

# Intercultural Communication Workshop

*Internationalising your university experience at Aalto*

Teacher: Yoonjoo Cho, PhD (Language Centre)



Aalto University  
Language Centre

# Hello everyone!

- My name is Yoonjoo
- I am a university teacher at Language Centre (LC)
- I teach “Intercultural Communication” courses at LC
  - Such as...

# ICC courses available at LC!

- **LC-0610** Intercultural Communication (3 credit): On-site
- **LC-0611** Teamwork & Leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (3 credit): On-site
- **LC-0614** Developing Global Competence: Working in an International Virtual Team (2 credit): Online

8<sup>th</sup> Sep-20<sup>th</sup> Oct  
(Thu): 09:15-12:15

The registration has  
been opened on Sisu!  
(Period I)

# Hello everyone!

- Nice to meet you all and welcome to the session!
  - Hope you find this talk is interesting and useful! 😊



# Housekeeping Points! 😊

- When I give a lecture, please mute your microphones.
- If you have any questions and comments, please write your message in the chat (But please be aware that I cannot see your message whilst I am sharing my screen to deliver a lecture).
- When in smaller groups (i.e. breakout rooms), please turn on your camera, so you can see each other! (Because it is always nice to see each other's face whilst having a chat! 😊 )

# Today's Talk

- How to **internationalise** your university experiences at Aalto?
- Understand the **main sources of intercultural misunderstanding/miscommunication** and discuss **potential solutions**

# Key objectives (1<sup>st</sup> part)

- Demonstrate an understanding of what is meant by internationalisation and the activities it involves
- Recognise the varieties of diversity present on your university campus
- Discuss the potential internationalising opportunities available at Aalto University

**Let's have a chat about this later! 😊**

# Key objectives (2<sup>nd</sup> Part)

- Describe the main sources of **misunderstanding** and **miscommunication** and discuss **potential solutions**
  - **Misunderstanding** – Inadequate linguistic choices
    - Clarification request & Confirmation check
  - **Miscommunication** – Clash of different communication styles
    - Directness & indirectness + Politeness



