

How culturally aware are we?

Translating and interpreting in a multinational world

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njour

オラ!

Good
morning

Ciao!

ДО СВИДАНИЯ

早安

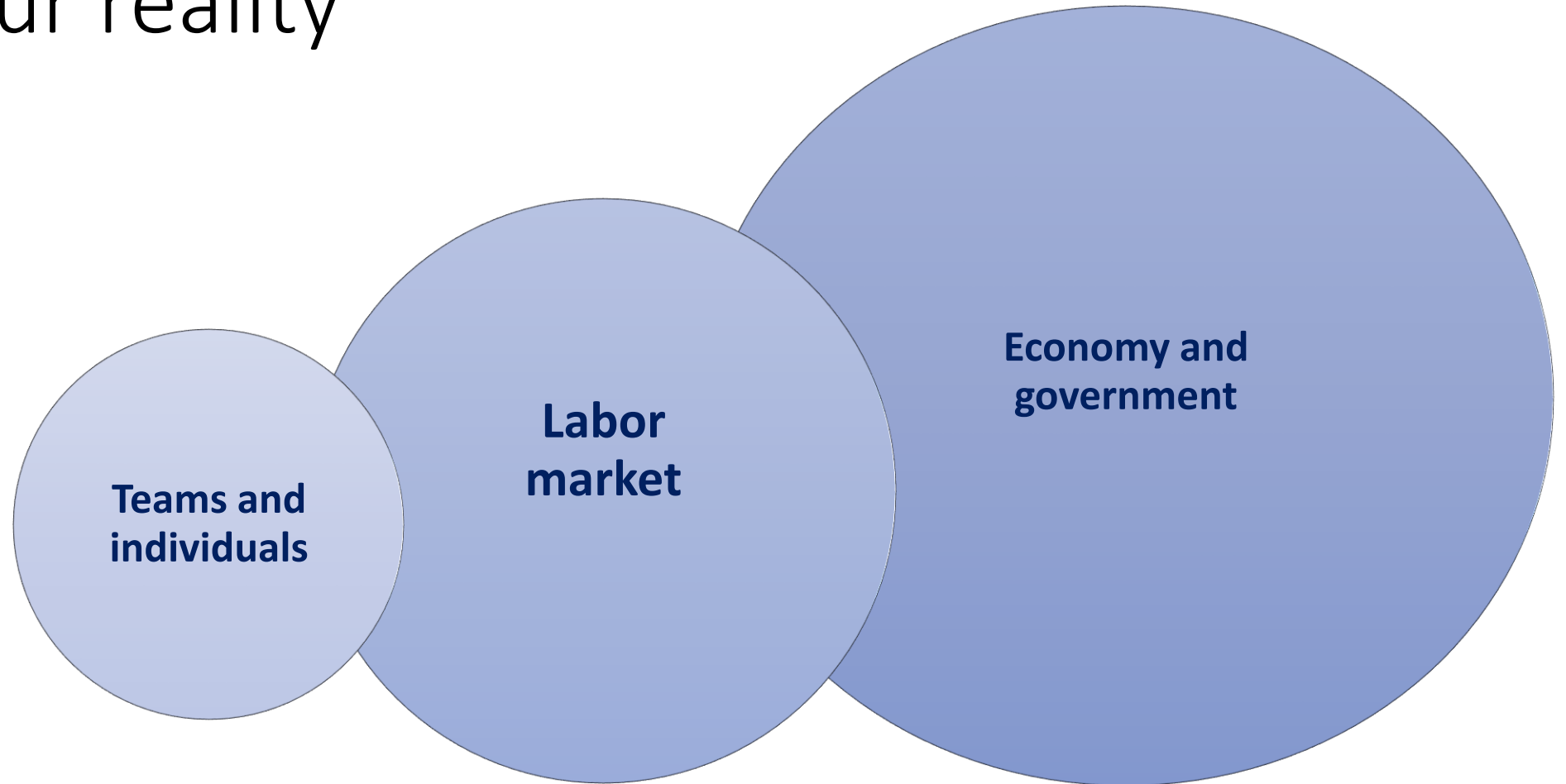
Hello!

Diversity

- International
- multilingualistic
- multicultural
- multimodal



Our reality



Cultural uniformity is not a given



Are you aware of cultural differences and to what extent they may affect communication?

Time constraints
Tasks to carry out
Pressure to reach
high quality
standards

....



These issues will be easily overlooked

What do we
know about
the OTHER?

Cultural awareness influenced by

- Family and friends
- Educational background (school and university)
- Media (portrait a distorted image of the other?/ seem to be biased against specific groups – gypsies in Portugal, Muslims, etc.)
- Life experiences (travelling or not, contact with other ethnic and religious groups)
- Contextual surroundings (place where you live, the migrant population near you)
- ...



- How to cope with different multicultural environments
- To what extent you are willing to learn more about the others
- Are HEI preparing their future graduates for these kind of challenges?

Project-based approach



- Translation of Technical Texts course
 - 3rd year – senior year of the Administrative Assistance and Translation Program
- Technical Writing and Technical Communication courses
 - US universities (North Dakota, Colorado, etc.)

Cultural 'bumps'

- The feedback provided by the US students was too blunt;
- PT students reacted negatively to criticism;
- Time and cooperation were overlooked at times;
- No need for interpersonal communication other than the minimum;
- ...

These cultural mismatches and divergences created a problem which threatened the continuation of the project.

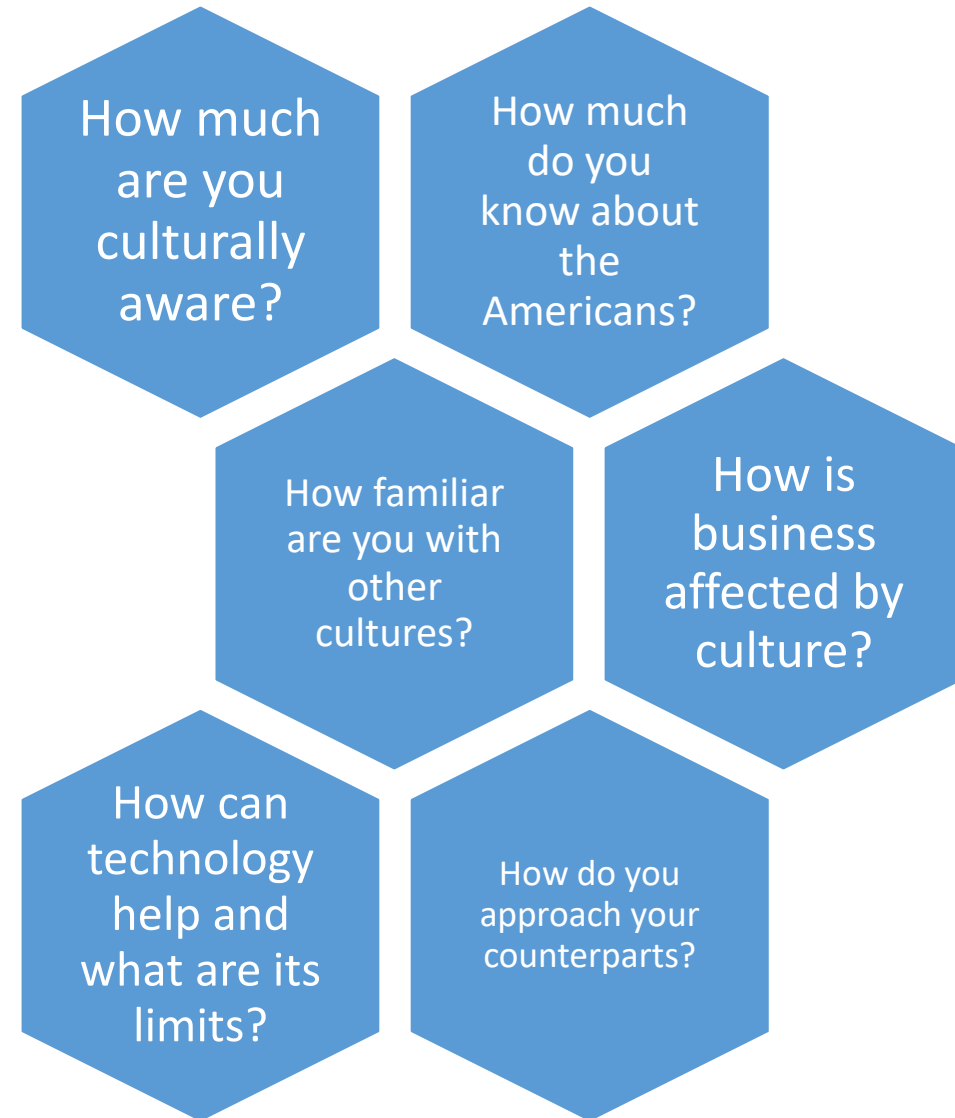
Cross-cultural intensive strategy

Designed and implemented in 2018/19:

- 1st phase - Awareness of the cultural differences
- 2nd phase - Cultural self-awareness questionnaire
- 3rd phase - Results analysis (In and out class; faculty and students involved)

1st phase: Brainstorming

What do the Portuguese need to know about USA?



