

## Today's team



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2



## Intercultural Communication for Freshmen at Aalto

September 3, 2020

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with the help from

Antti Huittinen and Hanne-Maaria Hirvonen



3

## Housekeeping

- In a large group, please mute your microphones
- Disallow cameras
- Please use chat-feature for communication
- When in smaller groups, please use the camera
- You can always send questions also later:  
[jaana.suviniitty@aalto.fi](mailto:jaana.suviniitty@aalto.fi)
- Study-related questions to your study advisers



4

## Objectives for today:

After this session, you should

- recognize some of your own cultural background
- realize how our background influences all of us
- see why we fall into stereotyping and when it interferes
- know what ethnocentrism means and how to deal with it
- recognize your time concept and, perhaps; how to adjust it
- understand the strength of intercultural groups
- realize the strength of working in a group
- recognize the communicative features of working online



5

## Culture

- is always learnt
- is learnt by listening and modelling
- we grow up as part of it
- is always changing
- directs our ways to live and think



*"The structure of our own behavior is invisible and taken for granted **until** its exposed and challenged through actual intercultural encounter."*

Source: Andersen, P. Nonverbal communication: Forms and Functions, 2008



6

*"The main challenges in intercultural communication are **false perceptions**, which are caused by cultural differences."*

(Samovar & Porter 1994)



7

## What is culture?

### The layers of culture:

- National
- Regional and ethnical level
- Gender
- Generation
- Social class
- Organizational level

(e.g. Hofstede)

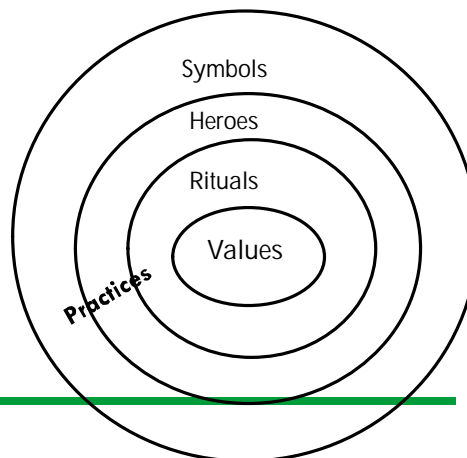
### Regional example:

Taina Kinnunen, a cultural anthropologist, argues that Finns still do not touch each other very openly. Researcher Kinnunen points out that Swedish-speaking Finns are more relaxed about touching. In Eastern Finland, it is more common to touch each other than in the Western parts. In the Ostrobothnia region, touching is even cooler.  
(Lähde: 29.4.2013 Yle)



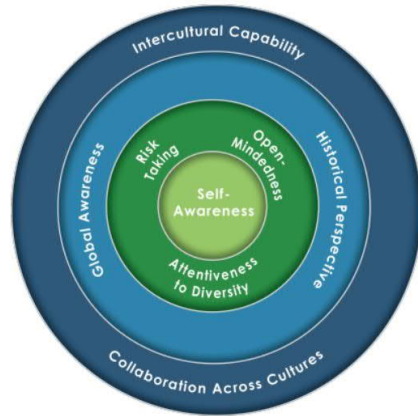
8

## Culture is like an onion (Hofstede)



9

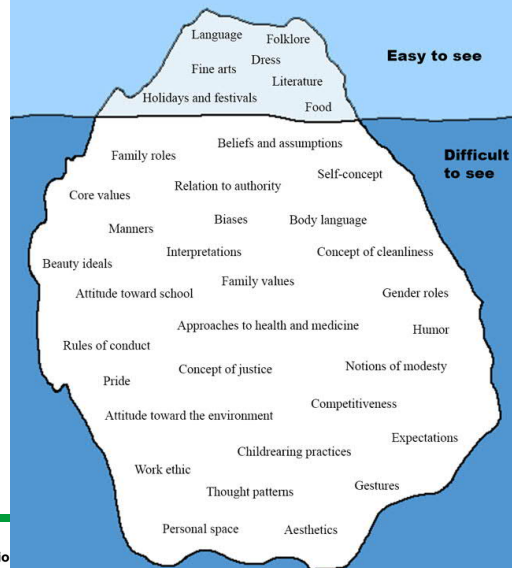
## Global Competence Model™



<https://globallycompetent.com/global-competence-model/>

10

## The Cultural Iceberg



[www.janinesmusicroom.com](http://www.janinesmusicroom.com)

11

## Be who you are

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sQuM5e0QGLg>



12

## Culture & Ethnocentrism

- Ethnocentrism: our way is the right way
- Feelings of superiority
- Culture affects our perceptions: **select, evaluate, and organize stimuli** from the external environment.