# *Internationalising your university experience at Aalto*



Aalto University  
Language Centre

# Where do I begin?

# Where do I begin?

**Intercultural  
Communication**

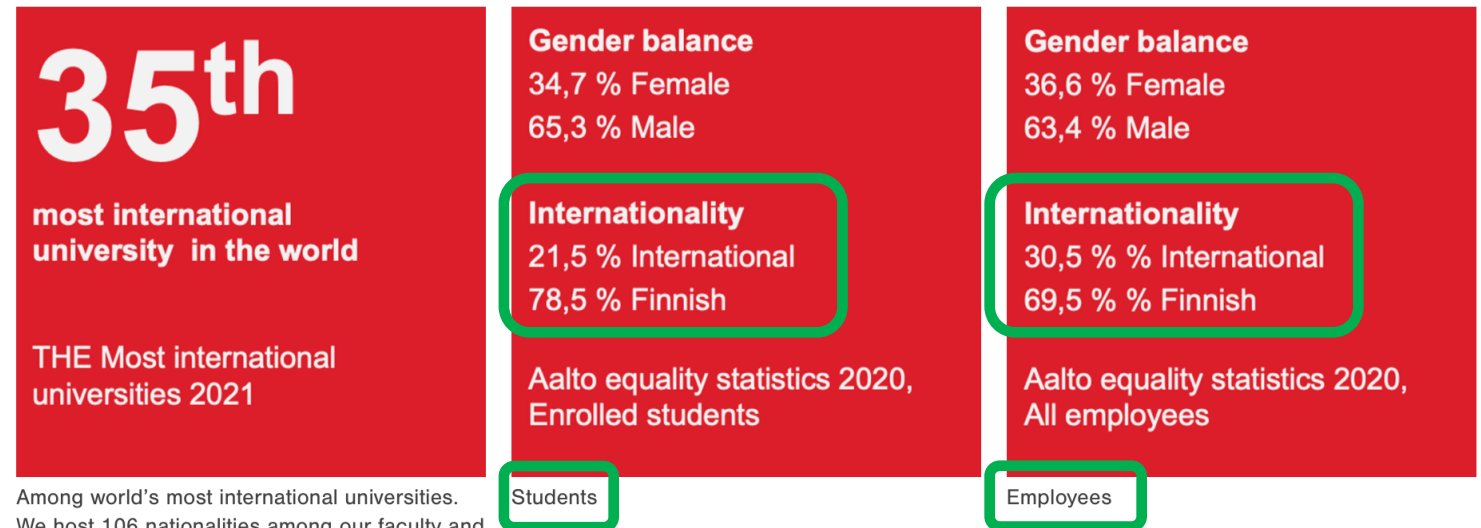


# A plethora of domestic diversity!

## Diversity at Aalto today

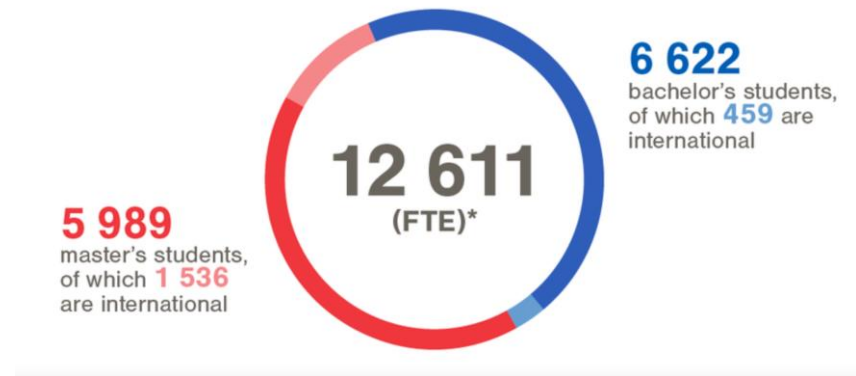
Here is a snapshot of our Diversity data.

*We are working on non-binary gender statistics. Please find a comprehensive Diversity data set as an attachment.*



# A plethora of domestic diversity!

- Key figures (2021 Report - Aalto University)



<https://www.aalto.fi/en/aalto-university/key-figures-of-2021-and-reports>

**BIZ (Economics): 14 out of 39**  
**TECH: 95 out of 180**  
**ART:**

**Of course, “Diversity” is not only about different nationalities but also other aspects/identities...**

# Internationalisation

# What is internationalisation?

- The process by which **universities become international** and involves “integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function or delivery of postsecondary education (Knight, 2004: 11)
- For example, recruiting international students, developing study abroad programmes, developing intercultural communication (ICC) courses, creating satellite campuses abroad and so forth

# **Internationalising your university experiences**

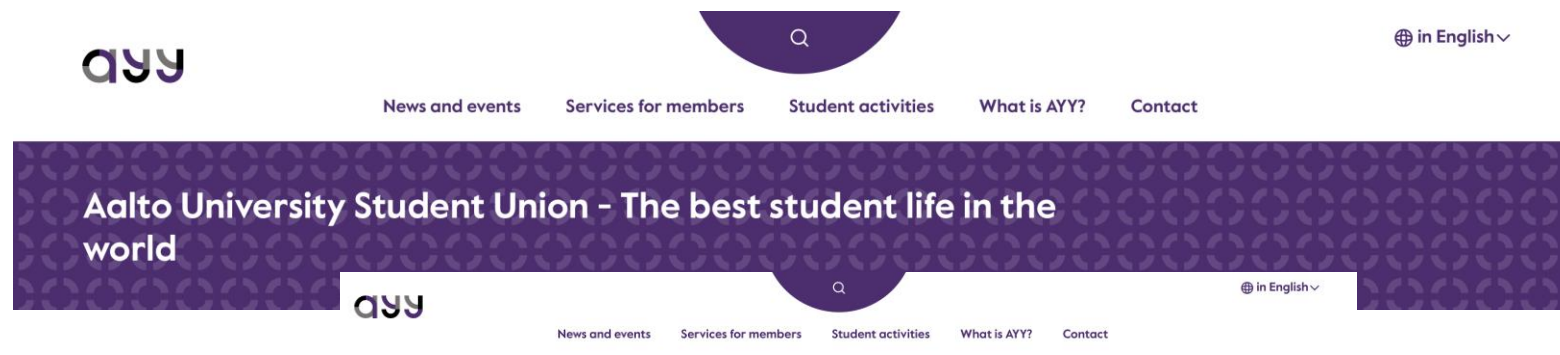
## **How?**



# **Guilds & Associations**

# Guilds & Associations

- Student clubs, societies and associations provide a forum where students having different backgrounds gather around particular topics or activities



**But...**

## List of Associations

### International Associations

Whether you are an exchange student, international degree student, or Finnish all the way, you can meet people from all over the world in the international associations.