1st phase: answers

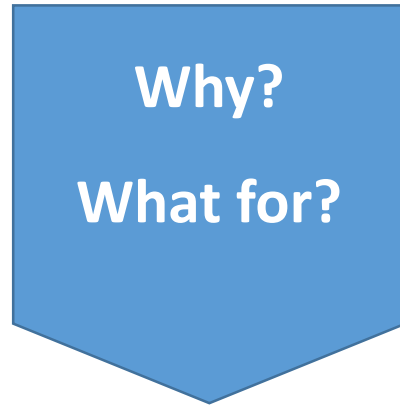
Awareness of differences

- Self-centered society
- Work-oriented
- Technologically adept
- Poor educational system

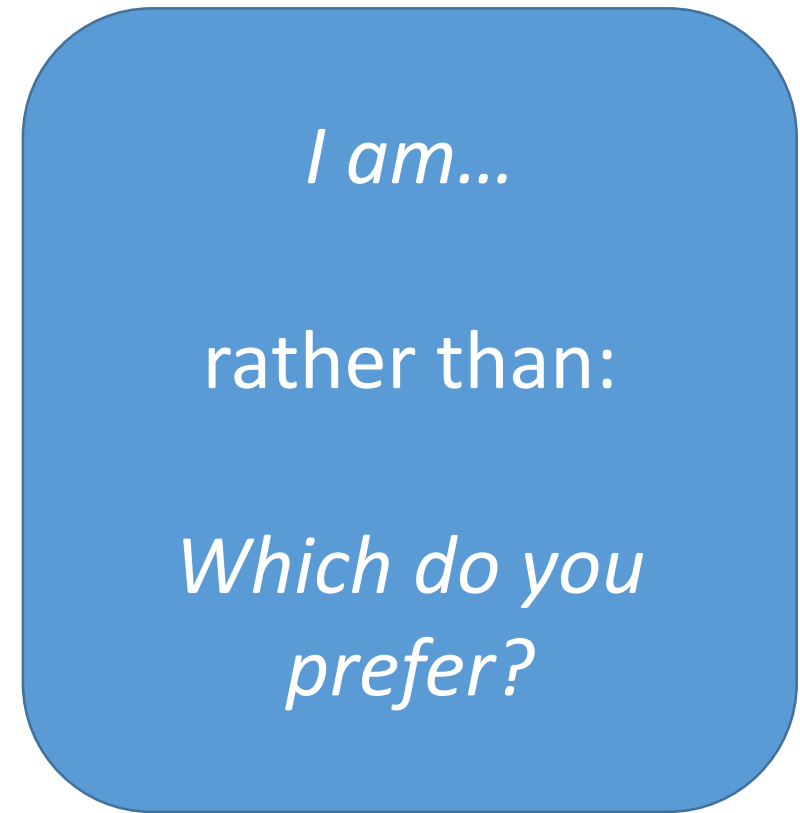
Common ground

- institutions (e. g. education)
- living and working conditions
- habits and lifestyle:
 - Europeans and Americans have *common* food and brands and speak a *common* language of communication

2nd phase: Cultural self-awareness questionnaire



Enhance awareness of your cultural self



ONLINE SURVEY

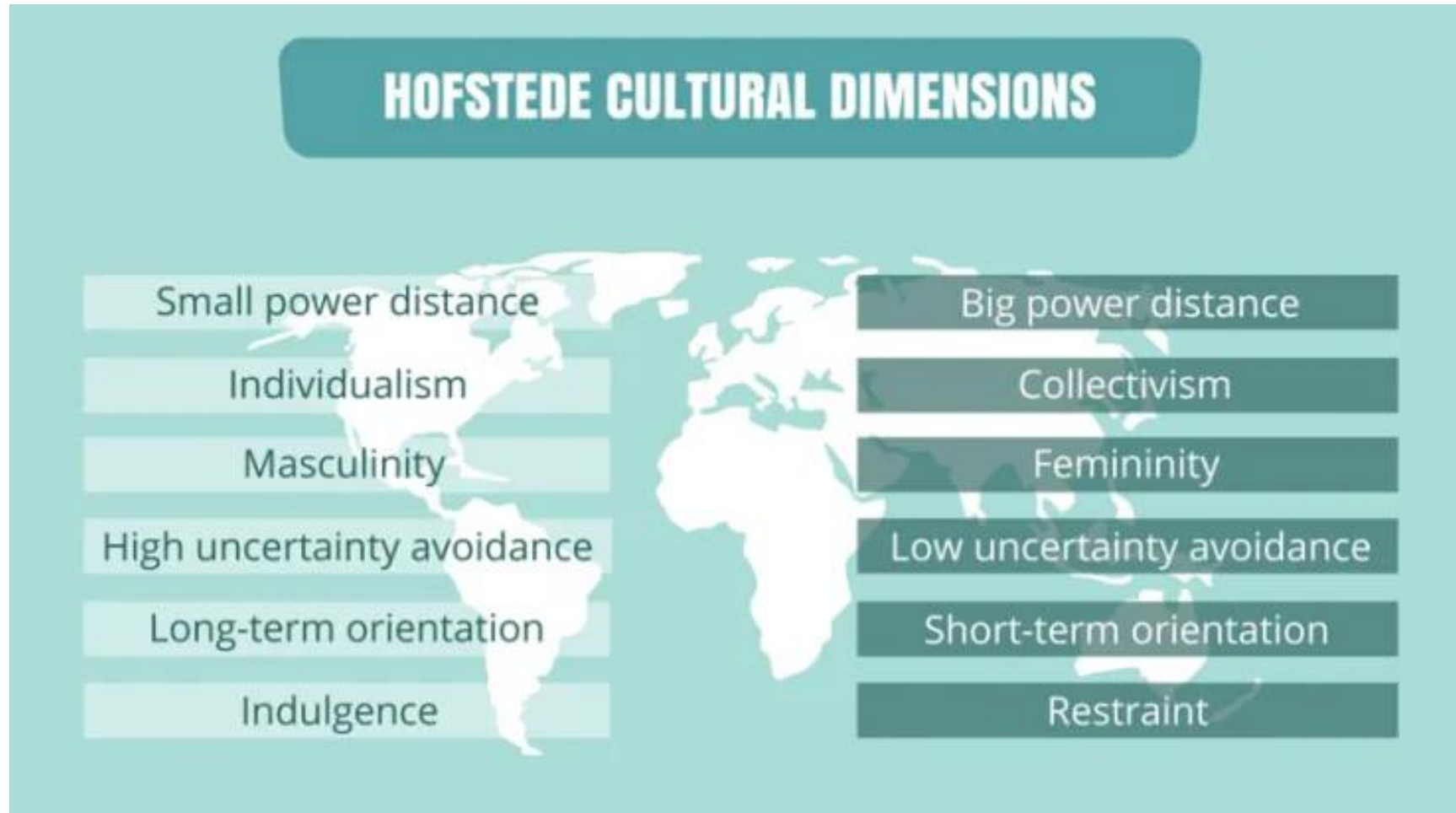


Muslims (Syrian
Palestinians, Qataris,
Egyptians, Jordanians,
Omanis, Moroccans)

Hall's cultural facts – time, space, high/low context

Factor	High-context culture	Low-context culture
Overtmess of messages	Many covert and implicit messages, with use of metaphor and reading between the lines.	Many overt and explicit messages that are simple and clear.
Locus of control and attribution for failure	Inner locus of control and personal acceptance for failure	Outer locus of control and blame of others for failure
Use of non-verbal communication	Much nonverbal communication	More focus on verbal communication than body language
Expression of reaction	Reserved, inward reactions	Visible, external, outward reaction
Cohesion and separation of groups	Strong distinction between ingroup and outgroup. Strong sense of family.	Flexible and open grouping patterns, changing as needed
People bonds	Strong people bonds with affiliation to family and community	Fragile bonds between people with little sense of loyalty.
Level of commitment to relationships	High commitment to long-term relationships. Relationship more important than task.	Low commitment to relationship. Task more important than relationships.
Flexibility of time	Time is open and flexible. Process is more important than product	Time is highly organized. Product is more important than process

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions



Results



High-context (more non-verbal communication) vs Low-context (more verbal communication)

	STATEMENT	PT	US	AR
1	I like specific directions that tell me exactly what is expected.	84	80	88
	I like more general, open-ended directions that give me some leeway and autonomy.	15	19	11
2	When feedback is vague, I'm confused and frustrated.	93	97	88
	When feedback is direct, I'm embarrassed and upset.	6	2	11
3	I'm perplexed when I don't receive specific, to-the-point information.	90	86	77
	I feel limited and micromanaged when I receive very specific communication.	9	13	22

