

# Incorporating intercultural awareness into language education

**Michael Carrier**  
**Highdale Consulting**

"Our generation's greatest challenge... is learning to live in a crowded and interconnected world that is creating unprecedented pressures on human society".

*Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, BBC Reith Lectures*

**ICC Conference**

**Berlin, 2019**

# 1 What is culture?

## Culture or culture?

***All people are the same.  
It's only their habits that are so  
different. Confucius***

### ***Big C:***

- Achievement culture
  - Shakespeare, Mozart
  - Opera, Art

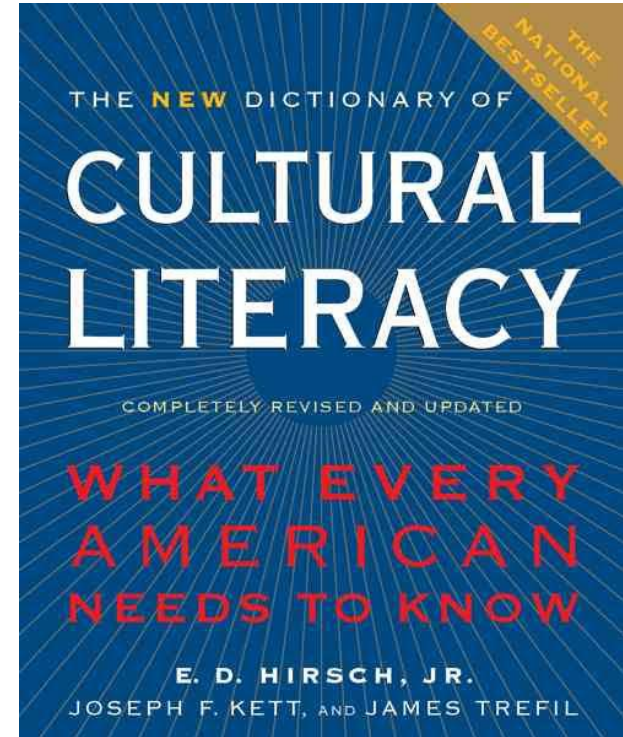
### ***Small c:***

- Behavioural culture
  - Belief systems
  - Assumptions
  - 'How we do things around here'

*from: Cultural awareness, Tomalin & Stempleski*

# 5Cs of Culture

- Cultural knowledge
- Cultural behaviour
- Cultural values & attitudes
- Cultural preferences
- Cultural adaptation



“One of the key 21st century skills is **global awareness** ...the ability to understand and address global issues, to learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue”

TIRE, 2009:51

# 2

## Intercultural awareness

‘Why, in 2014, can an American still genuinely offend a Brit by not buying a round, or a Brit offend a South Korean by handling his business card too casually?’ *The Guardian*

“And sometimes when I go back to France, in the supermarkets, for example, I say to myself 'they are so rude' because they never say 'sorry' ”  
(*Laure*)

### ***Key issues:***

- Self-awareness
- Respect
- Values
- Space
- Courtesy
- Register

# Intercultural intersection

**Culture 1 believes  
smoking in restaurants is...**

**Culture 2  
believes  
it is ...**

	<i>Culture 1</i>	
<i>Culture 2</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>
<i>Acceptable</i>	C1 and C2 both think it's acceptable	C2 thinks it is acceptable but C1 finds it unacceptable
<i>Un-acceptable</i>	C2 thinks it's unacceptable, but C1 finds it acceptable	C1 and C2 both think it's unacceptable

# Are you a peach or a coconut?

In '**peach**' cultures like the USA or Brazil people tend to be friendly with new people - they smile frequently at strangers .....BUT...

In '**coconut**' cultures such Russia and Germany, people are initially more closed off - they rarely smile at strangers.... BUT....



