

### III. Tagging Pictures for the LESCANT Model

The LESCANT model for tagging experiences interacting with another culture was developed by David A. Victor in the book *International Business Communication*. The letters in the acronym stand for the categories: **L**anguage, **E**nvironment, **S**ocial organization, **C**ontext, **A**uthority, **N**onverbal communication and **T**ime. Examples of photos with descriptions using this tagging system can be found at <http://laits.utexas.edu/lescant/page/about-lescant/index.html>

Categorizing and articulating your experiences with this tagging system should help in raising cultural awareness, also about subtle societal aspects. Keep in mind that there is overlapping among these categories and that what matters most is your explanation as to why you chose a particular tag.

Here are some examples. You can probably find many of your own through introspection.

**Language:** “sometimes cultures differ because of language differences. These include attitudes about your own language, insider relationships for those who speak a foreign language, decisions related to which language is used, and how to speak in ways that others will understand you.”

Here is an example of a marketing strategy by a Swedish firm for a vacuum cleaner in Great Britain that tripped over language:



**Environment** includes physical characteristics, such a climate, topography, population size and density, and natural resources.

Dixon tells the story of an American who went to Poland on business. An important meeting needed to be scheduled, but the American wasn't sure about timing so he asked the Poles to call him in the morning to set a time. They never called and the meeting didn't happen. "It was a big deal for him; he was very disappointed. He assumed the Poles weren't interested. The Poles, on the other hand, assumed everyone knew the phones in Poland are not always reliable – on a bad day, it can take two hours to get a call put through, if you can get a working line."

In discussing **Social Organization**, Victor contrasts family ties in the US with those of Mexico, where, according to author John Condon, "one is more likely to hear of a person's connections or influence, which is frequently through the family system." In Arab society, most have "over a hundred 'fairly close' relatives." For Victor, this category also includes nature and distribution of education, religion, class systems, and gender roles, individualism, workplace, political and judicial system and mobility. This then is a very broad category indeed!

**Context** might be viewed as a kind of personal interaction from very focused, transparent and explicit (which Victor calls low context) to more personal, rapport-building and implicit (high-context). Types of verbal communication play a role here. The following example concerning negotiations between a US Story Map as Story Board

## Story Map as Story Board

company and Japanese corporation. Victor uses it as an example of *haragei* (intuitive knowledge, experiences and feeling):

At the point where the U.S. contingent laid out a series of proposed prices for the goods in question, the Japanese, as is culturally appropriate, were silent for some time. The Americans, uncomfortable with the silence, interpreted this to mean the Japanese were unhappy with the prices quoted and immediately made a number of pricing concessions. The Japanese negotiators were both surprised and amused, since they really had no problem with the original prices.

**Authority** “deals with the role of authority figures and how power and decision making is accomplished. Authority also looks at leadership style and the relationship between bosses and their subordinates.”

Italy has a very large percentage of small and medium-sized family-owned enterprises (SMEs), and even some of the largest corporations are still controlled by single families (for example Fiat, Ferrero, Benetton, Mediaset, etc.). Because of the strong family presence in the Italian society and likewise in business, the management structures are often weak and very hierarchical. Most, if not all, of the decisions are made by the owner of the business, by the family or by the very few key decision makers in a company. The decision making process often takes place outside company meetings and board rooms, with the management often notified about critical decisions without having had opportunity to offer input.

<http://www.lagazzettaitaliana.com/italy-business.aspx>

**Nonverbal communication** includes gestures, dress codes and adornment, colors, people’s expected proximity to each other, quality of voice, eye contact, touch, smell and even odor. Of course, Italian is known for its non-verbal, gestural communication.

You can see a cinematic example of this available in the LARC materials resources page:

<http://larcmaterials.sdsu.edu/images/ItalianMimi/ItalianMimi.html>

Or dig a little deeper and watch the wonderful presentation last year by an Italian film maker on gestures in film and politics:

- Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7LAI3XxNI8>
- Part 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q\\_7SnjDXeDM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_7SnjDXeDM)
- Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhGtahafn68>

**Time** “refers to how people divide time, how they schedule their activities, and how they organize their day.”

Communication style during meetings is dissimilar between Italian and American companies. Italians have a different concept of punctuality and would tolerate a delay of 15 minutes (or more) in the start of a meeting. Additionally, agendas, when they exist, are very flexible. Further, all meeting participants will contribute to the conversations but may do so by interrupting others, holding side conversations, coming and going from the meeting while it’s in session, or speaking on the mobile phone without excusing themselves.

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