



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO  
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

# Intercultural Adaptation & Intergroup Communication

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# Similarities and differences activity



Talk to a person near you (or in Zoom, as a group), and find at least:

- one thing **you have in common**
- one **difference between you**



# Raise your hand if...



- You watch Netflix or any other streaming platform
- You have travelled abroad
- You consume media in (a) foreign language(s)
- Rent is expensive in your home town
- You enjoy Finnish nature
- You have swam in a lake at least once in your life
- You like spicy food
- You drink coffee or tea in the morning

# ...JYU identity?

“According to the JYU strategy, all students at the university develop a JYU Identity, which, among other things, includes **strong interaction competence, language skills and cultural awareness as well as global and ethical responsibility.**”

(Strategy of the University of Jyväskylä 2019–2030)



## **JYU identity: skills to thrive in an international context**

This notion of JYU Identity is founded on communication and the ability to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds and life stories:

→ Internationality as a skill, can be developed and practiced regardless of your degree programme.



**Communication**



**Cultural Understanding**



**Adaptability**

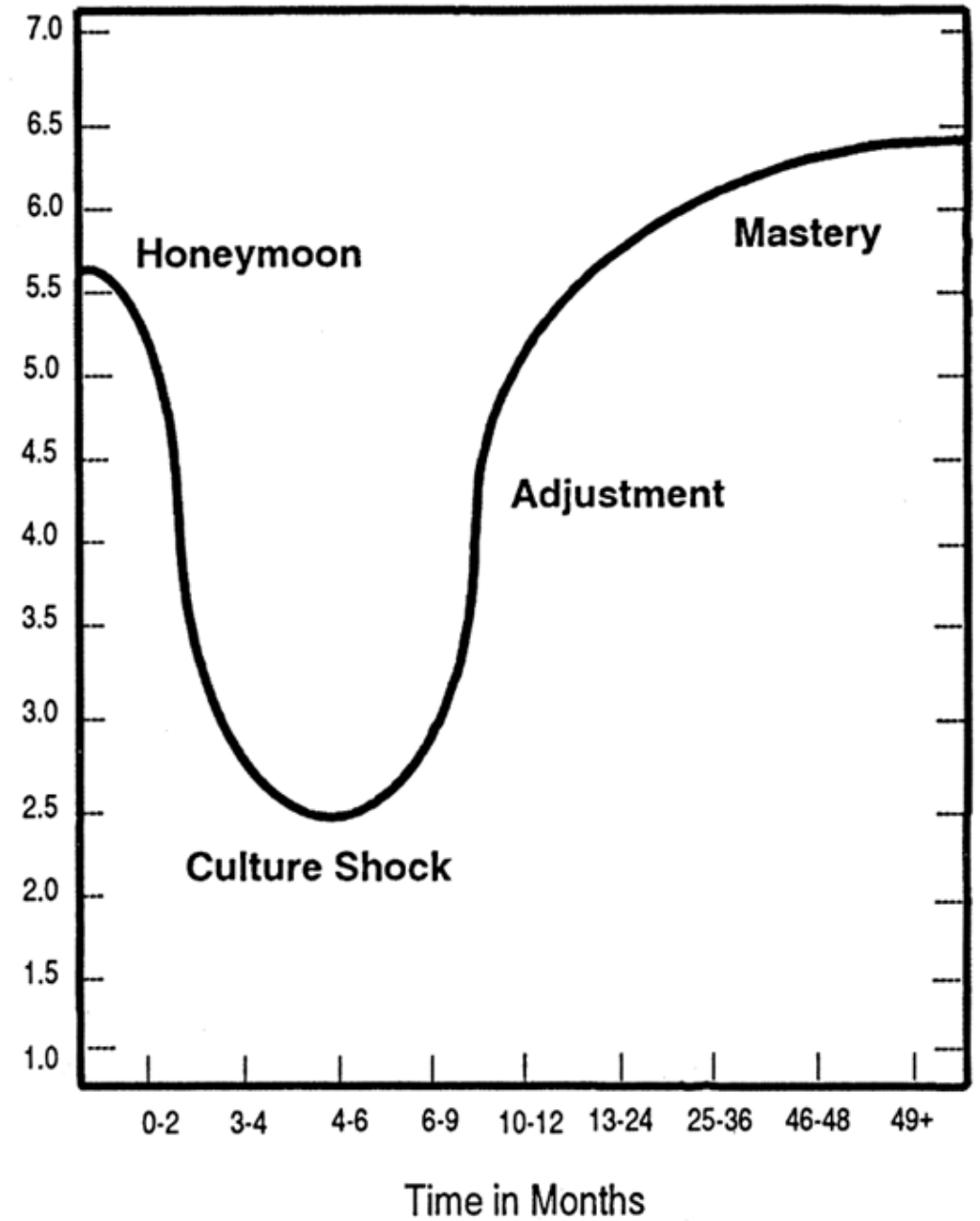


**Empathy**

# Stages of cultural adaptation, culture shock?

Black, J. S., & Mendenhall, M. E. (1991). The U-curve adjustment hypothesis revisited: A review and theoretical framework. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 22(2), 225–247. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8490301>

Degree of Adjustment



# The reality...



*“First, cultures do not interact – people do.*

*Culture only matters to the extent it is manifest in and through people in interaction.”*

