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**INSPIRE:**  
GETTING TO THE FUTURE FIRST

# Teaching students from the Middle East

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# Culture

- According to Scollon and Scollon and Jones (1995) “culture is a way of dividing people up into groups according to some feature of these people which helps us to understand something about them and how they are different from or similar to other people” (p. 4).

# Hofstede's dimensions

- Power distance
- Individualism and collectivism
- Masculinity and femininity
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Long-term orientation

# Power distance

the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organization within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (p. 28).

Middle East: 7 (power distance index)

New Zealand: 22 (power distance index)

# Power distance

- Large power distance – Classes are teacher-centred
  - Teachers are treated with respect and are considered the experts.
  - “The education system is highly personalized” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 34). Information is seen as the “personal wisdom of the teacher” (p. 34). The teacher is the guru.
  - Conversation is initiated by the teacher.
  - Success in the classroom is believed to be dependent on how good the teacher is.

# Power distance – the classroom

- Small power distance –
- Student centred classrooms
- Focus on student initiative, students asking questions to clarify.
- “The quality of learning is to a considerable extent determined by the excellence of the students” (p. 34).

# Power distance – the classroom

- So what does this mean for Arabic speaking students in your classrooms?
- What have you observed in your classes?
- Strategies for assisting the students?

# Collectivism and individualism

- Collectivism –
  - identity is tied to the group.
  - loyalty is to the group.
  - family is the extended family.
- Individualism –
  - personal identity is considered important.
  - people think of themselves as individuals.
- New Zealand – individualism index 6
- Middle East – individualism index 26/27

# Collectivism and individualism – the classroom

Collectivism –

- students do not speak up in class as individuals as they are part of the group, especially if they have not formed a relationship with the group.
- Taking part in group activities is generally enjoyed.
- Students from a dominant or preferred ethnic group will expect preferential treatment.
- Stress on learning the traditions.
- Social acceptance and promotion comes with qualifications.
  
- Individualism –
- Students are treated impartially, regardless of background
- Purpose of education is to teach students how to learn as it is assumed learning never stops.
- Stress on learning new skills, adaptation.
- Qualifications lead to a better job.

# Collectivism and individualism – the classroom

- So what does this mean for Arabic speaking students in your classrooms?
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# Masculinity and femininity

## Masculinity

- assertiveness, competitiveness, toughness

## Femininity

- nurturing
- “a concern for relationships” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 81).

# Masculinity and femininity – the classroom

- Masculine classrooms
    - high grades are important
    - competition between students is important
  - Feminine classrooms
    - Passing is considered enough
    - Solidarity is seen as a goal
    - “teachers’ friendliness and social skills and adaptation” (Hofstede, 1997, p. 91).
- students' social

## Masculinity index

New Zealand 17

Arab countries 23

# Masculinity and femininity – the classroom

- So what does this mean for Arabic speaking students in your classrooms?
- What have you observed in your classes?
- Strategies for assisting the students?

# Uncertainty avoidance

- “*The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations*” (p. 113) [italics in original]. Countries with a

## Uncertainty avoidance

- Arab countries 27 (anxiety levels lower)
- New Zealand 39/40 (higher anxiety levels)

# Uncertainty avoidance in the classroom

- Strong certainty avoidance students like – one correct answer, detailed assignments and strict guidelines. They expect to be rewarded for accuracy (p. 119).
- Weak certainty avoidance students like – “open-ended learning situations with vague objectives, broad assignments, and no timetables” (p. 119). They believe there is more than one correct answer.

# Uncertainty avoidance in the classroom

- So what does this mean for Arabic speaking students in your classrooms?
- What have you observed in your classes?
- Strategies for assisting the students?

# Long term orientation

- “The long term orientation dimension is closely related to the teachings of Confucius and can be interpreted as dealing with society’s search for virtue, ***the extent to which a society shows a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical short-term point of view.***
- With a score of 118 China is a highly long term oriented society in which persistence and perseverance are normal. Relationships are ordered by status and the order is observed. Nice people are thrifty and sparing with resources and investment tends to be in long term projects such as real estate. Traditions can be adapted to suit new conditions. Chinese people recognize that government is by men rather than as in the Low LTO countries by an external influence such as God or the law. Thinking ways focus on the full or no confidence, contrasting with low LTO countries that think in probabilistic ways.” (from website, make sure I reference this correctly)
- New Zealand’s score was 30. We are from the West.

# Arabic and English

## Language

There is no capitalization and no full-stops in Arabic.

Arabic speakers present both sides of the argument.

In English we **argue and back up our argument.**

Arabic speakers are hesitant to say “no” directly.

# Arabic and English

## Arabic speaking countries

It is not generally accepted to make direct eye contact with a member of the opposite sex.

Do not show the sole of your foot as it is offensive to Arabic speaking students.

# Arabic and English

## Arabic speaking countries

It is not generally accepted to make direct eye contact with a member of the opposite sex.

Do not show the sole of your foot as it is offensive to Arabic speaking students.

# References

Hofstede, G. (1997). Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind.

Scollon, R., Scollon, S. W., & Jones, R. H. (1995). *Intercultural communication: A discourse approach* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell.