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Formality

- Tradition, Ceremony and Social rules
 - Americans: Casual, direct and come to the point soon
 - Mexicans: hurt when asked to “get down to business”
 - Japanese: exchange of cards and signing docs. A ritual

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When we talk about formality, we have to see that many of us are great traditionalists. We have to follow a certain tradition that is why when you do something other than your tradition, you actually become either the butt of laughter or you become the matter of discussion, sometimes you also become the center of so many eyes there are certain ceremonies and social rules to be observed. You know even the way you receive a guest in your culture is different the way people are received in different cultures. So, every culture has its own beauty. And you will find as Indians we are more accommodating, as Indians we are more liberal, as Indians we are more guest loving.

But then you will find that people of different cultures they have a different sort of formality. For example, when we speak and when we react that is totally different from the way when Americans speak. It has been found studies suggest that Americans are more casual, direct and they actually come to the point very soon. They are more casual you know they are more direct also. You will find that as the way people in interpersonal gatherings when people are addressed the Americans will say Mr. X and Mr. Y, I mean they will address people either by their title or by their first name.

But then in some other countries the tradition is in Japan say, for example they will say Mr. President fine, Mr. premier like that; in China, Mr. premier like that. So, the question is even in very terms of business transactions, you will find while you are negotiating will find, the Americans come to the point very soon. And if you are having

communication with the American, you will find they do not love silences. If you remain silent for some time, they actually think they get impatient very soon that is why one expert goes to the extent of saying that Asians use this very dexterously, if they allow if they remain silent for some time they can go get more consultations in the business deals.

Whereas Mexicans, they are actually hurt when asked to get down to business. You will find that Mexicans when they have to have a meeting what they will do first is they will have a lot of courtesies, they will have a lot of eating, they will have a lot of greetings and finally, if you ask them to come to the business what they say is they actually feel hot. They do not give utmost importance to business deals, but what they say is they actually give more importance to the cordiality. If there is a certain tradition among Japanese, that they believe they considered exchange of cards and signing documents as a sort of ritual.

Now, in an observation, it is often said that they Americans they often follow the Hamburger style of management. Meaning there by even if they have to criticize what they will do is they will actually first ask you about the family, they will ask about the family so which others can say it is just the bun on the top. And finally, they will actually criticize you and towards the end, they actually make their points very clear and which other people often say that this is actually the bottom of the bun. Now, the question is even in terms of communication, you may find a lot of difference between what Americans say and what Japanese say. Even in terms of the maintenance of silence, as I said the Americans cannot tolerate too much of silence and they always they speak much, they want to be very direct and they come to the point very soon.

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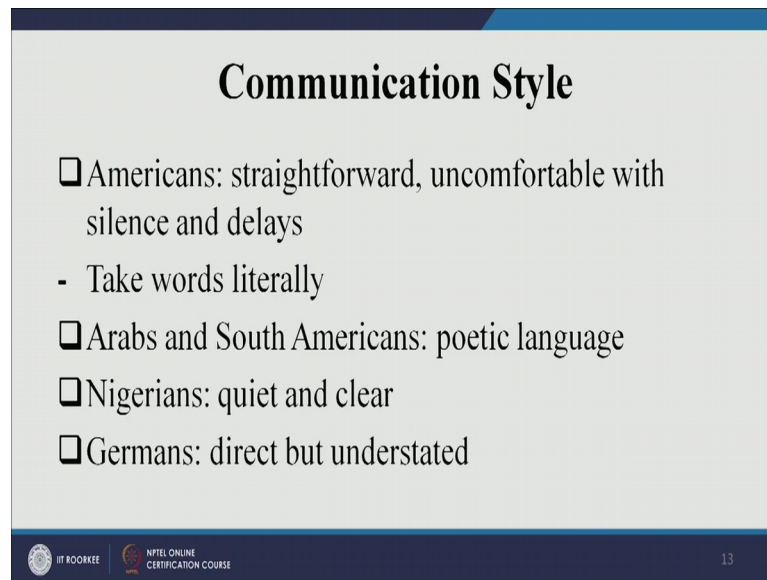
- Europeans: Never use first name without invitation
- Arabian, South Americans and Asians: Friendship first and business later
- Western Countries: Relaxed about social status and power

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But you will find Europeans, they will never use your first name without invitation, I mean they are in this way they are more formal, and they do not use their first name, your first name without any invitation. In this regard Arabian, South Americans and Asians, they actually believe if you are going to have a business deal with them, they value friendship and cordiality more than the business deals, friendship and cordiality comes first and business deals come later.