### Antidote

- Empathy: understanding the others' point of view

*"Remember to walk a mile in his moccasins  
And remember the lessons of humanity taught to you by your elders.  
We will be known forever by the tracks we leave  
In other people's lives, our kindnesses and generosity."*  
Mary T. Lathrap (1895). *Judge Softly*



Source: Porter & Samovar: An introduction to intercultural communication 1994  
<https://jamesmilson.com/about-the-blog/judge-softly-or-walk-a-mile-in-his-moccasins-by-mary-t-lathrap/>

13

# GROUP TASK

In breakout rooms (random selction)  
Keep the microphones and cameras on  
15 mins



14

The screenshot shows the FLINGA interface with the following elements and instructions:

- 1. Choose your color:** Points to a vertical color palette with various colored squares.
- 2. Choose shape:** Points to a dropdown menu with options: Square, Circle, Person, Title, Subtitle, and Text.
- 3. Type your message:** Points to the text input field containing "Your message here".
- 4. Send your message:** Points to the "Send" button.
- 5. Move your message:** Points to a small purple square with "Your message here" text, with a green arrow indicating it can be moved.

Additional interface elements include the FLINGA logo, a green microphone icon, a camera icon, a help icon, and zoom controls (+, -, and a refresh icon) in the bottom right corner.

15

## Discuss in small groups and write your ideas into Flinga

- How do you approach time and schedules?
- How does silence strike you?
- What does being polite entail in your opinion?



16

### FLINGA

#### Session name

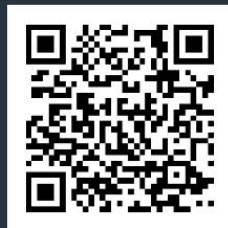
ICC: Concept of Time, ☆  
Silence, and Politeness

#### Access code

F9B5UP3

#### Join link

<https://flinga.fi/s/F9B5UP3>



17



## How was the discussion? (Sharing Flinga)

- Time and schedule
  - Linear approach (e.g. Finland)
  - Flexible approach (e.g. Spain)
  - Cyclical approach (e.g. China)
- Time and spatial concept
  - Where is future in your opinion?
    - Behind you or in front of you?

<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-different-cultures-understand-time-2014-5?r=US&IR=T>



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<https://blog.v-comply.com/time-vs-culture-a-perspective/>

18

## Politeness

- Necessary or not?
  - Training for working life
  - More pleasant for everyone
  - Life is already challenging without impoliteness
- An easy politeness tip
  - Use the language everyone present understands
  - In working life this is a must – better get used to it now
  - Most situations where English is used are Lingua Franca situations



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19

## What politeness actually is?

- Culture bound
- Depends...
- Finland:
  - Distant politeness
  - No interfering in others' business
  - Not many specific politeness phrases
  - Silence is certainly golden
  - No direct translation for "please"
  - Use of conditional in a sentence suffices
  - The highest form of compliment: an invitation to sauna!  
(no need to accept, Finns have to learn it's not for everyone ☺)



20

## SURVEY



21

## Poll results

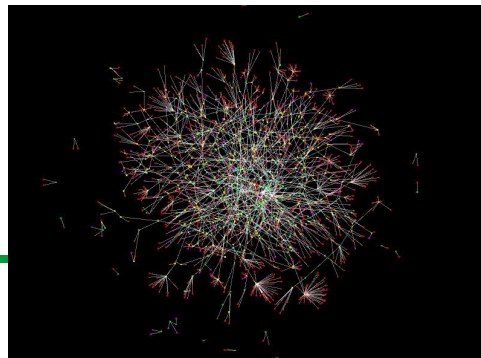
<http://presemo.aalto.fi/icc2020/screen>



22

## Working in teams

- Quite common at Aalto
- Even during online courses
- Working life goal
- Socialization within peers
- Building your network



