

# Intercultural communication in cross-border teams

*A Crossborder Journalism  
Campus Lecture*



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# Collaboration starts with... me!

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## **Lecturer introduction**

- Where have I lived? What is my cultural background? What's the lense through which I see the world?
- In which journalism culture have I been educated and socialised?
- What's my journalism experience and focus?
- And what does that say about my blank spots?

➔ Being aware and being able to describe own background is the starting point to intercultural communication.

# Cultures? Observe like an anthropologist

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Clothing

Language

Excuses

Jokes

Social indicators

Rituals and routines

Smiling

Rules and taboos

Greetings

...

➔ What are cultures? National, societal, professional...

## **Functionalist**

Trying to list characteristics

Fixed categories

"How to do business in country x"

## **Interpretative**

Phenomena are symbols of world views

Reading and interpreting symbols lead to deeper understanding

"widening one's horizon"

# Example: "...get to the point, please"



## **High context communication**

implicit

polite

formal

relations built over longer time

important not to lose face

## **Low context communication**

explicit

direct

"get to the point, please"

impolite to waste other people's time

# Example: Different times

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## **Polychronic time**

Doing many things at a time

Things are in flux – we all know that, don't we?

Being obsessed with fixed appointments is considered rigid and unflexible

## **Monochronic time**

Doing one thing at a time

Things need to get done on time

Being on time to an appointment is a very important sign of respect

# Hofstede's dimensions

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- Power distance
- Individualism vs collectivism
- Masculinity vs femininity
- Uncertainty avoidance
- Short or long term perspective
- Indulgence vs restraint

# Short group work #1



- Make groups of 3-4 students and ensure to have minimum two different nationalities
- Have a look at Hofstede's dimensions, the high/low context communication and the mono/polychronic attitude to time. Select one or two of these aspects for your group. Discuss where you see yourself and your background. Do you recognise some of them? Are there differences in your group? Are there points where you would potentially disagree or misunderstand each other? How could this be solved? (15 minutes)
- Prepare to share one or two of the aspects discussed in the group in the class (5 minutes presentation each group)
- Shared discussion in class



# How do we actually communicate?

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Conversation

Intellectual talks, discussions

Small talk

Negotiation

Interview

Verbal fight...

# Non-violent communication

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- Non-violent communication developed by Marshall B. Rosenberg, a US psychologist
- Based upon the assumption that humans are compassionate beings trying to fulfil their basic needs without harming others
- Non-violent communication is one of several communication methods
- Rosenberg divides communication into steps, that help us to look at various elements in our communication, so we are more aware of how we communicate

# Avoid communication-blockers

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4 examples of communication blockers:

- Enemy pictures
- Moralistic judgements
- Comparisons
- Denying own responsibility

# Rosenberg's 4 elements in communication

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Observing without judging

Identifying and expressing one's feelings

Understanding and taking responsibility for one's genuine needs

Expressing a plea to the other to help meet those needs

# Observing without judging



She's always lazy until just before the exam	She studies only shortly before the exam
You're too generous	When I see you give away all your lunch money to others, I think you are too generous
He talks too much, he's bragging all the time, he's so full of himself...	In our team meetings, he frequently associates to personal memories and starts telling a story from his childhood. This means that we often have difficulties to stick to the agenda and the agreed time plan.

# Identifying and expressing one's feelings



"I feel you should know better" "I feel like a failure" "I feel my boss is manipulating"	Feelings vs opinion
"I feel I am bad at playing the guitar"	What feelings might hide behind the guitar players remark? Fx irritation, frustration, impatience...
"I do not feel I am important for my colleagues"	What feelings might hide behind this remark? Fear? Loneliness? Anger?

# Taking responsibility for one's needs



## **Needs that are the deeper reason for our emotions:**

- Autonomy – we want to follow our own values, ideals, dreams and we want to chose how to get closer to them
- Solemnity – make space to celebrate or to mourn
- Integrity – meaning, autenticity, creativity
- Mutual dependance – respect, recognition, love, support, trust, praise
- Physical needs – touching, not having one's life threatened, food, air, water, shelter, sexuality
- Contemplation – harmony, beauty, inspiration, order, peace
- Play

# More about expressing our emotions

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- We are responsible for our own emotions – not for those of others
- We can change ourselves – we can not change others
- It may be painful to express emotions (and we may have been educated up not to express emotions: "you know, we can not afford this", "come on, big boys/girls don't cry" etc etc.)
- Opressed emotions are damaging to persons and to relations



# Expressing a plea for help to fulfill these needs

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- Thinking about a need
- Describing the need
- Mentioning the need as a plea (not as a demand or order)
- Ask the other to repeat

# Short group work #2

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## **You can Make groups of 3-4 students and ensure to have minimum two different nationalities**

- Each think of yourself beginning in the new class/group. Pick one emotion (being curious, being overwhelmed, feeling shy, feeling optimistic – the first that comes to mind!).
- Describe the emotion to your mates. Try to describe the underlying connected need. Is there something, you wish from your mates? Could you describe it?
- Prepare sum up to the class: Was it difficult, easy? How did you do it? Examples welcome but not obligatory.

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