As regards giving people the importance, the westerns especially the people of western countries, they are more relaxed, they do not allow more room to people on the basis of their social status and pared. They actually treat people as people, and they do not believe in giving too much edge to face or too much as to practice. Now, the world as my dear friends I have been telling is a global platform is a global place where they are rich diversity of cultures and in this diversity of cultures all of us should try to understand, how we can communicate with people from other cultures as regards the communication style as we have discussed.

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Communication Style

- Americans: straightforward, uncomfortable with silence and delays
 - Take words literally
- Arabs and South Americans: poetic language
- Nigerians: quiet and clear
- Germans: direct but understated

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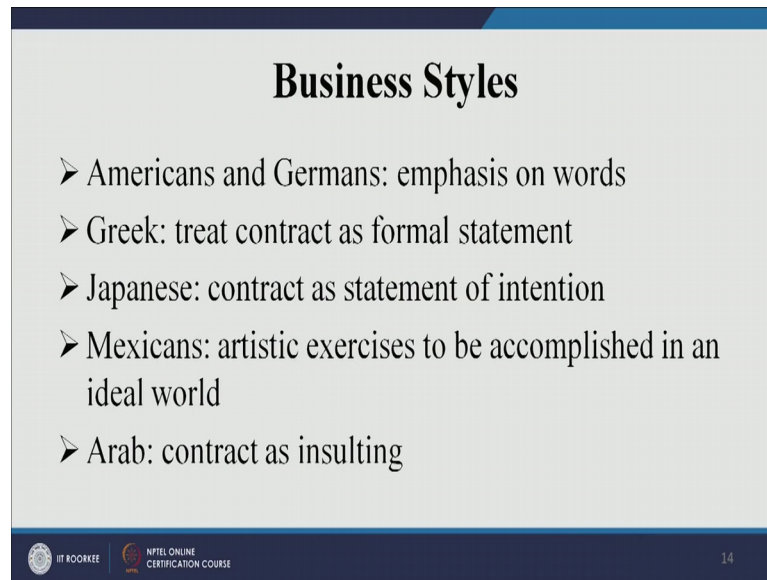
The Americans are very straightforward, they actually do not try to make use of the background, but then when they have to criticize of course, they will first ask you about how is the family. But in other ways they are more straightforward, they are uncomfortable with silence and delays they cannot tolerate a delay. When you are having a word with them, when you are having an exchange with them, they take words very literally, they do not believe that words actually require a sort of background. Hence, you have to be very particular why dealing with an American.

As regards the case of Arabs and south Americans, they actually believed in a poetic language. They do not come to the point too soon rather, they create a lot of background and then they come to say what they really want to say. In this regard, the Nigerians are quiet and they are very clear, they are very clear, they are composed, they do not believe in making a lot of exchanges, and they often at times become quiet and clear. In order not to show their opinion.

Even Germans are direct, but then they are understated, there goes a famous saying where we say Americans are forward, Americans are direct, Germans are often less direct and the Japanese are more subtle. Americans and Germans they give proper emphasis on words, they take words very literally. So, when you are having a communication because this culture can become a sort of say difference, when you are having a talk with them, when you are having a business deal with them. In terms of agreements and contracts,

the Americans because in a way they in many cases, they believe the since they are from the low context culture. They give more emphasis on words they do not attach much importance to nonverbal or non-words.

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Business Styles

- Americans and Germans: emphasis on words
- Greek: treat contract as formal statement
- Japanese: contract as statement of intention
- Mexicans: artistic exercises to be accomplished in an ideal world
- Arab: contract as insulting

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Greeks rather on the other hand they treat contract as a formal statement they treat contract as a formal statement. And formals when they treat it as a formal statement, they actually allow it to be very serious since they are going to sign it. And for Japanese, they make it clear that the contract is a statement of intention, they believe as things go further it can improve, but they do not they are not as specific as Americans, who give too much emphasis on words. In this regard, the Mexicans, they consider contract to be a sort of artistic excise which can be accomplished in an ideal world; meaning thereby they do not give extra emphasis on words rather since they as regards time also, they are a little bit flexible. And they understand that as the business goes further there can be things which can come up and that can only be accomplished in an ideal world.