23

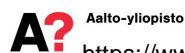
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4duPBWzf46E>



24

## The Importance of being open: Negotiating and discussing for successful teamwork

- Successful teamwork needs many issues to be clarified
  - Not only for multicultural teams
- Information asymmetry
  - Find out what each member knows
- Team agreement on housekeeping and other issues
- Clarify the roles of each team member
- Constructive and systematic feedback



<https://www.aalto.fi/en/collaboration/teamwork-first-aid-kit>

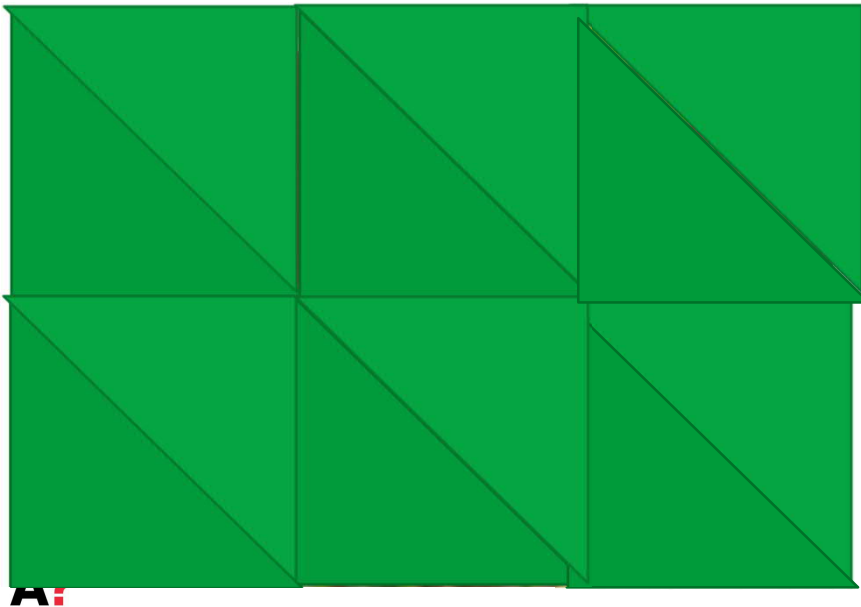
<https://www.hult.edu/blog/benefits-challenges-cultural-diversity-workplace/>

25

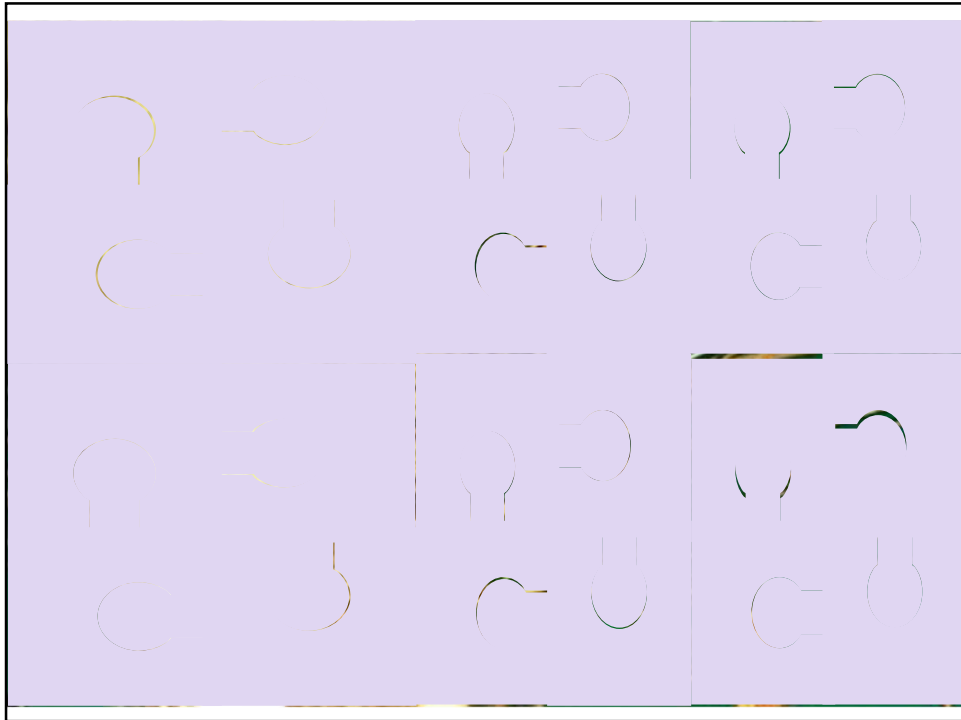
## Our brain on culture

- Autopilot
  - When we're tired
  - When there's very much new
  - When we're learning
- Let's see what I mean
  - When I show you an image, please use chat to write down your guesses

