Overview of David Victor's LESCANT Model: International Business Communication
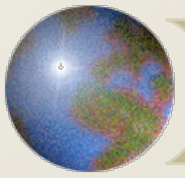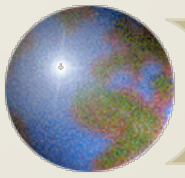
Orlando R. Kelm
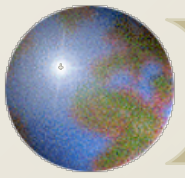
LESCANT

- **L**anguage
- **E**nvironment
- **S**ocial Organization
- **C**ontext
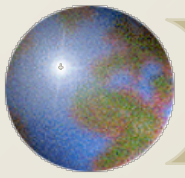- **A**uthority
- **N**on-verbal
- **T**ime

Language

- 1. Linguistic Ethnocentrism
  - Historical Reasons (e.g., Greek, French)
  - Social Reasons (e.g., English)
  - Political Reasons (e.g., Basque, Catalan, Gaelic)
  - Religious Reasons (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Armenian, Russian)
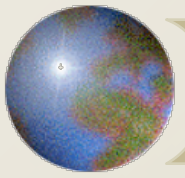 - Multiple Factors (e.g., comfort level = best)

Language, cont.

- 2. Insider-Outsider Relationship
  - *Lingua franca*
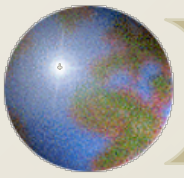 - Shibboleth

Language, cont.

- 3. Alliances in Linguistically Determined Group Dynamics
  - French in Canada
  - Quechua in Peru
  - Catalan in Spain
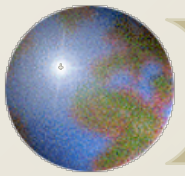
Language, cont.

- 4. Suggestions
  - Avoid idiomatic speech, slang, and colloquialisms
  - Speak slowly
  - Keep vocabulary simple
  - Rephrase frequently
  - Use written support
  - Become familiar with cognates
  - Be wary of false cognates
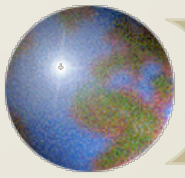 - Summarize

Environment

- 1. Physical Traits
  - Size (e.g., Japanese pharmaceutical data)
  - Workplace (e.g., safety vs. full employment)
  - Surroundings (e.g., beds, chairs, lights, desks, offices, cubicles, phones)
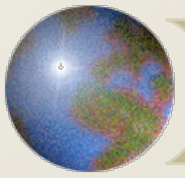
Environment, cont.

- 2. Physical Characteristics
  - Climate (e.g., A little dizzy in Peru)
  - Topography (e.g., Hawaii, you can't get there from here)
  - Population Size (e.g., US, why go international?)
  - Population Density and Space Usage (e.g., Japan parking & baby powder)
  - Availability of Natural Resources (e.g., "there's plenty more where that came from)
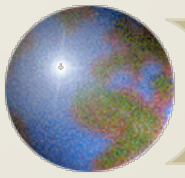
Environment, cont.

- 3. Perception of Technology
  - Control (e.g., U.S. Why does Phoenix exist?)
  - Subjugation (e.g., Muslim countries and will of Allah)
  - Harmony (e.g., members view themselves as part of their environment)
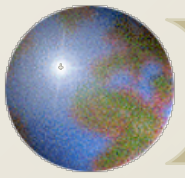
Social Organization

- 1. Kinship & Family
  - Nuclear vs. Extended Family
  - Nepotism

Social Organization, cont.
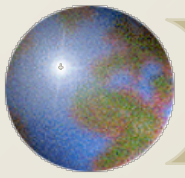
- 2. Education System
  - Literacy (e.g., Gerber baby food in Africa)
  - Accessibility (e.g., Mexico TEC system)
  - Networks (e.g., France, *grandes écoles*)

Social Organization, cont.
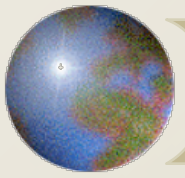
- 3. Class System
  - Achievement vs. Aristocracies

