



## TURNING STEREOTYPES INTO SOCIOTYPES TO IMPROVE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION

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University of Tallinn, 17th April 2012



## LIST OF TOPICS

1. The Paradox of Cultural Entropy
2. The double-faced Relation between Language and Culture
3. The Vicious Circle of Intercultural Non-Communication
4. From stereotype to sociotype
5. Conclusions

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## The Paradox of Cultural Entropy

“Culture isn’t something that comes with one’s race or sex. It comes only through experience; there isn’t any other way to acquire it. And in the end everyone’s culture is different, because everyone’s experience is different.”

Louis Menand, *The New Yorker*, 1992

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## Environmental Hypothesis

The structure of any language is affected by the context and the environment in which it is spoken

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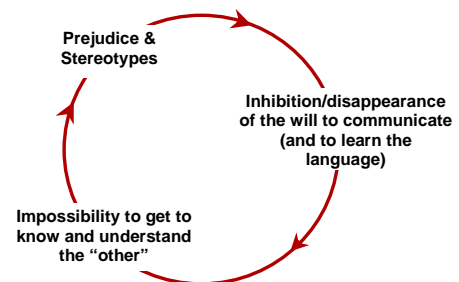
## The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Thoughts and behaviour are determined (or are at least partially influenced) by language

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## The Vicious Circle of Intercultural Non-Communication



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The larger the *Social Distance* between the cultures in contact, the more chances there are for (reciprocal and bi-directional) stereotypes to develop and for the vicious circle to be set off



From  
stereotype  
to  
sociotype



### What is a sociotype?

characterisation deriving from a rational generalisation of an empirically verified and/or verifiable stereotype



### Working strategy: a proposal

1. Brain storming on prejudice and stereotypes
2. Grouping stereotypes into categories (e.g.: food, lifestyle, habits, clothes, noise, honesty, countenance, etc.)
3. Search for proofs of confutation
4. Rational generalisation (historical analysis)
5. Comparison with similar aspects in native culture



### An example

#### 1. Brain storming on prejudice and stereotypes

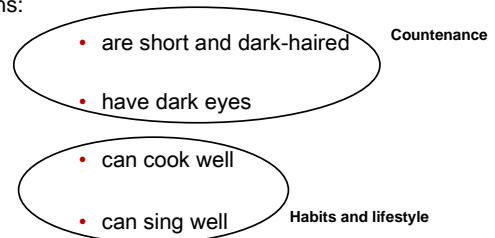
Italians:

- are short and dark-haired
- have dark eyes
- can cook well
- can sing well



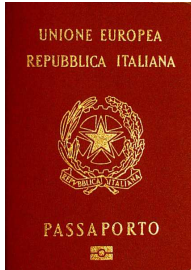
#### 2. Grouping stereotypes into categories

Italians:





### 3. Search for proofs of confutation



But I **am** Italian!

So:

- either I'm not Italian...
- or maybe It's not always true!

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### 4. Rational generalisation (historical analysis)

Why?

Because I'm from the North,  
but even in the South there are lots of  
Italians of Norman or North-European  
origin!

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### 5. Comparison with similar aspects in native culture

What about you?

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## Conclusions

1. Learning a language needs strong motivation
2. The strongest motivation lies in pleasure
3. Pleasure cannot be triggered off if stereotypes exist and persist
4. Turning stereotypes into sociotypes facilitates language learning and
5. eventually, communication and understanding

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However,

**INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION  
CANNOT BE TAUGHT!**

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## Essential Bibliography

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Tānan Kiitos Gracias Danke Thank you Merci Paldies  
Ačiū Diky Takk Dzięki Grazie धन्यवाद Muṭumiri 謝謝  
شكرا धन्यवाद شکریہ Obrigado спасиби спасибо תודה  
Falēnderim благодаря Köszönöm Hvala хвала  
дзякуй ευχαριστίες Grazi Vd'aka Terima Kasih  
благодарение 감사 Dankon

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