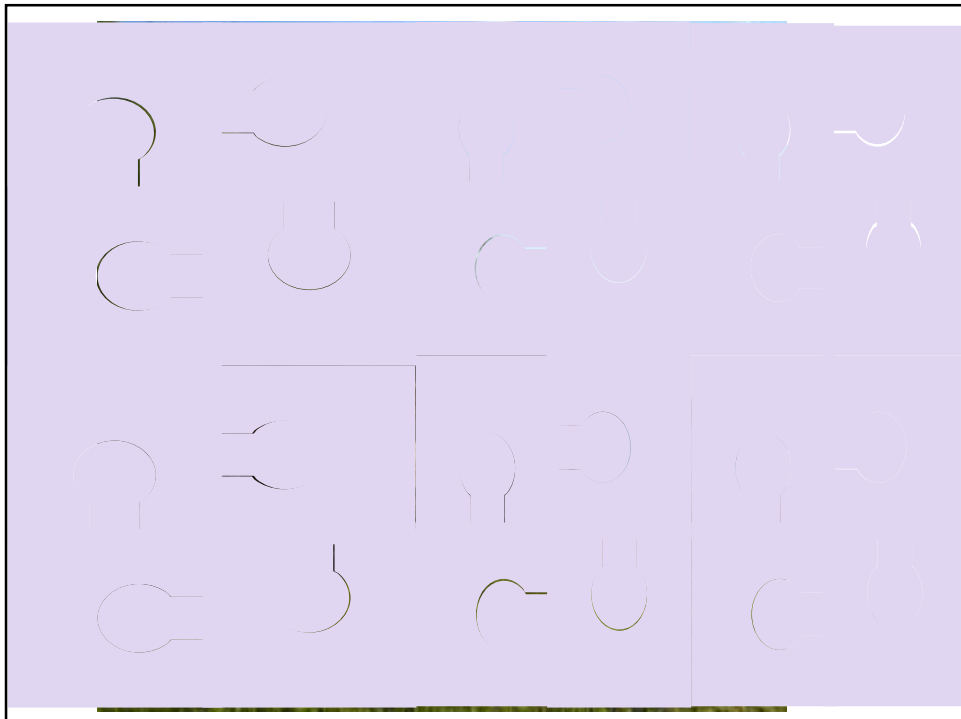
26



27



28



29

## Prior knowledge – why does it matter?

- In stressful situation our (lizard) brain takes over our frontal lobes
- We may just follow our instincts
- Our primitive reactions may overrule
- Being aware is the key
- Taking a deep breath helps to gauge the situation first

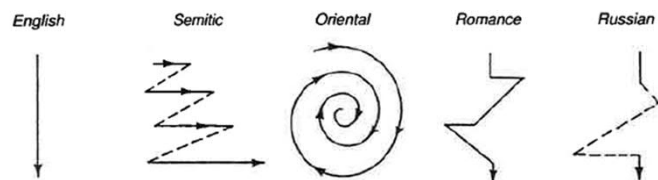
See, e.g.: Tobias S. Interest, prior knowledge, and learning. *Rev Educ Res.* 1994;64:37-54.