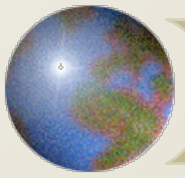# *Social Organization, cont.*

- 4. Gender Roles
  - Collegial Interaction, Attempt to Ignore Gender Stereotypes
  - Collegial Interaction, Attempt to Cultivate Gender Stereotypes
  - Non-collegial or Absent Interaction

Social Organization,cont.
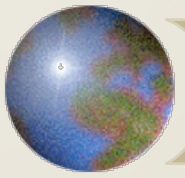
- 5. Individualism & Collectivism
  - Epcot Center U.S. Pavilion: Individualism, Self-reliance, Independence, Freedom
  - Japan: "The nail that stands up will be hammered down."

Social Organization, cont.
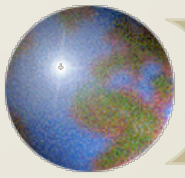
- 6. Religion
  - Theological Values (e.g., protestant work ethic)
  - Day-to-Day Behavior (e.g., alcohol, prayers, etc.)
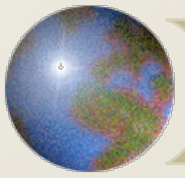 - Group Membership

Social Organization, cont.

- 7. Occupational Institutions
  - Mechanistic Attitude (e.g., amount and quality of labor)
  - Humanistic Attitude (e.g., membership in a sort of family)
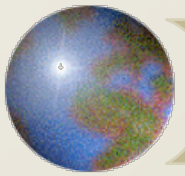
Social Organization, cont.

- 8. Mobility & Geography Attachment
  - High Mobility (e.g., U.S. job opportunities)
  - Static Mobility
  - Phasic Mobility

Social Organization, cont.

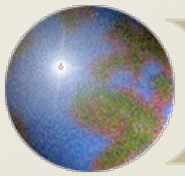- 9. Recreational Institutions
  - Free Time (e.g., Japan = 6 hours, U.S. = 24 hours, U.K. = 41 hours)
  - Vacations
  - Sports

Context

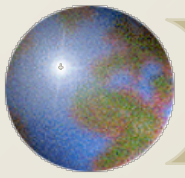- 1. High Context vs. Low Context
  - Emphasis on Personal Relationships
  - Belief in Explicit Communication, Laws, Contracts
    - Written words
    - Adherence to law
    - Governance of interpersonal behavior
    - Agreements based on promises
    - Agreements based on written word

Context, cont.

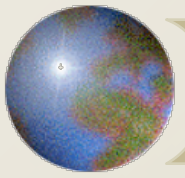- 1. High Context vs. Low Context
  - Reliance on Verbal Communication
    - Reliance on words to communicate
    - Reliance on nonverbal communication
    - View of silence
    - Attention to detail
    - Attention to intent
    - Direct/Indirect communication approach
    - Literalness
  - Uncertainty Avoidance Variations
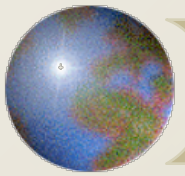
Context, cont.

- **1. High Context vs. Low Context**
  - Face-Saving
    - Act of preserving one's prestige or outward dignity
    - Politeness Strategy
    - Indirectness = civility
    - Low verbal self-disclosure
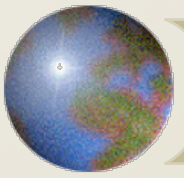   - High tolerance to vagueness

Authority

- 1. Authority Defined
  - Power = Substantive Action
  - Leadership Style = Symbolic Action
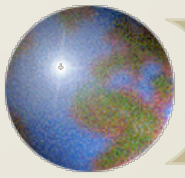
Authority, cont.

- 2. Power
  - Independent of the person holding it (i.e., transferable)
  - Resting in individual rather than in the office held (i.e., non-transferable)
  - Decision Making vs. Status
  - Use of titles

Authority, cont.
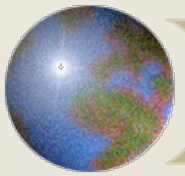
- **3. Power Distance**
  - Extent to which boss and subordinate can influence one another

Authority, cont.
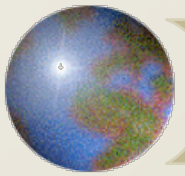
- 4. Leadership Style
  - What leaders do vs. how they are perceived (e.g., Mark Cuban)
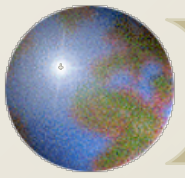
Authority, cont.