Brian Spitzberg 2015, 24

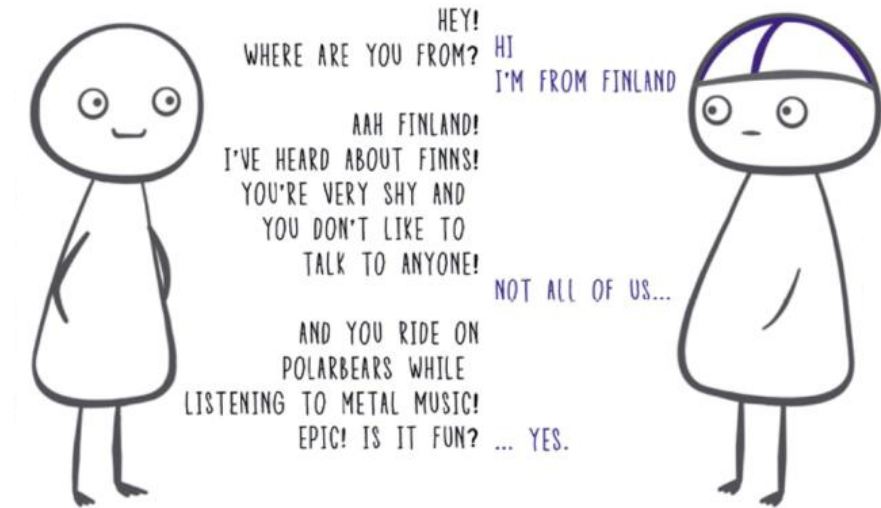
Many factors affecting your adaptation to the new context you are finding yourself in:

- Expectations
- Stereotypes
- Environment and personal situation
- Language
- Values, norms and rules
- Perception and interpretation
- Personality
- Cultural distance
- Social network
- Attitudes toward change
- Multilingual and Intercultural Communication Competence

# Finnish "culture" and "Silent Finn"



- Stereotypes are oversimplifications. Such assumptions shape how we perceive and interact with others and might become communication barriers. Take them critically.
- "Silent Finn" as an academic myth (research by Marko Siitonen & Margarethe Olbertz-Siitonen)
- Assuming that all Finns are quiet because they don't speak much in public settings overlooks deeper values and social norms like **respect for personal space, non-intrusiveness, or valuing silence as meaningful.**



WHEN SOMEONE TAKES FINNISH STEREOTYPES TOO SERIOUSLY.

*Finnish Nightmares by Karoliina Korhonen*

# Tip of the iceberg

**Activity:** write down 3 things you have noticed living in Finland? Discuss in pairs/groups: is it connected to "implicit" culture.

Based on model by Edward T. Hall



# Networking - Strength of Weak Ties

(Strength of Weak Ties Theory by Mark Granovetter)

- **Strong ties:** Close friends, family, people you interact with regularly. These ties are emotionally rich but often share the same information and networks.
- **Weak ties:** classmates from other departments, acquaintances outside of university circle, people you meet at different events, projects, volunteering. These ties connect you to different social circles, offering access to **new ideas, diverse viewpoints, and working opportunities**, helping you to grow both personally and professionally.
- -> Don't spend all your time within the "**study programme / university bubble**"  
Leave your comfort zone :)