# Guilds & Associations

- If you join a guild & association
  - lack of diversity in student backgrounds and
  - you stay within them too much
    - ***This might diminish your chances of intercultural communication experiences***

***How can I get out of my bubble/comfort zone?***

***How can we enhance the interaction between home students and international students?***

# Study or work abroad

# Study or work abroad

- A range of studies show that “studying abroad” is **beneficial**
  - It helps you to gain a better understanding of your own values and biases
  - It helps you to develop a more sophisticated view of the world
  - It helps you to interact with people having different backgrounds and continue to seek out those who are different from yourself in their daily lives
  - It helps you to develop the confidence to cope with the demands of their first job (and many more!)

**Preparation is the key!**

# Study or work abroad

- Studying abroad is offered by an increasing number of departments/schools
  - Your school will offer structured programmes that help students to study in other countries
  - Outgoing students:  
<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enopinnot/Exchange+studies>
  - Incoming Students:  
<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enuudet/Incoming+exchange+students>

# Study or work abroad



> Exchange studies	-
> Planning the exchange	
> Exchange destinations	
> Application instructions	
> Selection criteria and terms of exchange	
> Funding	
> Before the exchange	
> During the exchange	
> After the exchange	
> Contact exchange coordinators	
> Incoming exchange students	-
> How to apply	
> Studies	+
> Housing for exchange students	
> Arrival at Aalto University	+
> Departure from Aalto University	
> Contact information	

**But...**

**We need more than just checking information...**

**Education**

# ICC Courses



# Intercultural communication (ICC) courses

- **Taking credit bearing courses related to ICC**
  - You can understand the complexity around the concept of 'culture' and 'communication'
  - You can learn several interesting topics (e.g. stereotyping, intercultural transition, non-verbal communication and so forth) in the field of ICC and apply these to your real-life contexts
  - You can have many opportunities to share and learn new perspectives from your classmates having different backgrounds

# ICC courses available at LC!

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# Learning Foreign Languages

# Learning foreign language(s)

- **Why learning a new language?**
  - Language is thought to be a “guide to social reality”
  - Learning a new language enables us to understand different values, beliefs, worldviews, attitudes, behaviours of people having different backgrounds
  - Learning a new language improve cognitive functions (analytical and problem-solving skills, creativity, memory)

# Foreign Language Courses at LC!



<https://into.aalto.fi/display/enopinnot/Bachelor+programmes>

> Courses

> Studies in Swedish

> Exchange studies

+

> Internship

+

> Language and communication studies

+

> Studies at other Aalto schools or in Finnish universities

> Studies in international university networks

+

> University Wide Studies

+

> Personal Impact

# Foreign Language Courses at LC!

## Teaching of languages and communication

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English	Spanish	Japanese	Chinese
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Portuguese	French	Swedish	German
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Finnish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ As foreign language</li><li>▪ Written communication</li></ul>	Russian		
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Intercultural Communication	Language and communication studies for Aalto students in other universities	Speech communication	KiVAKO Online Language Courses  UniTandem
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# Unite! universities

<https://www.unite-university.eu>



Get involved as... ▾ Metacampus Our Alliance ▾ Contact



Unite Map

Aalto University, Espoo/Helsinki  
KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm

Wrocław Tech (future full partner)  
Technical University of Darmstadt  
Graz University of Technology (future full partner)  
Grenoble INP-UGA  
Politecnico di Torino  
Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya · BarcelonaTech  
Universidade de Lisboa

# Unite! Virtual language & Comm Courses

Virtual exchange courses



<https://metacampus.unite-university.eu/course/info.php?id=68>

Space period: 19.05.22 - 16.01.23

Take a virtual language or global competence course at Unite!



# Discussion Question! (Flinga)

- So far, I have discussed several options of internationalisation experience available at Aalto. Then, <https://edu.flinga.fi/s/EVRF5YT>
  - What is **the most interesting/attractive option** for you? Can you explain **why**? And **how** would you take actions to actualize this option?
  - Can you come-up with **any other opportunities** (especially “**off-campus**” options)?
  - How can we **get out of our comfort zone/bubbles**? How can we **increase the interaction between international and home students**?

***Teamwork experience***

***Intercultural***

***Misunderstanding/Miscommunication***



Aalto University  
Language Centre

# A plethora of domestic diversity!



**Aalto University**

## Diversity at Aalto today

Here is a snapshot of our Diversity data.

