

EYE CONTACT

- In many Western societies, including the United States, a person who does not maintain “good eye contact” is regarded as being slightly suspicious, or a “shifty” character.
- Americans unconsciously associate people who avoid eye contact as unfriendly, insecure, inattentive and impersonal.
- However, in contrast, Japanese children are taught in school not to direct their gaze at the region of their teacher’s Adam’s apple or tie knot.
- As an adults, Japanese lower their eyes when speaking to a superior, a gesture of respect.
- Latin America and African have longer time looking, but prolonged eye contact from individual of lower status is considered disrespectful.
- A polite Englishman is taught to pay strict attention to a speaker, to listen carefully, and to blink his eyes to let the speaker know he or she has been understood as well as heard.
- Take the case of American and Chinese, the Americans interpreted the widening of the eyes as astonishment instead of danger and polite expression of anger.

Let’s Talk

1. In doing business overseas, how important is the knowledge of cultural issues?
2. If you are preparing a business contracts with people from other countries is it necessary to be acquainted with their culture? Why? Why not?