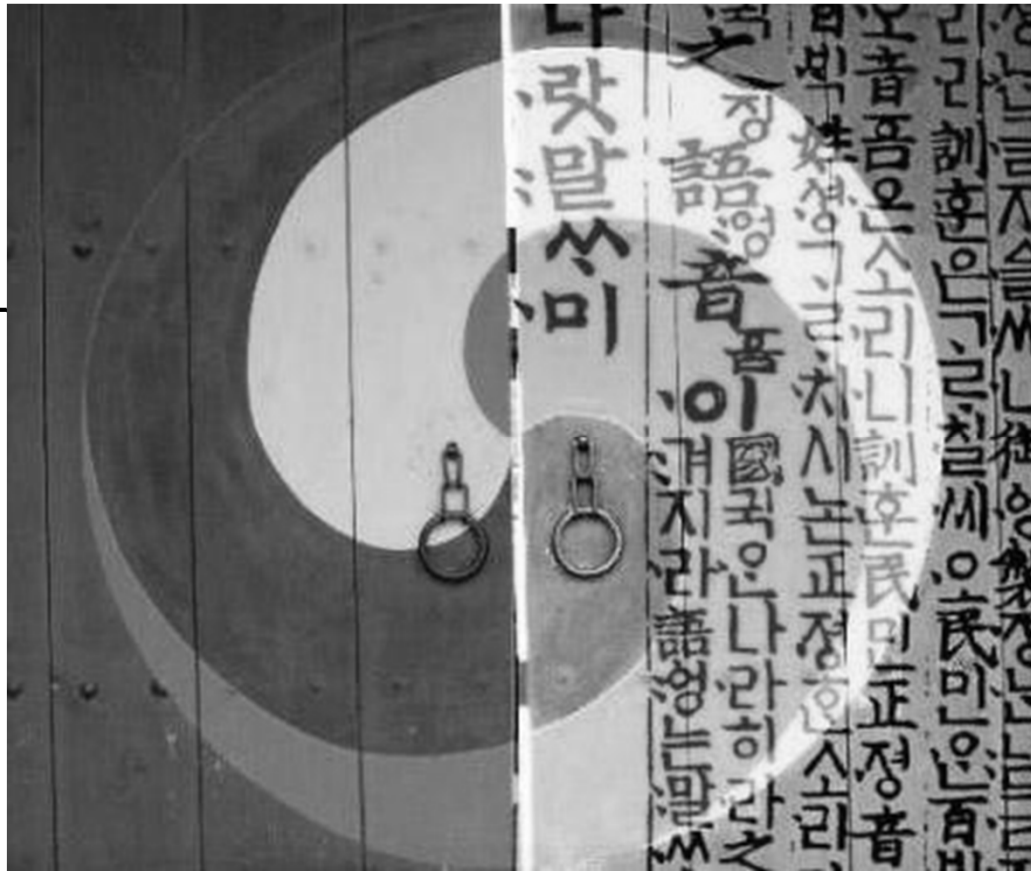


KOREAN BUSINESS CULTURE



Jennifer Fletcher, Intercultural Trainer and Consultant

Culture | Our invisible teacher

Culture teaches us how to think, feel, believe and value...

All groups develop a common system which tells us:

What to pay attention to;

What we ignore;

What's right; What's wrong;

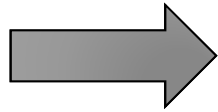
What's good; What's bad



cultures share the same problems; it's their solutions which differ...

Margaret Mead

Only 10% of an iceberg shows above water.