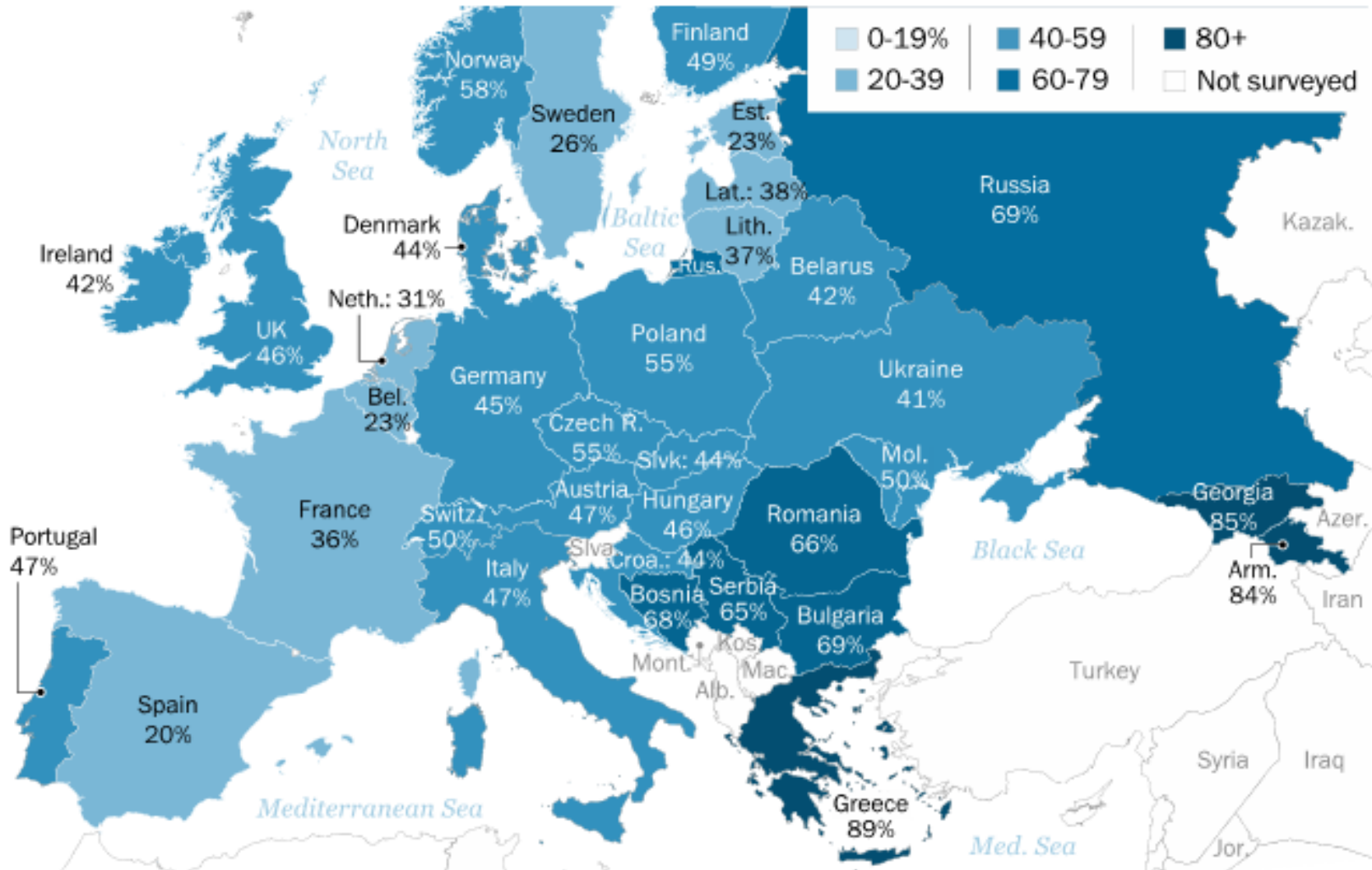
'**Coconuts** view 'peaches' as insincere, because their surface effusiveness doesn't signify deep friendship.

**Peaches** see 'coconuts' as rude, refusing to oil the wheels of life with a few pleasantries.

It's all relative: the British are **coconuts** in California but **peaches** in Paris.'

