

# Conclusions about lesson 2

Can a “typical Finn” be characterized?

Read some research-based thoughts about this.

## Characterizations of “The Finn”

- “The Finn” as intercultural communicator is, according to Kirra (1999), “www-oriented” (=word, work, watch): words are taken literally, work is emphasized, not relationships, and schedule-consciousness is high.
- Power distance is low, and hierarchy and gender differences are minimized.
- Femininity (see Hofstede 1994 for a definition of the concept) is also manifested through modest self-presentations.
- Finnish politeness strategies reflect independency rather than involvement (see Scollon and Scollon 1995 for the relevant terminology): and, thus, politeness strategies are used, which increase social distance.
- Proximity-creating strategies (such as, the use of names in an interaction) are felt to be embarrassing by the Finns (Kirra 1999).

## Is there then “the Finn” who would correspond to the above characterizations today? Yes and no.

- Generalizations based on empirical quantitative cross-cultural studies, such as those of Hofstede (for example, 1994) or of Trompenaars (1997), **do not consider the situational or individual particularities.**
- There are no “typical Finns”, who would, as individuals, possess all the features of their culture.
- It is important to remember **that it is not cultures that communicate, but individuals** who have their own personal histories and social placements.
- **The communication behavior of individuals**, representatives of their national cultures, **is affected by different sub- and co-cultures**, such as regional, generational, rural and urban cultures, or gender and profession. **Situational factors**, as well as **personal relationships**, make each human encounter a unique event.