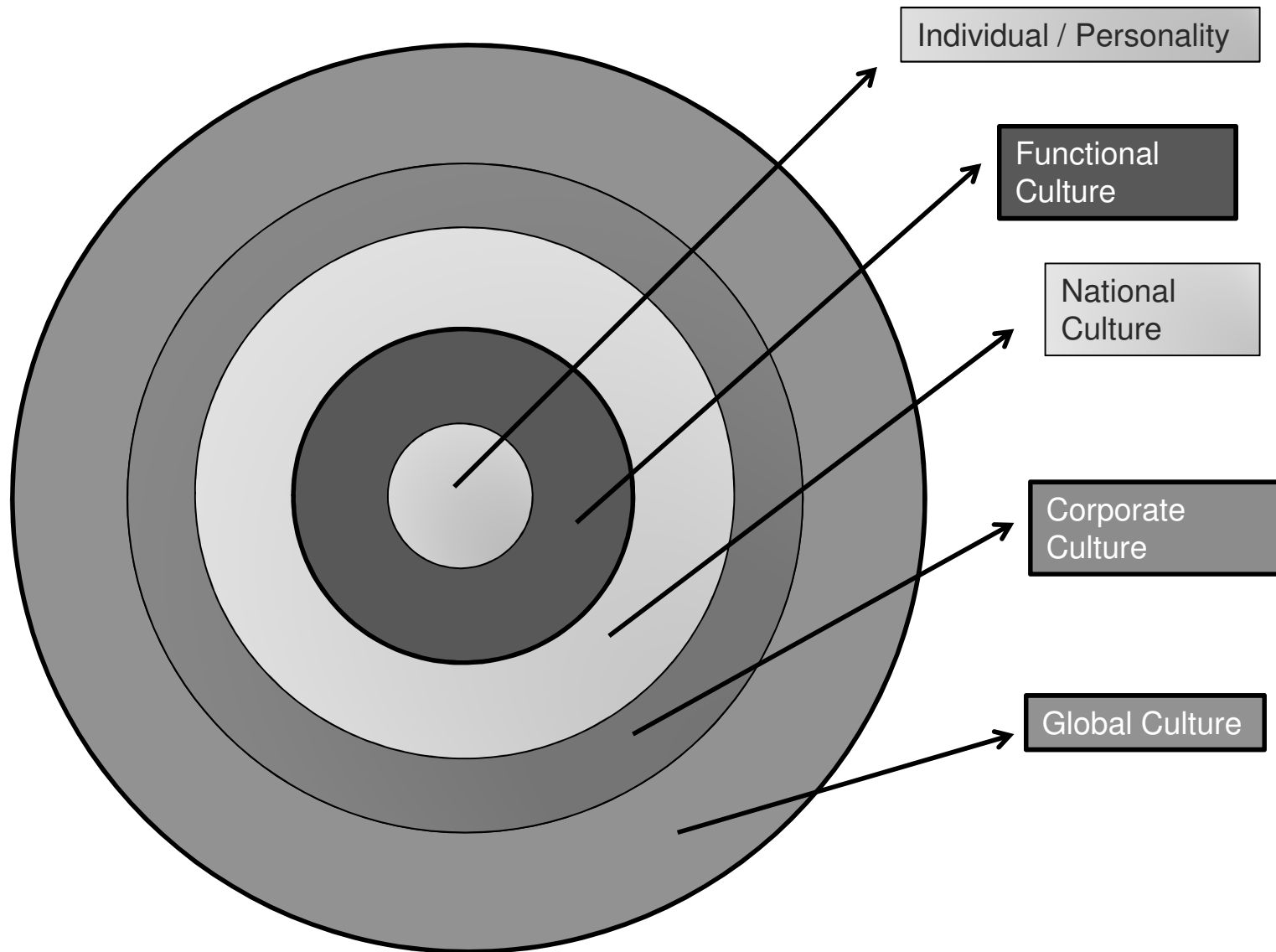
Explicit culture:
Perceive with 5
senses