## Eastern Europeans are more likely to regard their culture as superior to others

% who say they completely/mainly agree with the statement, "Our people are not perfect, but our culture is superior to others"

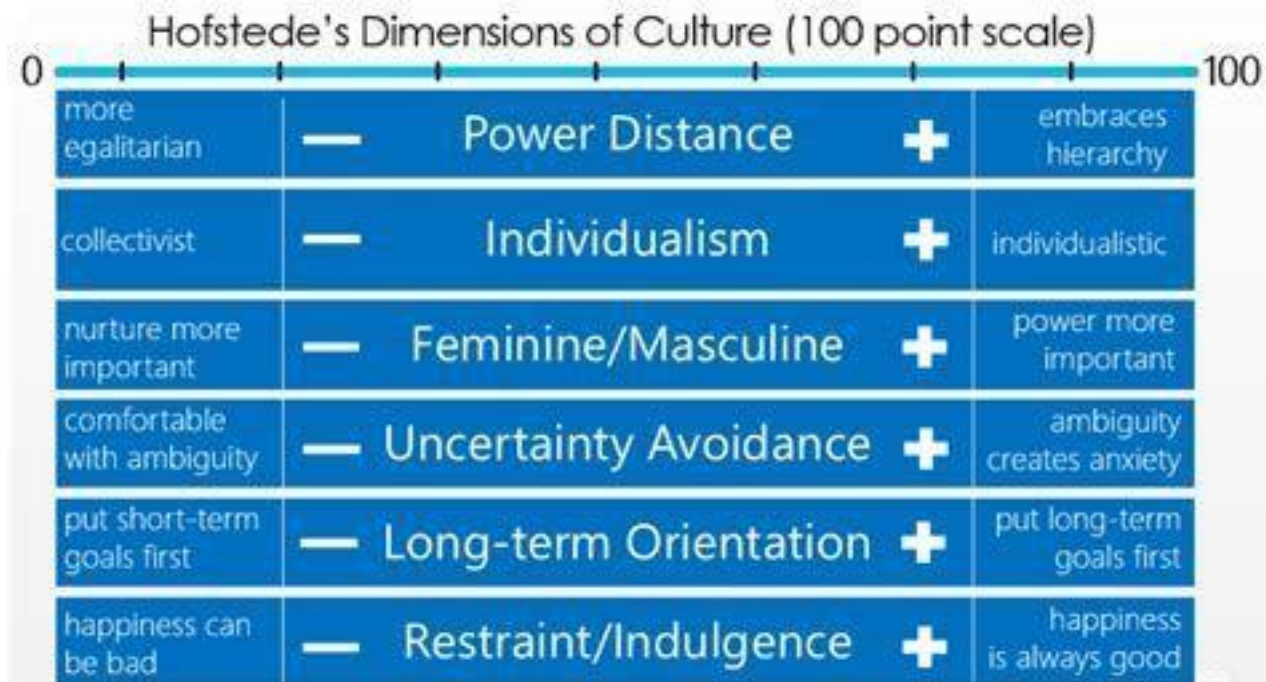
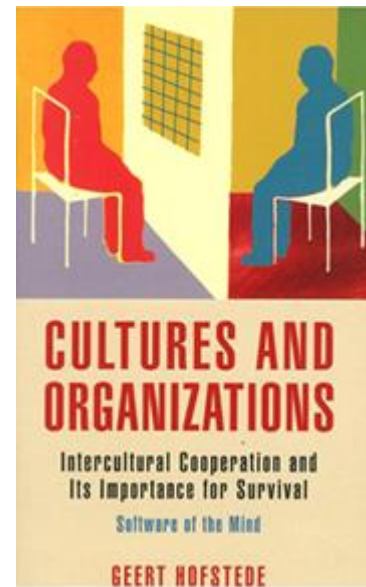


Source: Surveys conducted 2015-2017 in 34 countries. See Methodology for details.

"Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues"



# 3 Intercultural theorists





# Power Distance index

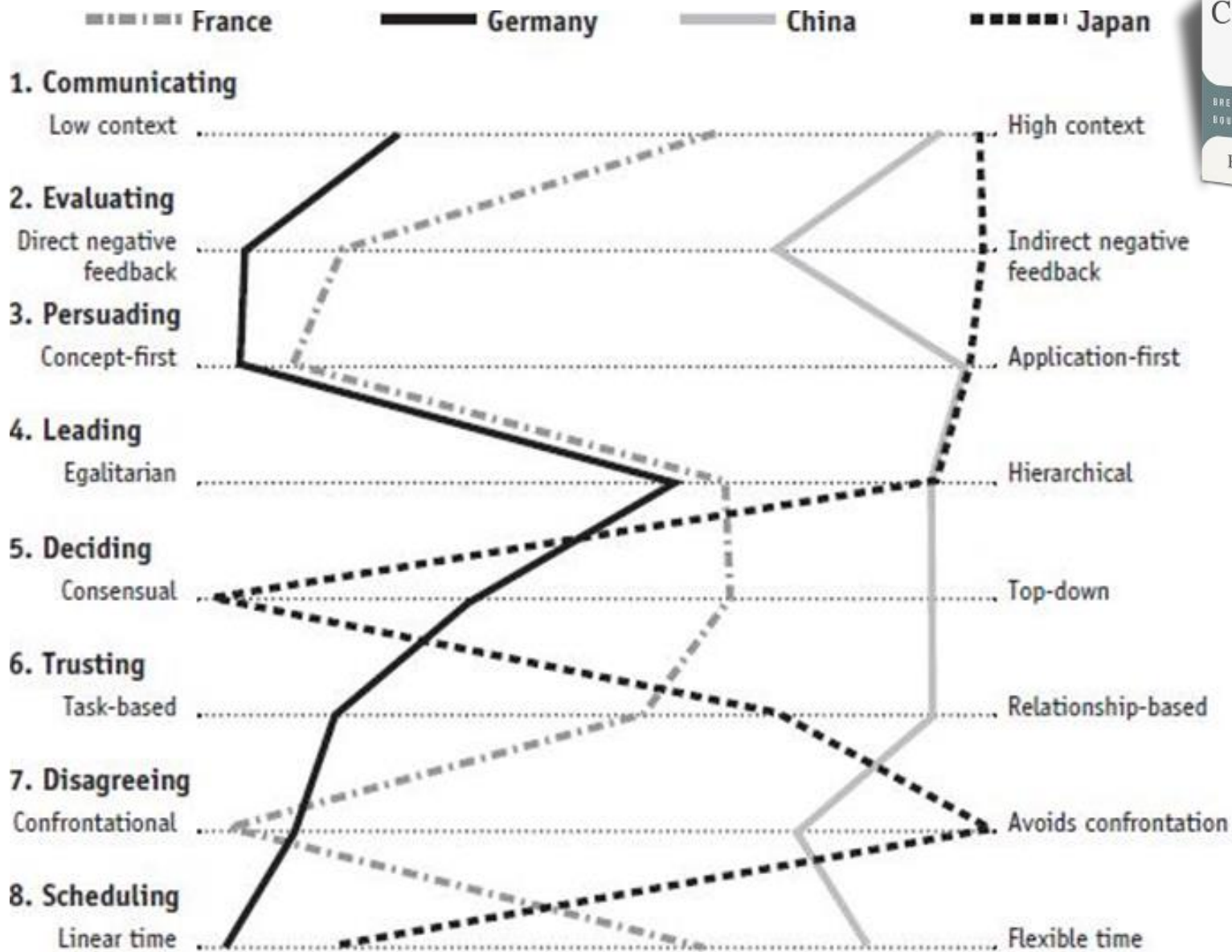
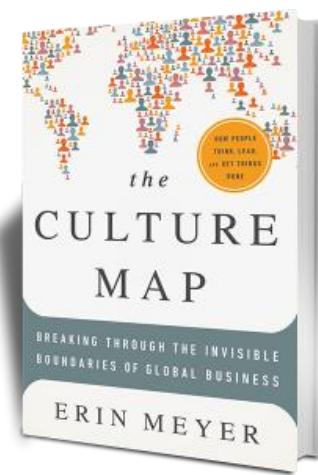
## Egalitarian

- Few status differences
- Informal social relations
- Superior can be questioned
- Little respect for old age

## Hierarchical

- Many status differences
- Formal social relations
- Deference for superiors
- Great respect for old age