*We are working on non-binary gender statistics. Please find a comprehensive Diversity data set as an attachment.*

**35<sup>th</sup>**  
**most international  
university in the world**  
  
THE Most international  
universities 2021

Among world's most international universities.  
We host 106 nationalities among our faculty and staff.

**Gender balance**  
34,7 % Female  
65,3 % Male  
  
**Internationality**  
21,5 % International  
78,5 % Finnish  
  
Aalto equality statistics 2020,  
Enrolled students

Students

**Gender balance**  
36,6 % Female  
63,4 % Male  
  
**Internationality**  
30,5 % % International  
69,5 % % Finnish  
  
Aalto equality statistics 2020,  
All employees

Employees

# Working with a diverse cohort

**We want it to be a valuable experience**

**But it might not always be positive?!**

# Teamwork experience...



Language and Intercultural Communication



ISSN: 1470-8477 (Print) 1747-759X (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmli20>

## 'Intercultural competence' as an intersubjective process: a reply to 'essentialism'

Vivien Xiaowei Zhou & Nick Pilcher

To cite this article: Vivien Xiaowei Zhou & Nick Pilcher (2018) 'Intercultural competence' as an intersubjective process: a reply to 'essentialism', *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 18:1, 125-143, DOI: [10.1080/14708477.2017.1400510](https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2017.1400510)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2017.1400510>

# Teamwork experience...

“I noticed...it was a little bit hard to make different approaches coexist and not clash...**I think we realised how difficult writing a report all together is going to be, since everyone wants to work in his/her way...I tried my hardest to find a way to convey my ideas without being too rude or ‘dictatorial’, because I know I might sound a little bit arrogant when I get overexcited and passionate about something,** but I’ve learnt from previous experiences of teamwork that that does not help the work atmosphere at all, in particular if someone get offended.”

# Teamwork experience...

“[Group member] A...presented us a draft structure of how to write the report without sent it to us before, just say we can have a look in this meeting...**I was surprise and appreciate that A has already done so much because someone has to do it, but...I feel a little uncomfortable...**I observed the others['] reaction, they were a little surprised too and saying how appreciate what A has done as well...Although I can understand A did this because A really wants us have a good mark but who does not?”

# Teamwork experience...

“The two students [from Country X] hold their opinions towards some details of our writings such as the punctuation and the format...This is definitely a challenge to my patience as a person [from Country Z] who possesses less concerns about the details of our job, what we concerns more is the relationship between your partners...**As a result, this situation increased my stereotype of [Country X] are really rigid to details. Thus, I started confusing that whether the group work has increase my intercultural competence or strengthen my stereotype of a specific culture.**”



# Misunderstanding Miscommunication

**What are the main sources?**

# Misunderstanding vs Miscommunication

- **Misunderstanding**
  - 'Language' related
- **Miscommunication**
  - Misunderstanding of another's norms, values and practices

# What are the main sources?

## Main sources of misunderstanding/miscommunication

- Inadequate linguistic choices
- Pragmatic mismatch
- Clash of style
- Mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes
- Mismatch in contextualization cues and framing

# **Inadequate linguistic choices (Misunderstanding)**

# Inadequate linguistic choices

- Lexical comprehension problem
- ‘Mishearing’ a lexical element
- Syntactic complexity

They are related to “**word choice**” & “**structures of utterance**”

They are relatively easy to solve as we can directly point out **the trouble source** and **ask a clarification**

*What does that mean?*

**We might use different Englishes**

“When you use the term, ‘xxx’, what does that exactly mean in this case?”

“You’ve tried to explain several things at once and I am just wondering whether you could explain one by one?”

# How to solve it?

- **Clarification & negotiation strategies**

- **Confirmation checks**

- e.g. 'Have you understood my explanation?', 'Did I understand it right?', 'Yeah?', etc.

- **Clarification request**

- e.g. 'Can you explain a bit further?', 'Can you make it more simple?', 'Can you repeat?', 'When you said xxx, what did you mean?'

**Identify a trouble source +  
Ask open/non-judgemental Qs!**

# What are the main sources?

## Main sources of misunderstanding/miscommunication

- Inadequate linguistic proficiency
- Pragmatic mismatch
- Clash of style
- Mismatch in schemas and cultural stereotypes
- Mismatch in contextualization cues and framing

- ❖ Major issues
- ❖ It is rather tricky to point out trouble source
- ❖ The problem often runs across longer stretch or beyond conversation/interaction
- ❖ Related to different ways of doing things

# **Clash of Style (Miscommunication)**



# Clash of style

- **Directness or indirectness (Politeness)**
  - When norms of direct/indirect communication is different between/amongst people, miscommunication is likely to happen

# Directness/Indirectness

“A classmate of yours asked you whether you would like to go to a cinema with her and a couple of other classmates during the weekend. **You do not particularly want to go, because you need time to prepare for an assignment.** How are you going to say ‘no’ to her? Which of the following reply sounds most like you?”