30

## Communication may differ a lot

- Different communicative strategies
- Different approaches to issues

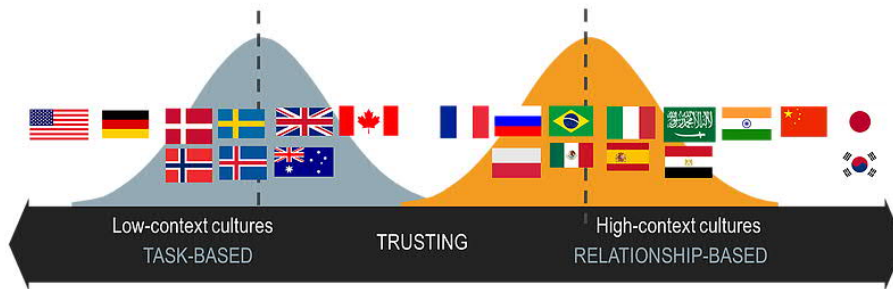


*Figure 1 Diagram on cross-cultural differences in paragraph organization in Kaplan's (1966) study on cultural thought patterns in intercultural education.*



31

## High/Low Context Cultures



Aalto-yliopisto <https://www.tecnolyticscorp.com/single-post/2017/06/30/Plans-and-budgets-must-be-in-Low-context-of-communication>

32

Let's see how you respond to the questions related to this



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33



## National Stereotypes – True or False?



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34

## Classification helps us to

- make sense of the world
- handle large amount of information available
- make educated guesses

But we have to be aware of this to avoid

- generalizations
- prejudices
- not seeing the individuals
- assumptions

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35

## The Blue-eyed Liar? Really?



<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/why-it%27s-easier-to-trust-brown-eyed-men-010913>



36

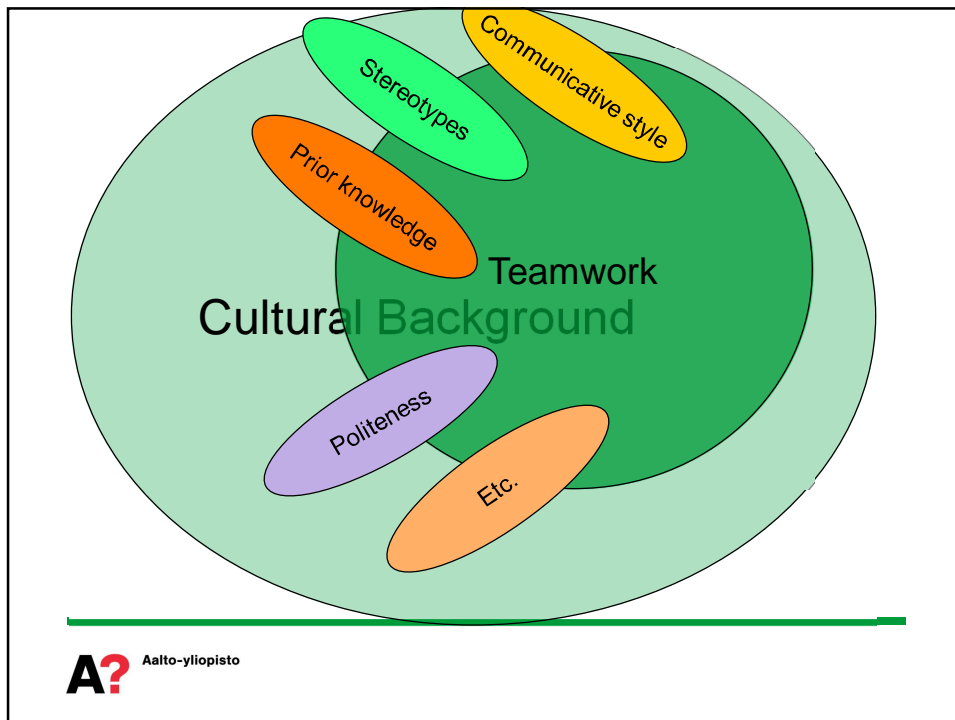
## In short

- You can't read people like books, not even from your own culture.
- Knowledge might help to understand situations and reduce confusion and misconceptions.
- Reduce ethnocentrism and see others cultures less threatening.
- Fear is often based on misunderstanding.

(Andersen, P. 1999. Nonverbal communication.)



37



38

## Greetings from the Language Center

- ✓ Registration for LC-0610 Intercultural Communication has been extended until 9 am on Sep 4.
- 🎓 Currently there are only 4 students registered, please register!
- 👥 You will go deeper into these themes and complete exercises related to intercultural communication.
- 🎓 This course can be included in your elective studies.

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39



40