# Culture mapping - Meyer

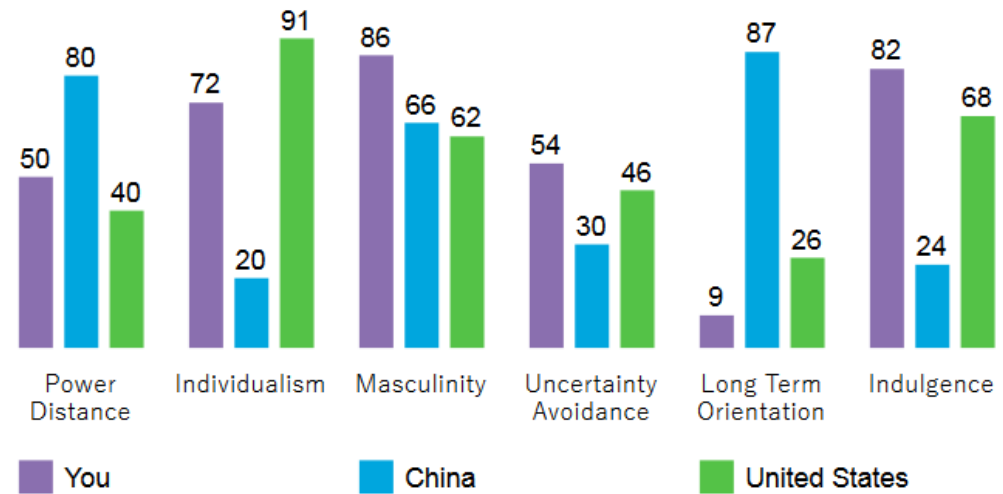


# Culture compass

Careernomics  
self-test 39€

## Scores

Your scores are only an approximation on Hofstede's dimensions, especially because models describing differences among cultures should not be used to describe differences among personalities; group reality doesn't equal individual reality. The textual feedback on the previous page(s) contains the most valuable information.



In addition to your country of interest and your home country, the table below lists the 5 countries scoring most similar to you and the 3 countries scoring most different to you. But also here, treat these scores with caution.

	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
<b>Your score</b>	50	72	86	54	9	82
<b>China</b>	80	20	66	30	87	24
<b>United States</b>	40	91	62	46	26	68
<b>Most similar</b>						
South Africa	49	65	63	49	34	63
Australia	36	90	61	51	21	71
United States	40	91	62	46	26	68
Ireland	28	70	68	35	24	65
Trinidad and Tobago	47	16	58	55	13	80
<b>Most different</b>						
Ukraine	92	25	27	95	55	18
Guatemala	95	6	37	99	—	—
Belarus	95	25	20	95	56	18

# INCA framework - Byram

<b>Tolerance of ambiguity</b>	Able to tolerate and manage ambiguity
<b>Behavioural flexibility</b>	Able to adopt appropriate behaviour to match situation
<b>Communicative awareness</b>	Able to understand the impact of cultural differences on the communication process and adapt accordingly
<b>Knowledge discovery</b>	Knowledge of and research into other cultures
<b>Respect for otherness</b>	Respect for diversity in value systems, equal treatment of diversity
<b>Empathy</b>	Ability to appreciate others' perceptions and needs and to act to optimize communication

# Intercultural work competences

## 4 Interculture at work

- Respectful
- Multilingual
- Flexible
- Builds trust
- Understands cultural differences
- Accepts differences
- Adjusts communication
- Aware of own culture
- Tolerates ambiguity
- Adapts to different cultures
- Works in diverse teams
- Open to new ideas