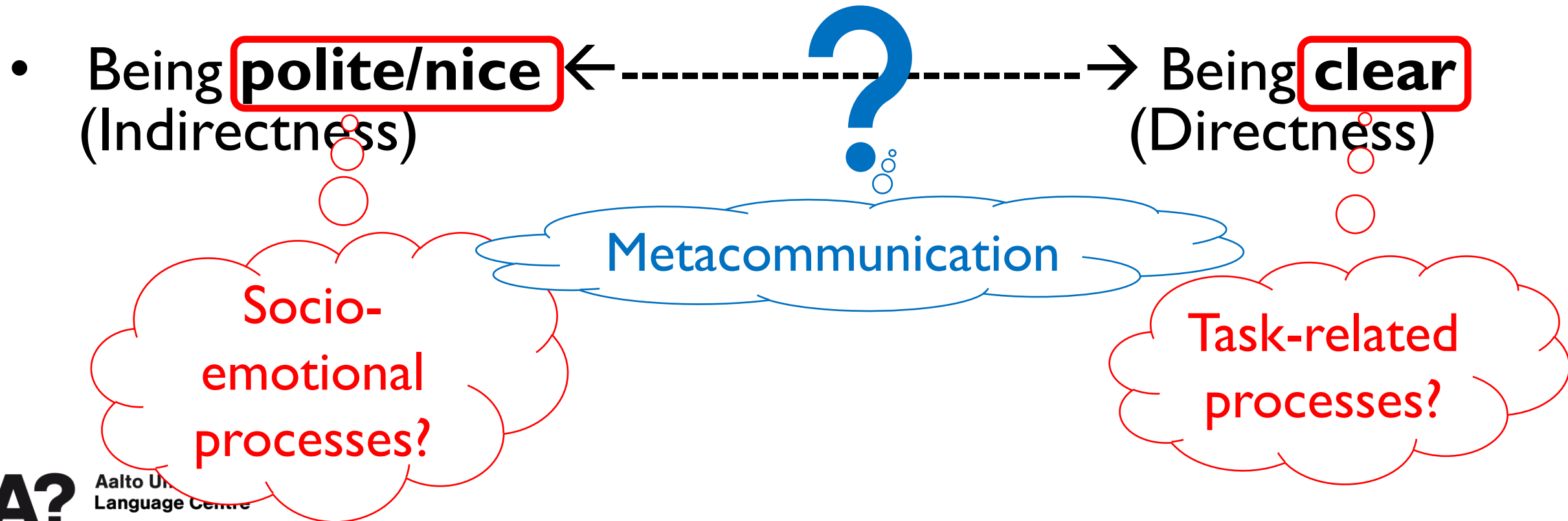
# Directness/Indirectness

*A: Would you like to go to cinema with me?*

- B1: No, I can't.
- B2: Sorry, I can't. I need to write an assignment.
- B3: Thanks for the invitation but I am not sure that I would be free, but I will let you know if I can go!
- B4: Thanks, but I have visitors this weekend. I need to show them around.

# Directness/Indirectness

- Understanding “directness” and “indirectness” as a **spectrum**



**Time is not enough...But! 😊**

# Summary – Key takeaways!

- Try to think about how to increase the opportunity to experience diversity available both on and off campus!
  - How to get out of my comfort zone/bubble?
  - How to have authentic interactions with people having different backgrounds?
  - How to experience the importance & values of diversity

**Take actions! 😊**

# Summary – Key takeaways!

- Misunderstanding & Miscommunication is part of our everyday interaction with others
  - But, there are potentially helpful strategies to manage and negotiate misunderstanding & miscommunication
  - To resolve intercultural miscommunication, we need to acquire more sophisticated understanding of human communication (embracing both culture-specific, universal and context-bound variations)

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(Period I)



**Any questions?**

**[yoonyoo.cho@aalto.fi](mailto:yoonyoo.cho@aalto.fi)**

**Thanks for listening!**

**All the best for  
your 1<sup>st</sup> year at Aalto! 😊**