- ### 5. Suggestions
  - Pay attention to how others react to shows of power
  - For High Power Distance cultures, give clear orders
  - For High Power Distance cultures, do not demand participative feedback
  - For Low Power Distance cultures, expect desire to hear opinions of subordinates
  - For Low Power Distance cultures, participation in decision making does not diminish power

Non-verbal

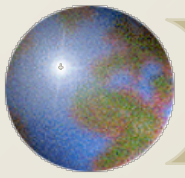- 1. Active Non-Verbal Communication
  - Kinesics (Personal Idiosyncrasies, Situational, Gender, Cultural)
    - Emblems (e.g., OK sign, Khrushchev's Victory sign)
    - Affect Display (e.g., show of emotion)
    - Regulators (e.g., nodding in Japan vs. U.S.)
    - Adaptors (e.g., scratching, squirming, smiling)
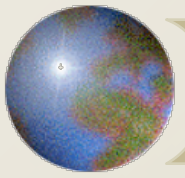
Non-verbal, cont.

- 2. Appearance
  - Dress and Adornment
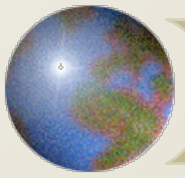
Non-verbal, cont.

- 3. Oculesics
  - Eye contact (e.g., attentiveness vs. respect)
  - Mutual gaze (e.g., Briton blinking)
  - Squinting, winking, fluttering eyelids, eyebrow movement

Non-verbal, cont.
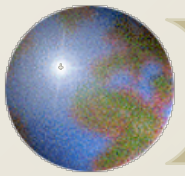
- 4. Haptics
  - Functional/Professional
  - Social/Polite
  - Friendship/Warmth
  - Love/Intimacy
  - Sexual Arousal

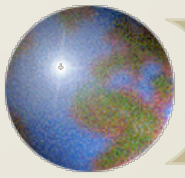# *Non-verbal, cont.*

- 5. Proxemics
  - Public
  - Social-consultative
  - Casual-personal
  - Intimate

Non-verbal, cont.
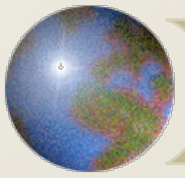
- 6. Paralanguage
  - Voice quality
  - Vocalization
  - Vocal Qualifiers (e.g., lower voice = respect (Saudi), = calm strength to uncertainty (U.S)
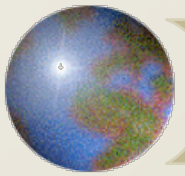
Non-verbal, cont.

- 7. Passive Non-Verbal Communication
  - Color
  - Numerals and counting indicators
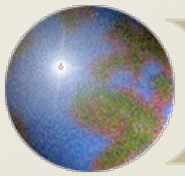 - Nonkinesic emblems
  - Olfactory communication

Time

- 1. Individual Reality of Time (e.g., Time flies when you are having fun.)

Time, cont.

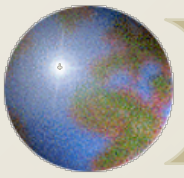- 2. Monochronic
    - Interpersonal relations are subordinate to schedule
    - Schedule coordinates activity
    - One task handled at a time
    - Breaks and personal time are sacrosanct
    - Time is inflexible
    - Work time separate from personal time
    - Time measured by output (activity per hour)

Time, cont.

- 3. Polychronic Time
  - Preset schedule is subordinate to interpersonal relations
  - Interpersonal relations coordinate activity
  - Many tasks handled simultaneously
  - Breaks subordinate to personal ties
  - Time is flexible, fluid
  - Work time not clearly separate from personal time
  - Activities integrated into a whole

Reference

- Victor, David A. 1992. *International Business Communication*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.