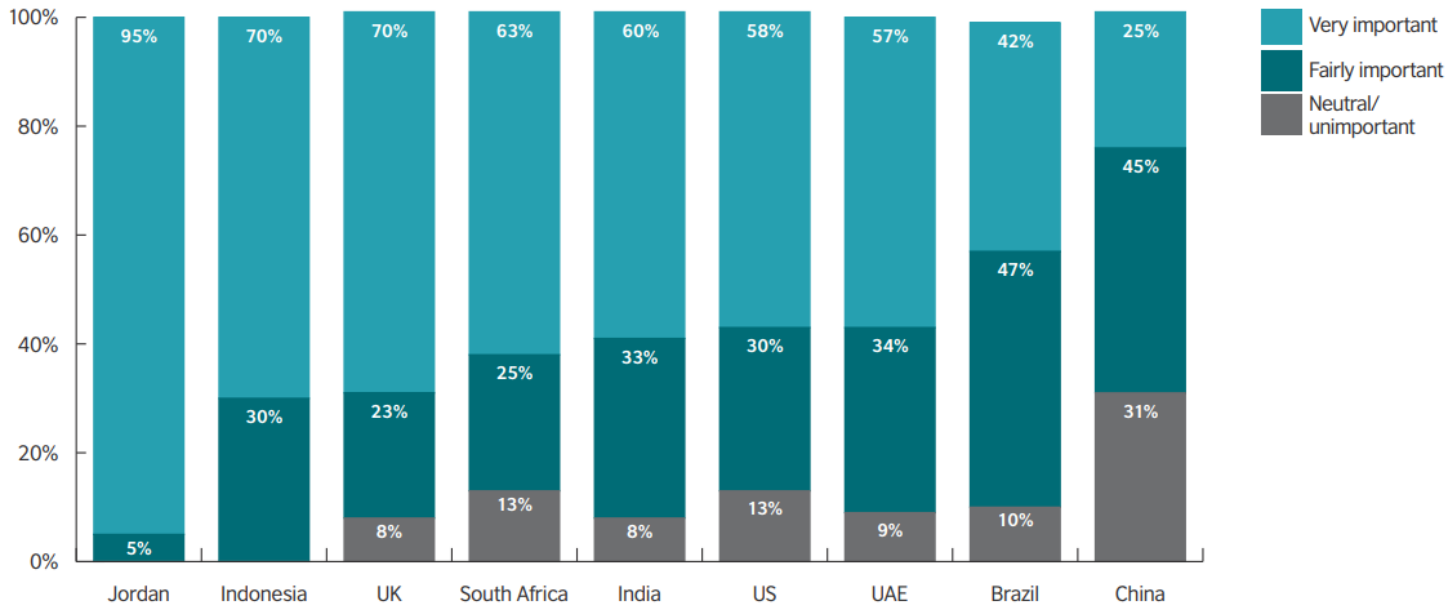


*British Council*



# Intercultural skills for mobility

Chart 5: The importance of intercultural skills to organisations  
(by country, ranked by very important)

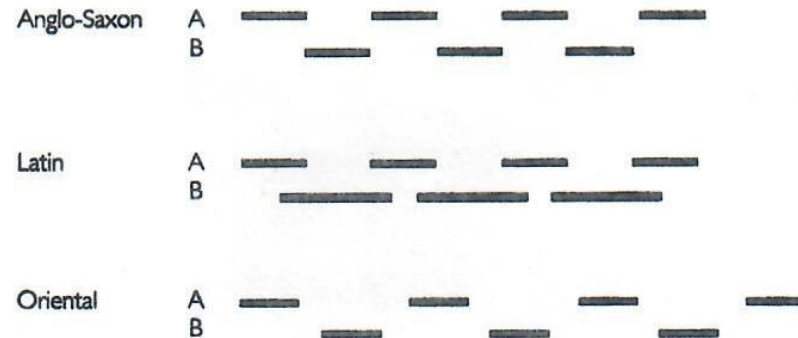


- Interpersonal skills
- Linguistic ability
- Motivation to live abroad
- Cultural curiosity
- Tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity
- Flexibility
- Patience and respect
- Cultural empathy
- Strong sense of self (ego strength)
- Sense of humour

# 5 Interculture & language training

## Intercultural language - themes

Figure 6.2 Styles of verbal communication



*F.Trompenaars*

- Greetings
- Courtesy rules
- Small talk - topics
- Making friends
- Taboos – words and topics
- Agreeing/disagreeing
- Turn-taking
- Formal/informal register
- Office talk
- Socialising for work
- Meetings language



# Intercultural language - activities

Subkowiak posited a broad set of intercultural exercise types for the language classroom, such as:

- Exploring foreign cultures
- Doing ethnographic projects
- Comparing and contrasting cultures
- Investigating critical incidents
- Exploring learners culture
- Reflecting on values, attitudes, beliefs