Implicit culture:
Unobservable,
rooted in values,
history and
geography



Influencers of work behaviour



Categorizing culture

Human relationships

Individualism / collectivism

Hierarchy, status, rank / flat, equal

Concepts of trust

Task / relationship

Situational / rule-based

Concept of time

Risk avoidant / comfortable

Fate / control

Process / results

Communication

High-context / low-context

Harmony, indirect / Confrontational, direct

Formal, ritualistic / informal, efficient

Cultural stereotypes vs. tendencies

Stereotypes

The Closed Circle

Tendencies

The Open Circle



Rough guide



Key
concepts,
values and
approaches

- Confucian values
- Harmony
- Concept of 'face'
- 'Nunchi'
- Group orientation
- Business model is characterized by the *chaebol*; giant, family-run corporations with enormous power
- Business is governed by who knows whom and how influential they are
- Importance of hierarchy
- Good business relationships are nurtured and long-term
- Any negotiations should end in a win-win situation so that nobody loses face

Group orientation: A basic difference

Individualists primarily define themselves by their own actions (“I’m an engineer” or “I’m a pianist”), while collectivists define themselves by their group or family membership (“I’m part of the Lee family” or “I’m a Samsung employee”).

Individualists

- Rewarded for “thinking outside the box”
- “Doing their own thing”
- Looking out for themselves

Collectivists

- Rewarded for working harmoniously with others
- Minimize attention to his/her own contributions to group effort
- Strong group loyalty

Individualism-Collectivism Around the World

(Individualistic)	Germany	Turkey	Thailand
USA	South Africa	Uruguay	Salvador
Australia	Finland	Greece	South Korea
Great Britain	Austria	Philippines	Taiwan
Canada	Israel	Mexico	Peru
Netherlands	Spain	East Africa	Costa Rica
New Zealand	India	Yugoslavia	Pakistan
Italy	Japan	Portugal	Indonesia
Belgium	Argentina	Malaysia	Colombia
Denmark	Iran	Hong Kong	Venezuela
Sweden	Jamaica	Chile	Panama
France	Brazil	West Africa	Ecuador
Ireland	Arab countries	Singapore	Guatemala
Norway			(Collectivistic)
Switzerland			

from Hofstede, 1991

Hierarchy

A black and white photograph of a city street at night. The scene is dominated by tall, modern buildings with many lit windows, creating a grid of light against the dark sky. In the foreground, a person is walking away from the camera, slightly out of focus. A metal railing runs across the lower part of the frame. The overall atmosphere is that of a busy urban environment.

Hierarchy in
South
Korean
companies

- Strict delineated hierarchy
- Those at the bottom are rarely empowered to make decisions
- Strong bonds within a Korean team

Rank and status

Determined by several factors,
depending on what group you are
focusing on:

Age

Family position

Job title

Work sector

SXC



Power Distance Around the World

(High Distance)	France	South Korea	Australia
Malaysia	Hong Kong	Iran	Costa Rica
Guatemala	Colombia	Taiwan	Germany
Panama	Salvador	Spain	Great Britain
Philippines	Turkey	Pakistan	Switzerland
Mexico	Belgium	Japan	Finland
Venezuela	East Africa	Italy	Norway
Arab countries	Peru	Argentina	Sweden
Ecuador	Thailand	South Africa	Ireland
Indonesia	Chile	Jamaica	New Zealand
India	Portugal	USA	Denmark
West Africa	Uruguay	Canada	Israel
Yugoslavia	Greece	Netherlands	Austria
Singapore			(Low Distance)
Brazil			

from Hofstede, 1991

Communication



Making the right connection

- Koreans value humility in their communications with others.
- The use of "yes" often indicates "I understand" rather than "I agree".
- Self deprecation will often result in gaining the respect of others.
- Pauses and silences are more common during meetings and gatherings.
- Interruptions are infrequent during meetings.
- The context, including non verbal communication, seating arrangements, etiquette and formalities carry more importance and meaning.