- Preference for verbal communication
- Explicit and overt communication: direct feedback; need direct specific information
- Autonomy and freedom of action (seem) irrelevant
- Prefer guidance/orientation and to know the expectations

Power distance (relation between distribution of power)

	STATEMENT	PT	US	AR
4	I like feeling that we all have shared responsibility.	68	80	88
	I like to know who will take responsibility.	31	19	11
5	Knowing someone's in charge gives me a sense of security.	71	97	88
	Titles, status, and formality create barriers for me.	28	2	11
6	I work best when there's order from a chain of command.	56	86	77
	I work best when I can rely on information and ideas from anywhere in the organization when levels are disregarded.	43	13	22

- Hierarchical vs Egalitarian
- Accept formality and a structured chain of command
- Responsibility is shared
- Social structure is important.

Individualism vs Collectivism

	STATEMENT	PT	US	AR
7	I feel best when I'm responsible only for my own work.	75	45	55
	It's embarrassing to me to be singled out for praise.	25	54	44
8	Each individual's needs must be respected and considered	78	60	55
	What's best for me is what's best for the group.	21	39	44
9	I work best in a team or group setting.	34	45	55
	I work best independently on my own.	65	54	44

- Sense of achievement is rooted in the self (PT)
- Self-identity rooted in groups (AR)
- Strong feeling of affiliation to family and community
- Individually-oriented work emphasis (PT and US)

Relationships vs Task-/goal-oriented

	STATEMENT	PT	US	AR
10	I need to get to know people in order to work productively with them.	84	69	77
	Spending time talking and socializing interferes with productivity.	15	30	22
11	Teamwork is enhanced when there are strong interpersonal bonds.	59	84	66
	Productivity is enhanced when people focus on getting the job done.	40	15	33
12	I enjoy socializing with my co-workers in and out of work.	65	39	22
	I keep my work life and social life separate.	34	60	77

- Productivity benefits from interpersonal interactions
- Personal connections favor group work (mainly US)
- Socializing is important for PT regardless of being co-workers or not
- Relationship more important than task.

Temporality - monochronic vs polychronic

	STATEMENT	PT	US	AR
13	I run my day by a schedule.	68	82	77
	I rarely look at the clock or a watch.	31	17	22
14	I like to be on time and expect others to do the same.	75	60	55
	What happens at the meeting is more important to me than when it starts.	25	39	44
15	It's frustrating for me when others are late.	75	58	66
	For me, a schedule and appointments are guidelines not rules.	25	41	33

- Time is adjustable to the circumstances
- Order and planning are relevant
- Time is linear (punctuality is emphasized)

Femininity vs Masculinity

	STATEMENT	PT	US	AR
16	I become tense and upset when there is conflict at work.	50	69	88
	When there is a conflict at work, I want to get to the bottom of it.	50	30	11
17	Differences are best dealt with quietly, behind the scenes.	31	56	88
	Differences are best dealt with when the issues are discussed openly.	68	43	11
18	I try to avoid conflict wherever possible.	65	69	77
	I generally confront the issue when I perceive there is conflict brewing	34	30	22

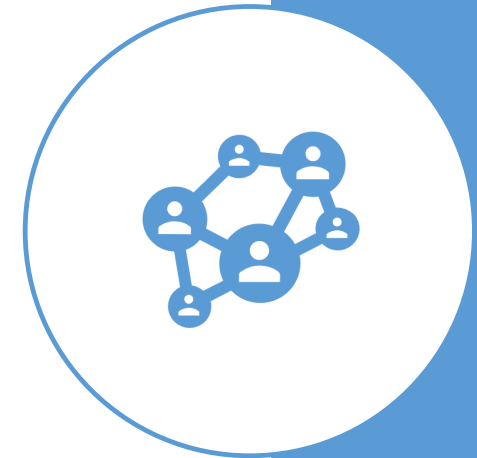
- Disagreement is personalized and should be avoided
- Differences should be dealt with openly and assertively
- Less confrontational (AR)
- More rational approach to conflict (US)

Now, it is your turn!

<http://www.polljunkie.com/poll/gpwjet/cultural-profile-porto-2020>

Wrapping up

- In our HEI, engaging both instructors and students on cross cultural interactions reduces the probability of cultural clashes and improves efficiency
- Embracing cultural diversity as a key factor on the team performance of every organization
- Capitalize on our common ground (knowledge and experiences) to promote synergies
- Communication mismatches were minimized



Sources:

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