

# **10937NAT**

# **New Diploma of English Proficiency**

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Diploma of English Proficiency

Analyse Australian Cultural Contexts

Pack

NAT10937009

Section 1 - High Context and Low Context Cultures Part 1

Go to YouTube and search for the subject “Oliver Phillips High Context and Low Context Cultures”. Listen **once** to Oliver Phillips (5:30 minutes) and be prepared to answer the following questions with another partner.

1. What does he say about signage?
2. When working cross culturally, what should we do?
3. What does he say about church?
4. What is “low” and “dismal” about church?
5. What examples does he give of how the nuclear family is a high context environment?
6. What do “multiple network ties” create in high context societies?
7. What does he say about knowledge in low context societies?
8. Why is it critical to know whether a society is high or low context??
9. What examples of nationalities of high and low context modalities does Phillips give?
10. What are some suggestions which he gives for cross cultural engagement?

Section 1: High Context and Low Context Cultures Part 2

**High context and low context cultures**

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall’s theory of high- and low-context culture helps us better understand the powerful effect culture has on communication.  A key factor in his theory is **context.**  This relates to the framework, background, and surrounding circumstances, in which communication or an event takes place.  The following summary highlights the problems facing low-context North Americans when they interact with people from high-context cultures.

**High-context cultures** (including much of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America) are relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative.  This means that people in these cultures emphasize interpersonal relationships.  Developing trust is an important first step to any business transaction.  According to Hall, these cultures are collectivist, preferring group harmony and consensus to individual achievement.  And people in these cultures are less governed by reason than by intuition or feelings.  Words are not so important as context, which might include the speaker’s tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, posture—and even the person’s family history and status.  A Japanese manager explained his culture’s communication style to an American: “We are a homogeneous people and don’t have to speak as much as you do here.  When we say one word, we understand ten, but here you have to say ten to understand one.”  High-context communication tends to be more indirect and more formal.  Flowery language, humility, and elaborate apologies are typical.

**Low-context cultures** (including North America and much of Western Europe) are logical, linear, individualistic, and action-oriented.  People from low-context cultures value logic, facts, and directness.  Solving a problem means lining up the facts and evaluating one after another.  Decisions are based on fact rather than intuition.  Discussions end with actions.  And communicators are expected to be straightforward, concise, and efficient in telling what action is expected.  To be absolutely clear, they strive to use precise words and intend them to be taken literally.  Explicit contracts conclude negotiations.  This is very different from communicators in high-context cultures who depend less on language precision and legal documents.  High context business-people may even distrust contracts and be offended by the lack of trust they suggest.

Discussion:  Do you believe Hall is correct in his assumptions?  If so, what examples can you give that demonstrate high- and low-context cultures?  How would context help explain instances of miscommunication between North Americans and Japanese?  How could you become a better international communicator?

**Reference**

College of Marin, n.d., *Chapter 1 Lecture: High-context and low-context culture styles*, College of Marin, viewed 9 May 2014, http://www.marin.edu/buscom/index\_files/Page605.htm.

Section 2: Public Intellectuals

**Listening to an Australian Public Intellectual – Hugh McKay**

(<http://www.hughmackay.net.au/about-hugh-mackay/>)

***Hugh Mackay*** *is a social researcher and the author of sixteen books – ten in the field of social psychology and ethics, and six novels. His latest book, The Art of Belonging, was published in 2014, and his sixth novel, Infidelity, was published in 2013.*

Listen (once) to the first 11 ½ minutes of the YouTube clip of Hugh McKay discussing his book, “What makes us tick?” in 2011. In this book he talks about the 10 desires which govern us. (ttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLHUNxy7DIE)

1. In a short sentence, what is the thesis of Hugh’s book?
2. Are the 10 desires described in order of importance? Why? / Why not?
3. What is the first desire he talks about?
4. What is significant about:
   1. the Denton interview with Helen Bamber, the campaigner for the care of torture victims
   2. Applying for jobs
   3. Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generation
   4. The Roman Church’s apology to the Jews
   5. Ken Marone, the NSW Police Commissioner
   6. Arrogance
   7. Counselling
   8. Dogs
   9. Advertising campaigns
   10. Abusive relationships
   11. Mayo and the Western Electric Company
5. What other desires do you think govern us?

Section 3: Values, Attitudes and Prejudices

Values, Attitudes and Prejudices

* Oral agreements
* Short term view
* Long term view
* Particularist
* Collectivist
* Hierarchical
* Formal
* Ascribed status
* Informal
* Individualist
* Doing-oriented
* Universalist
* Egalitarian
* Being-oriented
* Achieved status
* Written agreement

Where are you?

