Workshop Intercultural Awareness

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● Culture is ...
● Two theories of culture
● Intercultural communication and differences
  – "Rich points" in intercultural communication
● Stereotypes
● Culture shock – cultural sensitivity
Culture is ...

- ... ??
- 'Culture' vs. 'culture'
(1) Iceberg theory of culture (Hall 1976)

- Traditions
  - Wardrobe
    - To mass, dinner, etc.
  - Religious practices
  - The way people talk to each other
  - Family lifestyle
  - Food
  - Rules
  - Attitudes
    - Animals, gender
  - Social norms
    - Don't yell in the streets.
    - Tipping
    - Stereotypes
- clothing
- language
- food art
- manners
- friendliness openness

- beliefs
- values

- tradition
- lifestyle
- ethnicity
- norms
What makes me unique? – Disadvantages of the iceberg theory

- At the beginning of the 21st century [...] the comparison of differences between one native and one foreign culture, seen as stable spaces o the map and permanent in time seems too reductionist. Such a view of intercultural communication research dosen’t reflect the complexities of a post-colonial, global age in which people live in multiple, shifting spaces and partake of multiple identities often in conflict with one another [...] In a few years the traditional binary tradition of Us vs Them in intercultural communication will be replaced by the notion that in a networked, interdependent world the Other is in Us and We are in the Other.

*Claire Kramsch (2001: 2005): Intercultural communication*
(2) The „rucksack“ model of culture

- Culture as one’s personal luggage
Intercultural communication

- "Communication is culture and culture is communication." Edward Hall: *The Silent Language* (1959; 169)
"Hotspots"/"Rich points" in intercultural communication

- [...] some things that come up strike you with their difficulty, their complexity, their inability to fit into the resources you use to make sense out of the world. These things—from lexical items through speech act up to extensive stretches of discourse—are called rich points (Agar, 1991). Rich points are rich because of the intricate web of associations and connotations that they carry with them, webs that have no corresponding echoes in your own language. Rich points [...] are the linguistic tip of the cultural iceberg, the locations in discourse where major cultural differences are signalled.

*Agar: The intercultural frame* (1994, 231f.)
Hotspots (Heringer, 2012)

Example: invitations

- Invitation?
- Accepting/rejecting invitations
- Gift?
- Which kind of gift?
- Which kind of invitation?
- When is it OK to come? When to leave?
- ...

➔ *Think of other hotspots. What do you have to consider?*
A few hotspots

- greetings
  - education
  - punctuality
  - forms of address
- invitations
  - gifts
  - speech/silence
  - topics
  - yes/no
  - compliments
  - requests
- politeness
  - apologies
  - body language
  - taboos
Cultural differences likely to cause miscommunication

- Pronunciation, vocabulary / lexical semantics, ...
- Paraverbal (intonation, rhythm, speech volume, pauses)
- Discourse conventions (e.g. small talk)
- Topics/tabooos
- Register (formal/informal): situation, age, gender, ...
- Nonverbal (gestures, facial expression, eye contact)
- Communicative style (direct – indirect, verbal – nonverbal; turn-taking)
- Culture-specific attitudes: space, time, individualism – collectivism, religion
- Culture-specific acts: rituals (e.g. handshake)

- Be alert to signals of misunderstanding.
- Ask whether you have understood something correctly. Try to clarify problems immediately.
- Try to "repair" misunderstandings without causing your dialogue partner to lose face.
- Be flexible! Be prepared to re-interpret utterances/situations that may have been misunderstood.
- Switch to another language.
- Don't assume that you are being understood.
A questionnaire

- Peter:
- Mike:
- Would you like to have him as a friend?
- Would you like to work with him in a team?
- Would you like to be in the same sports team?
- In your opinion, is Peter rather likeable or unlikeable?
- Please rate on a scale: Peter is ...
  - 1 = very well-liked ... 5 = very unpopular

Adapted from Losche/Püttker (2009: 181f.)
Sterotypes

- Walter Lippmann: Public opinion (1922) "pictures in our heads"
- "A natural function of the human and cultural mind" (Nachbar and Lause, 1992)
- "A set of shared convictions / beliefs about members of a particular group" (Leyens et al., 1994; Smith and Bond, 1994)
Stereotypes - prejudices

Two examples:


http://www.libarts london.co.uk/10048/stereotypes/
Stereotypes – prejudice – discrimination

- Katz/Braly (1933): stereotypes: cognitive; prejudices: affective aspect of human attitudes to groups of people.
- Allport: The nature of prejudice (1979): "premature judgment without sufficient warrant"
- Doyé: The intercultural dimension (1999, 49): discrimination: "prejudice in action"; "any conduct based on a distinction made on grounds of natural or social categories, which have no relation either to individual capacities or merits, or to the concrete behaviour of the individual person" (UN Publications 1949)
Culture shock
Developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (M. J. Bennett):
An illustrated interpretation of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)

Denial: I don’t consider that cultural differences exist at all.

Defense: I defend my home culture because I lose my bearings otherwise.

Minimization: I minimize differences and focus on what brings me similar to others.

Integration: I develop a feeling of membership in my new culture.

Adaptation: I adapt my reasoning and actions to my new culture.

Acceptance: I am aware of diverse cultural perceptions.
References