

# Business Culture

## The Basics

Aleksandra Łuczak (PhD)

A British business man in Germany was told a meeting was at *halb neun* (half nine) so he arrived at 9.30.

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

A British firm produced 15,000 leaflets in Spanish to send to Brazil.

A British advertising agency prepared a „before-and-after’ type of advertisement to sell washing powder in the Arab world. The ‘before’ picture with the dirty clothes was on the left; the ‘after’ picture with the clean clothes was on the right.

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Gazpacho



[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Why do we need to understand other cultures?

- to become more tolerant person
- to learn to accept and like other cultures
- to respect the validity of other cultures
- to become a more skilled intercultural communicator

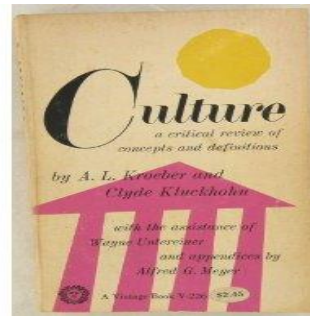
## Understand the basics of culture

### The 3 R's

- **RECOGNITION**
  - increase awareness of one's own cultural perspective
- **RESPECT**
  - appreciate cultural differences
- **RECONCILIATION**
  - resolve cultural differences

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## What is culture?



www.kozminski.edu.pl

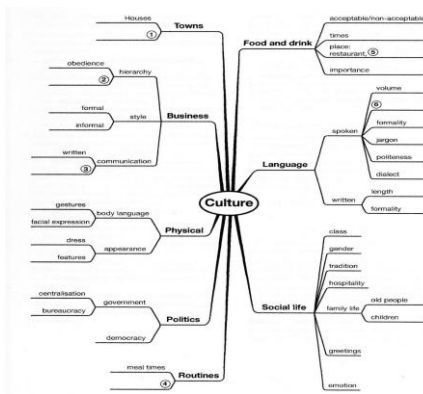
## So, what is "culture" then?

Draw up a list of factors that you think are the most important in creating a culture.

www.kozminski.edu.pl

- language
- architecture
- painting
- music
- literature
- climate
- religion
- historical events
- behaviour and attitudes
- institutions
- cuisine
- art
- work ethics
- dress
- food
- physical contact
- pace of life
- lifestyle
- geography
- social customs and traditions
- ceremonies and festivals

www.kozminski.edu.pl



## 1.2 Defining the word 'culture'

'Culture' can mean different things to different people.

Think about:

- how culture is created – by geography, climate, history, coincidence?
- what groups of people can be said to have a culture – races, countries, companies?
- in what ways you see, hear or experience it – by behaviour, attitudes, gestures?

Look at these five definitions of culture.

- 1 Select the one you think is closest to your own idea.
- 2 Identify any missing elements in each definition.
- 3 If not satisfied, produce your own, better definition.

A

The sum total of all the beliefs, values and norms shared by a group of people.

B

The way you have been conditioned in a society to think, feel, interpret and react.

C

The collective programming of the human mind.

D

A large pool of experience composed of learned programmes for action and passed on from generation to generation.

E

All you need to know and believe in order to be accepted in a society.

My definition:

1 Why does culture matter?

## What is culture?

„Sztuka jest arystokratyczna. Kultura może być masowa - sztuka nigdy. Sztuka - to arystokracja kultury.”

R. Kapuściński

Art is aristocratic. Culture can be mass. Art is never mass. Art is the aristocracy of culture.

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Culture - definitions

The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought ...

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/culture>

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Culture - definitions

Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities or habits acquired by members of a society...

E.B. Taylor

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Culture - definitions

The way we do things around here

→ the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a region, an institution or an organization...

www.kozminski.edu.pl

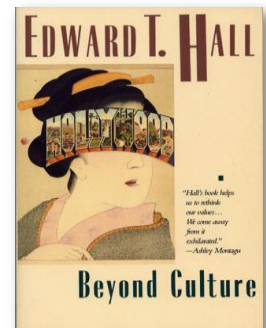
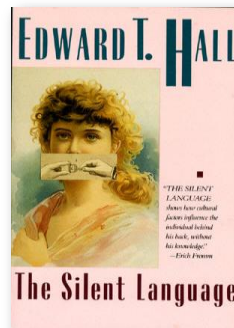
## Culture - definitions

„The ways people agree to be”

Kerry O'Sullivan

www.kozminski.edu.pl

Read more...



www.kozminski.edu.pl

What **culture** do you belong to?

**Be careful!**

Culture ≠ nationality ≠ ethnicity

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

This is Lek



This is Mei-Ling



[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

**The key is ...**

**self-image / self-identification**

If your passport required you to describe  
your nationality  
your ethnicity  
your culture,

**what would you say?**

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

- Culture, ethnicity and nationality are not the same
- Don't make assumptions about people's culture based on their ethnicity or nationality
- People holding the same nationality may have different culture

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

? American, Nigerian, South African,  
Malaysian, Australian, Venezuelan

? Balinese, Navajo, Hawaiian

? Russian, Lithuanian

? Japanese, German, Thai

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

**Culture**

**vs**

**Lifestyle**

How do they differ?