Communication styles

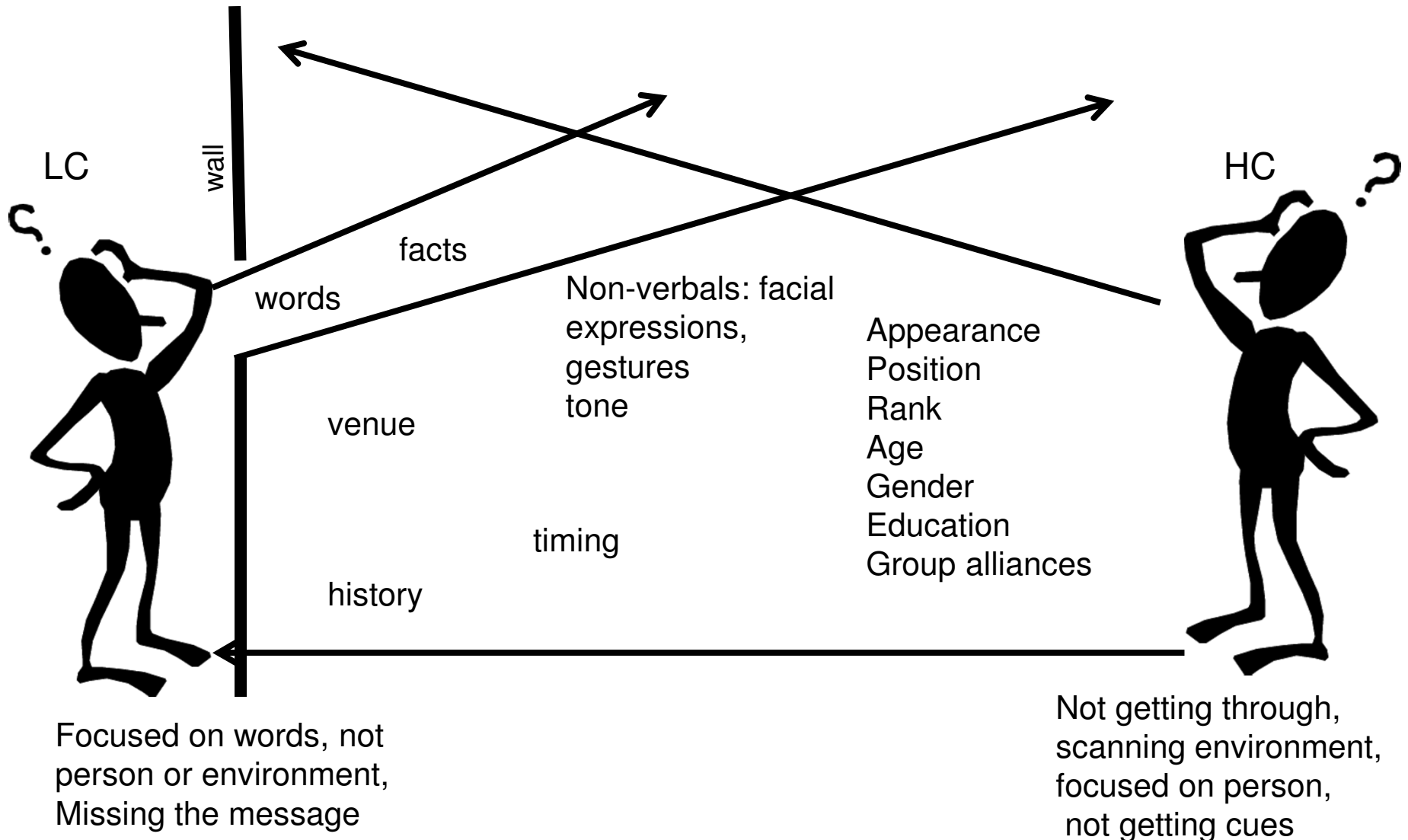
High context

- Meaning is dependent on situation, individuals, context
- Can be indirect
- Non-verbals high
- Verbals may be invalid

Low context

- Meaning is non-variable, independent of context and situation
- Can be very direct
- Verbal meaning high
- Non-verbals secondary

High context and low context



Best practices



Practice makes perfect!



감사합니다
Merci
Thank you