While when you are dealing with an Arab, they believe that contract is insulting, they give more emphasis and Arabs actually come from the high context culture that is why they give more emphasis to non-verbal. It has already been said during our nonverbal communication, while discussing on communicating without words that even the way people start making distances, people start making rooms while communication, they also go a long way. You can find people in US and Canada, they actually maintain five

feet distance while they are communicating which can be a sought of uncomfortably close for one culture, and which can be uncomfortably apart for people of the Arab.

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TIME

- Asians: Punctual
- North Americans: A Commodity
- Japanese: Take time to decide
- Hispanics: more relaxed regarding time

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As regards time also the people of other cultures they have different ways they treat time differently. It is often said that Asians are punctual, but actually they take lot of time in deliberation and finally, at times they appear to be delaying also even in your own country, you will find in various states and in various cultures, in some cultures they give too much emphasis to time. But in some cultures, they do not give actually importance to time rather they think that it will happen, it will happen in the days to come, I mean they are not as pussy as others.

North Americans, they actually consider time as a commodity and they do not want to waste too much time that is why if somebody is kept for a long time, now waiting outside, they consider it is just a waste of time, it is just because time is money for them. Here, in this regard, let me give an example of how an American person who had to buy some appliances had to wait for a long time, I mean more than two hours, but the person who was to buy that see knew it well that his panics were more relaxed about times. So, she did not take it that seriously she was aware of.

So, if we are aware of a particular culture being followed by a particular person or say by the member of particular culture, it is going to make the deals smoother. But in many countries, you will find that time is taken very seriously. Sometimes, people from some

other culture I mean a timely response that is very important, a timely reaction is very important, a timely suggestion is also very important. Since, the world is a varied place where people of all cultures meet together and discuss; it actually requires a lot of patience for all of us to understand how important are all these things. Many people they often believe they actually believe in individualism, and they do not understand that people have to play, people have to work in groups people have associating group.

So, in many countries, you will find that many people would like even the way they have space distribution. You will find in many countries, the boss occupies the corner space; whereas, in some countries especially in Mexico, the boss occupy the middle position where all others they are sitting, and they are quite in view of them in front of them. So, even the space is guided by certain cultural norms. We have already read in our previous lectures, how space, time, language they also go to a long extent.

You know the real problem appears when we are exchanging and certain vocabulary of certain word makes us not understand the real meaning. If you come across certain advertisements of certain hotels, you will find that as regard because you know in many countries they actually in order to make the world a better place. They translate even the punch lines of advertisements. And in one hotel they had written in one Swiss Restra, in one Swiss restra they had written our wines will make you forget everything or our wines will make you feel nowhere. Now, the question is if we go on its literal meaning the meaning totally becomes different, I would like wines leave you know here.

Likewise, in other hotel what they had written women are not allowed to have their children at the bar. Now, the question is the intended saying and what comes out are two different the meaning was that women were not allowed in the bar whereas the way it had been written it actually had a different sort of meaning. Another example is of water one hotel wanted to suggest that its water was quite pure and you know what they had translated as our water has been passed by the manager himself. Now, such situations often we come across, but the need of the ours we need to understand the essence of what is being said and not the way it has been said. Otherwise, it will lead to a sort of ambiguity and we will feel that we are in a world where it is a question of culture that makes us feel ourselves different.

Dear friends, the world is such a place where we have to work together and where all of us in a way or the other have to understand that cultural diversity is a reality. And if we have to succeed in today's world, we have to understand the cultural truths. It of course, needs some time to realize a particular culture, but then if we try our level best we can learn a culture and we can respond to a culture in a better way than we have been doing. No culture is without an a logic and no belief is without any logic, it is time that we understood; and we did not belittled the cultures of another because communication has the prime role of bringing people closer. So, culture also has the same role. With more and more cultures, we know we become aware of more things of the world, we learn new things of the world, and we have to integrate ourselves, in order that we do not come across a cultural shock.

Thank you very much.