

## Concept Workshop "Language and Culture": Let's not misunderstand each other

### How can successful communication work despite linguistic and cultural differences?

- Target group: Adults
- Materials: Flipchart, pin board, preferably no PowerPoint.
- Approximately how many people should you expect?

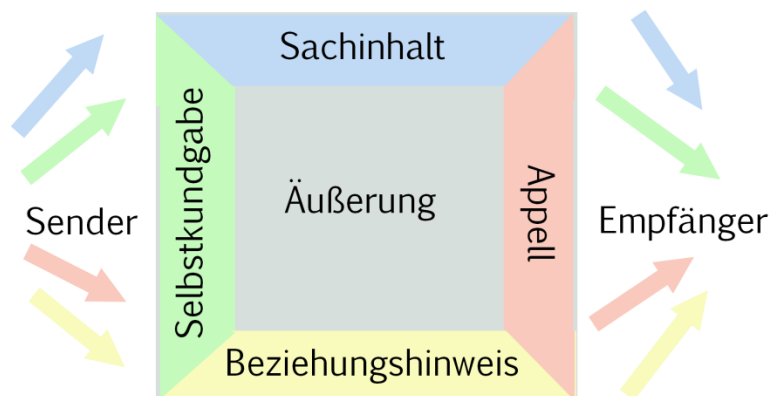
#### 1. Approach to the terms "language" and "culture"

##### What is language? What is culture?

Language	Culture
System of Lute and drawing	≠ Nature
Serves communication	System of rules and habits that regulate living together and behaviour
Non-verbal language	Inclusion / exclusion of people
Mother tongue – Foreign language	Iceberg model, cultivated onion
Fictitious languages / world auxiliary languages / technical languages	

#### Associograms / mind maps with the participants on the terms

##### 1. communication model according to Friedemann Schulz von Thun



- **Sachebene**>: - Subject level >: Data, facts, circumstances
- **Selbstkundgabe**:- Self-disclosure>: information about oneself, implicitly or explicitly.
- **Beziehungshinweis**: - Relationship indication>: particularly active in non-verbal or intercultural communication (facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice), how do I relate to my counterpart?
- **Appell**: -Appeal >: What do I want to achieve with my counterpart? Expression of wishes, advice, appeals,...
- Voice pitch and body language provide information about the level "sent".
- Examples of 4 sides of a message: couple driving and eating  
The woman is driving at 90 km/h on a country road. The man says: "You can drive 100 km/h here".

- o **Factual level:** Driving at 100km/h is allowed on this road.
- o **Self-expression:** The man is in a hurry / annoyed by the woman's driving style.
- o **Relationship level:** The man thinks he is the better driver who has to help his wife because she is a bad driver.
- o **Appeal:** Drive faster!

A couple is sitting at dinner. The man abruptly asks the woman: "What's that green in the sauce?"

- o **Factual level:** There is something green
- o **Self-revelation:** I don't know what it is.
- o **Relationship:** You will know.
- o **Appeal:** Tell me what it is!

The woman, on the other hand, understands the man on the different levels like this:

- o **Factual level:** There is something green.
- o **Self-revelation:** I don't like the food.
- o **Relationship:** You are a lousy cook.
- o **Appeal:** Next time leave out the green!

## 1. communication

### a. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication accounts for about 55% of the signals we send when communicating

Paul Watzlawick: "You cannot not communicate."

- Types of non-verbal communication

- o Gaze behaviour
- o Tactility
- o Spatial distance
- o Vegetative symptoms (e.g. blushing)
- o Facial expressions
- o Gestures
- o Vocal characteristics (paraverbal communication)

- Mostly subconscious and difficult to control

- Facial expressions, which are not culturally dependent but genetically determined (according to Paul Ekman)

o Anger

o Sadness

o Joy

o Surprise

o Disgust

o Fear

- Knowledge of certain non-verbal signals in a foreign culture helpful, but intact senses just as important: empathy, sympathy, acceptance, curiosity. It is also important to be aware that there are differences and that these are also recognisable

- Examples of misunderstandings

o Nodding in Bulgaria and Greece means negation

o Eye contact is avoided in Japan or Finland, but is desired in Western cultures or in Arabic countries.

o Waving goodbye can be interpreted as a sign of "no" in Latin America.

o Circle of fingers: USA, Germany everything okay/excellent - Russia, Brazil, Southern Europe taken as an insult

o Thumbs up in Germany: hitchhiking gesture, all good, in Australia or Nigeria: obscene insult, in Japan expression for number 5 or "firm friend".

o "Victory" sign: Peace, victory, rabbit ears in photos; with the back of the hand facing forward in the UK and Australia, however, extremely vulgar and rude way to say "leave me alone"

o Palm down and "wave": Germany: slow down, East and Southeast Asia/Latin America and West Africa: come here, Netherlands: go away.

- Exercise: Encounter forms: With the help of a role card (non-verbal greeting rituals) as many people as possible should be greeted within 2 minutes.

a. Direct and indirect communication

- Communication in Germany very direct

- Aim of direct communication: to give and receive efficient and clear information without being long-winded.

- Aim of indirect communication: to convey information and messages by means of allusions or paraphrases.

- Indirect communication: to approach the subject of the conversation in a roundabout way, to tell private stories, to express criticism very carefully (especially common in Asian cultures).
- Misunderstandings and ambiguities when direct and indirect communication come together.
- Example and application of the communication model: German woman asks Syrian woman if she wants tea Answer: no

#### German

- o Ears of facts: She does not want tea
- o Appeal ear: Don't bother
- o Relationship ear: Thank you for the offer
- o Self-revealing ear: The Chinese woman does not want to make any trouble.

#### Syrian

- o Subject level: No as a polite formula; part of the politeness ritual
- o Appeal level: if the offer is serious, just pour me some tea
- o Relationship level: I am happy about the offer, but do not want to be a burden
- o Self-disclosure: I don't want to be a bother

#### 2 How can communication be improved accordingly?

- o Be aware that there are different styles of communication.
- o Raise awareness of the 4 sides of a message (more than one possible interpretation)
- o Avoid generalisations
- o Use "I" statements instead of "you" statements.
- o Ask questions in case of ambiguity
- o Pay attention to non-verbal signals
- o Empathy, curiosity, acceptance, respect
- o Address possible misunderstandings right away and get them out of the way.