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Over to you

- Lifestyle is visible (food, clothes, consumer goods, music)
- Culture is less visible (attitudes, beliefs, values, behaviour, communication)
- Don't draw conclusions about a person's culture based on some aspect of their lifestyle

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

- ? How do you regard yourselves in terms of ethnicity, nationality and culture?
- ? Are there any aspects of your lifestyle that have come from other cultures?

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Intercultural communication

- Global village
- Unsuccessful interaction means money and opportunities lost
- Goodwill and tolerance are a good start but not enough
- We need knowledge, awareness and skill

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Over to you

- Do you feel that underneath we all are basically the same?
- or
- Do you feel that cultures are so different that successful intercultural communication is impossible?

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

- Underneath people of the world can be profoundly different
- People of all cultures face the same dilemmas of life
- All cultures are valid and worthy of respect
- Cultural difference is a reality
- Cultures are and have been capable of successful interaction

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Rituals and tribes

- What kind of ritual is it?
- Which tribe it may take place in?

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

- The process of learning the culture is longer the process of learning the language
- It follows the pattern prescribed by our cultural group; becomes natural and programmed
- We don't have total freedom of choice in our behaviour
- Our actions are rule governed, automatic and unconscious
- Our behaviour is ritualised but we are not aware of that
- Our culture regulates our behaviour

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Cultures differ

- Is it possible for an outsider to become a member of your tribe?
- What adjustments or circumstances would need to occur before an outsider is included?

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Panhuman cultural categories Universals of behaviour

- Individual behaviour
- Social behaviour
- Social control and education
- Technology
- Collective beliefs

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## What situations can be influenced by culture?

- Greeting each other?
- Reacting to compliment?
- Apologising?
- Watching TV?
- Dismissing employees?
- Interviewing applicants?
- Making small talk?
- Standing when talking to the boss?

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Cultures are constantly changing

- Unnoticed change vs open widely discussed change
- Generation gap
- How about your tribe? Any changes recently?

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Cultures are not uniform

- Diversity results from:
  - » age
  - » education
  - » class
  - » status
- Within cultures we have subcultures:
  - » wealth
  - » education
  - » profession
  - » religion
  - » area of residence...
- What subculture do you belong to?

www.kozminski.edu.pl

## Uniform behaviour or a wide range of alternatives?

1. Behaviour at funeral
2. Residence after marriage
3. Duration of education undertaken
4. Behaviour and dress of widows
5. Courtship behaviour
6. Responses to receiving a gift
7. Behaviour at job interview

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Stereotypes

- They reduce diversity
  - absolutely everyone in that culture is the same
- They reduce complexity
  - culture can be described with only small set of characteristics

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Stereotypes about Poles

- What is your stereotype of librarians?
- What is your stereotype of accountants?
- What is your stereotype of Poles?
- Are intolerant
- Are full of anti-semitism
- Do not speak foreign languages
- Never smile
- Complain a lot
- Abuse alcohol
- Organised crime and theft are part of daily life

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Stereotypes

- Arabs
  - » billionaires, bombers and belly dancers
- British
  - » old fashioned, violent, ugly
- French
  - » rude, unfriendly, snail eating Frogs

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Cultural superiority

- Unquestioned superiority
- Cultural equality
- Exploration

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## No culture is an island

- Tribes are influenced by and borrow from each other
- Cultural imports – may not keep the same meaning and significance
- When you see something similar in another culture it may have different significance

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Colours

All cats are ... at night

GREY

The lights are on ...

YELLOW

To be ... with rage

WHITE

... tie

WHITE/BLACK?

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Sum up

1. Know what culture you belong to
2. Understand that culture is dominant; it influences the way you act, see, feel, do, interact, behave
3. You are a member of culture which regulates your behaviour
4. Don't make assumptions about people's culture based on their ethnicity or nationality

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Sum up

5. Don't draw conclusions about person's culture based on some aspects of their lifestyle
6. Don't assume that when you see something familiar in another culture that it has the same meaning and significance as in your culture

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Sum up

7. Accept cultural difference as reality; underneath people of the world can be profoundly different
8. Don't make the mistake of thinking that your culture is more complex than others
9. Allow yourself to like and dislike aspects of other cultures, but don't condemn entire cultures

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)

## Sum up

10. Remember that when you judge another culture you are probably using your own culture's standards
11. Goodwill and tolerance are a good start but not enough; you need knowledge, awareness and skill to improve intercultural communication
12. Your aim is to be a more skilled communicator and not a better person

[www.kozminski.edu.pl](http://www.kozminski.edu.pl)



## Sum up

13. It is always possible to succeed in intercultural communication
14. Don't generalise when you meet someone from another culture whom you don't like
15. Stereotyping is inevitable but can't be the only basis for your interpretations.