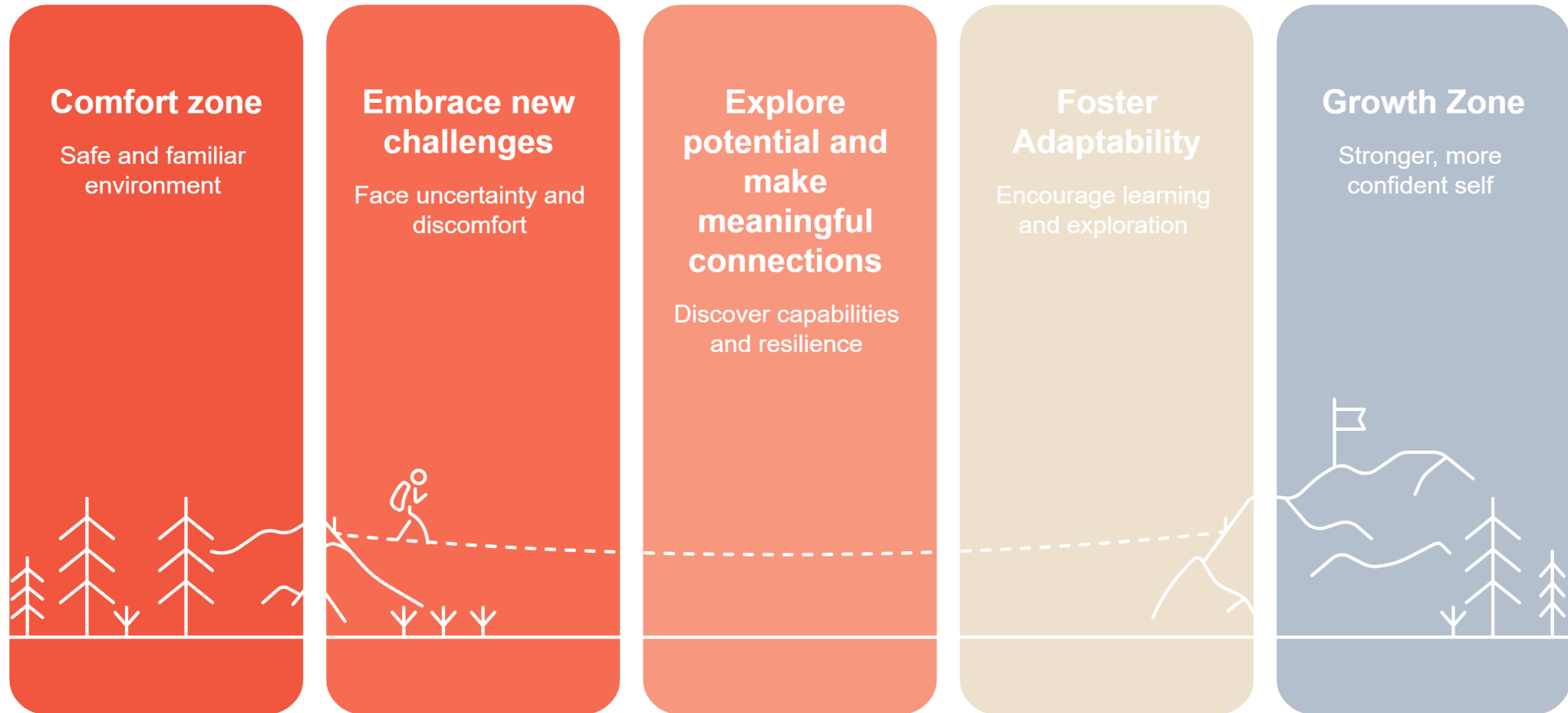
# Tips & resources



## Social relations

- Fostering a sense of **belonging**. Communication relationships are often seen as a one very important factor in adapting to life changes in general.
- Places become **homes** through relationships.
- Do not to reduce individuals to cultural clichés, **be open-minded and curious** to learn about teh person you are interacting with.
- Reflect on your own iceberg: Recognize how your own values influence how you interpret others.
- Networking! Leave your bubble, hobbies, volunteering, Adult Education Centre
- Empathy (towards yourself, and others)
- [Movi courses to enhance your multilingual and intercultural competence](#)

# Before we conclude



# Special thanks to



- **Lotta Kokkonen**, PhD, (Movi), for her Introduction to Intercultural Communication presentations in the past Orientations.
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