*(Subkowiak, 2018)*

Get learners to share experiences of C2 and what they see as contrasts with their C1

Compare C1/C2 daily lifestyles, behaviours - YouTube clips/movies

Explore stereotypes in texts/roleplays, & discuss

Write a guide for people coming to C1: what they need to know, people, places, food, customs

# 6 Teacher Development

## Teacher development

### *Aims*

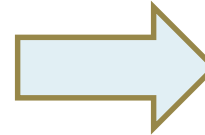
- Give teachers an understanding of intercultural research & frameworks of competences
- Develop their intercultural competences and apply to the language classroom
- Suggest pedagogical approaches to incorporating intercultural content

- What do language teachers need to know?
- What do we mean by culture?
- Understanding intercultural skills
- Core values & attitudes
  
- How to teach intercultural skills
- Activities for teachers to do themselves
- Activities for teachers to give learners
- Certification: BCTC/Barry Tomalin

# 7 Intercultural sociopolitics

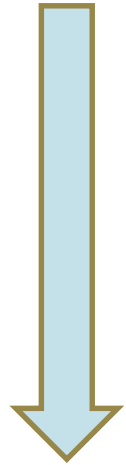
## Intercultural politics – the 3 Rs

- Imposition
- Integration
- Assimilation



- Respect
- Recognition
- Reconciliation

# Intercultural tension cline



- C1 tolerates C2 activities in private (not in public)
- C1 accepts C2 activities in public
- C1 accommodates C2 activities in public
- C1 imposes C2 activities on C1 community
- C1 bans certain C1 activities to avoid offending C2

## Positive vs Negative Freedom:

“When does *your* freedom to follow your culture start to restrict *my* freedom to follow mine?”

# The Anglo-Dutch translation guide

<i>What the British say</i>	<i>What the British mean</i>	<i>What the Dutch understand</i>
I hear what you say	I disagree completely	He accepts my point of view
You must come by for dinner sometime	Just being polite; Goodbye!	He will invite me for dinner in the course of time
Very interesting	I don't agree	He likes my idea
With the greatest respect	You must be a fool, I have a better suggestion (polite disagreement)	He respects me/my view
I'm sure it's my fault	It's your fault!	It is his fault

I would suggest	Do it as I want you to	An open suggestion
By the way	The primary purpose is	Not very important
Perhaps you could give this some more thought	Don't do it, it's a bad idea	Consider possible road blocks
I am a bit disappointed that	I am very upset and angry that	It doesn't really matter

# Panel discussion

## *Panel:*

- Ellinor Haase
- Barry Tomalin
- Rob Williams
- Myriam Fischer

## *Topic*

Can we improve cultural integration and harmony by drawing upon intercultural theory and incorporating intercultural skills into the classroom?

# Panel discussion

- What aspects of the theory & frameworks are relevant to the teaching of migrants?
- How should we define intercultural content for migrant learners?
- Should teachers incorporate intercultural content into their language lessons?
- How should this content be integrated with language learning?
- What topics do you feel are appropriate/inappropriate for the language classroom?
- Are the needs of people adapting to an **working** in a new international setting similar to those of migrants adapting to **living** in a new host culture?
- Does an intercultural approach bring people together or make them too aware of difference?
- How should we help teachers develop their intercultural competences?
- Who should adapt their cultural behaviour – the hosts or the new arrivals?



# References

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Block, David                          | Multilingual identities in a global city     |
| Crystal, David                        | How language works                           |
| Ferraro, Gary                         | Cultural dimension of international business |
| Gubbins, P. & Holt, M.                | Language and Identity in Contemporary Europe |
| Hofstede, Geert                       | Cultures and Organisations                   |
| Lewis, Richard                        | When cultures collide                        |
| Meyer, Erin                           | The Culture Map                              |
| Mole, John                            | Mind your manners                            |
| Tomalin, Barry                        | The World's Business Cultures                |
| Tomalin, Barry                        | Cross-cultural Communication                 |
| Tomalin, Barry &<br>Stempleski, Susan | Cultural Awareness                           |
| Trompenaars, Fons                     | Riding the waves of Culture                  |

