Lesson
ThreeCross-Cultural Communication in US BusinessPart I
ObjectivesSix Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Differences
6   A general view of corporate culture
Decoding body-language of North America
Part II The How-Tos Identify the Differences   Six
Fundamental Patterns of Cultural Differences

1. Different Communication Styles

The way people communicate varies widely between, and
even within, cultures. One aspect of communication style is language
usage. Across cultures, some words and phrases are used in different
ways. For example, even in countries that share the English language,
the meaning of "yes" varies from "maybe, I   ll consider it" to
"definitely so," with many shades in between. Another major aspect of
communication style is the degree of importance given to non-verbal
communication. Non-verbal communication includes not only
facial expressions and gestures. it also involves seating arrangements,
personal distance, and sense of time. In addition, different norms
regarding the appropriate degree of assertiveness in communicating
can add to cultural misunderstandings. For instance, some white
Americans typically consider raised voices to be a sign that a fight has
begun, while some Asian, African, Jewish and Italian Americans
often feel that an increase in volume is a sign of an exciting

conversation among friends. Thus, some white Americans may react with greater alarm to a loud discussion than would members of some American ethnic or non-white racial groups.2. Different Attitudes Toward Conflict   Some cultures view conflict as a positive thing, while others view it as something to be avoided. In the U.S., conflict is not usually desirable. but people often are encouraged to deal directly with conflicts that do arise. In fact, face-to-face meetings customarily are recommended as the way to work through whatever problems exist. In contrast, in many Eastern countries, open conflict is experienced as embarrassing or demeaning. as a rule, differences are best worked out quietly. A written exchange might be the favored means to address the conflict.3. Different Approaches to Completing Tasks

From culture to culture, there are different ways that people move toward completing tasks. Some reasons include different access to resources, different judgments of the rewards associated with task completion, different notions of time, and varied ideas about how relationship-building and task-oriented work should go together.When it comes to working together effectively on a task, cultures differ with respect to the importance placed on establishing relationships early on in the collaboration. A case in point, Asian and Hispanic cultures tend to attach more value to developing relationships at the beginning of a shared project and more emphasis on task completion toward the end as compared with Americans. Americans tend to focus immediately on the task at hand, and let relationships develop as they work on the task. This

does not mean that people from any one of these cultural backgrounds are more or less committed to accomplishing the task, or value relationships more or less. it means they may pursue them differently. 100Test

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