



Culture “Laughs”

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Let's start!

- **In the shared document from the link, write the city and country where you are from under the respective heading in the table.**
- https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1g4cBU_Sq4h9c58cinVczCAIJC3QpE_2h?usp=sharing



What do we hope to achieve

The aim of the webinar is for participants to

- Engage in **reflecting on their own experiences** of working or living in another culture
 - **Explore the intercultural encounters** they have been part of
 - **Discuss strategies** useful in overcoming cultural barriers in daily life and at their workplace.
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What have you prepared

- You have 4 minutes to enter either the intercultural encounter or the joke you have prepared in the respective place in the table from the shared document.
- Now, take a few moments to read what other participants have added and choose 1 example of either an encounter or a joke to consider in more depth.

- **Consider the following questions. Then share with the group.**

Intercultural encounter	Joke
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- When did the encounter happen?- Where did it happen?- Who was involved? What cultures were represented?- What actually happened?- How did they feel? Why did they feel like that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-What culture does the joke belong to?-What is the punchline?-What is it based on (stereotyping, values, language use, etc.)?-Is this joke likely to be perceived in the same way in another culture? Why?

Alternatively...

2.1 Read the examples of intercultural encounters and jokes below.

- **On vacation in Bulgaria**

This happened while on vacation in Bulgaria. It happened in a parking lot. A Serbian family was in a car trying to park, they were talking with the Bulgarian parking lot worker. They asked if they could park. The Bulgarian worker shook his head and the family perceived it as a “No”. They started to back out of the lot but the men said "But I said “Yes”, why are you backing out?".

The family felt extremely confused.

Authors: Sara Slivečko, Neus Calderón, Lydia Juan, Anna-Maria Penkova, Mina Čušin

- **Can I pet your dog?**

When my cousin from Canada and her boyfriend (let's call him Tom) visited Slovenia, we went on a little walk to the lake. At the lake there were also a dog and his owner. Tom started walking up to the dog, when my cousin pulled his sleeve very angrily. She said “You can't just walk up to people and pet their dogs, you're not home!” And that is how I found out that in Canada (at least in the part where they lived) it is totally acceptable to come up to random people and pet their dogs without asking for consent first (or at least asking if the dog is aggressive).

I felt surprised that it is okay to just do that, meanwhile my cousin was mad, and her boyfriend embarrassed.

Authors: Liza Marolt Cajner, Neža Bernik, Clara Casero, Claudia Valero, Alexandra Petrova

- Have you noticed, dear, that when you make a wrong step, you get a swollen ankle?
- Bushtit! I get a black eye. (BG joke)

- My ex-wife still misses me. But her aim is starting to improve (EN joke)
- The only person I show any mercy to is Ruth. If I didn't, I'd be ruthless. (EN joke)

Kindly provided by Tanya Borisova, PhD who carried out comparative research into puns in Bulgarian and English in the period of 2018-2022. The corpus contains 600 jokes (300 in each language).

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1eptUM5fpuMWtXR0eEEP-rGKvccYaSiFh_fgROJKDLIc/edit?usp=sharing

Consider the following questions. Then share with the group.

Intercultural encounter

- When did the encounter happen?
- Where did it happen?
- Who was involved? What cultures were represented?
- What actually happened?
- How did they feel? Why did they feel like that?

Joke

- What culture does the joke belong to?
- What is the punchline?
- What is it based on (stereotyping, values, language use, etc.)?
- Is this joke likely to be perceived in the same way in another culture? Why?

My ways... Are they your ways?

- **Stereotypes**

Consist basically of shared beliefs or thoughts about a particular human group usually in terms of behaviour, habits, etc.

The objective of stereotypes is to simplify reality: "they are like that".

They may be negative and positive we often have positive stereotypes about our own cultural group.

- **Prejudices**

A prejudice is a judgement we make about another person or other people without really knowing them.

Prejudices are learned as part of our socialisation process and they are very difficult to modify or eradicate. Therefore it is important that we are aware that we have them.

They can also be negative or positive.

- **Ethnocentrism**

This is the belief that our response to the world - our culture - is the right one. Our values and ways of life are universal, they are the correct ones for all people.

Our judgements, evaluations and justifications are influenced strongly by our ethnocentrism.

Mere contact with people from other cultures can actually reinforce our prejudices, our ethnocentric spectacles, blinding us to anything but to what we actually expect to see.

Based on All Different, All Equal (2004), Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (2009)

My ways... Are they your ways? What makes us different?

- A different set of beliefs (what they assume is true, e.g. about what is classed as edible and inedible or what is thought polite behaviour)

- A different set of values (what they assume is important in their lives, e.g. they value honesty more than politeness, or they consider that older people's views are more valuable than those of the young)

- A different set of behaviours (the routine, often unconscious, ways of acting, e.g. they always avoid looking older people directly in the eyes or they always keep a fast at a given period in the year – whatever they 'always' do, without reflection)

Based on Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (2009)

What makes us laugh?

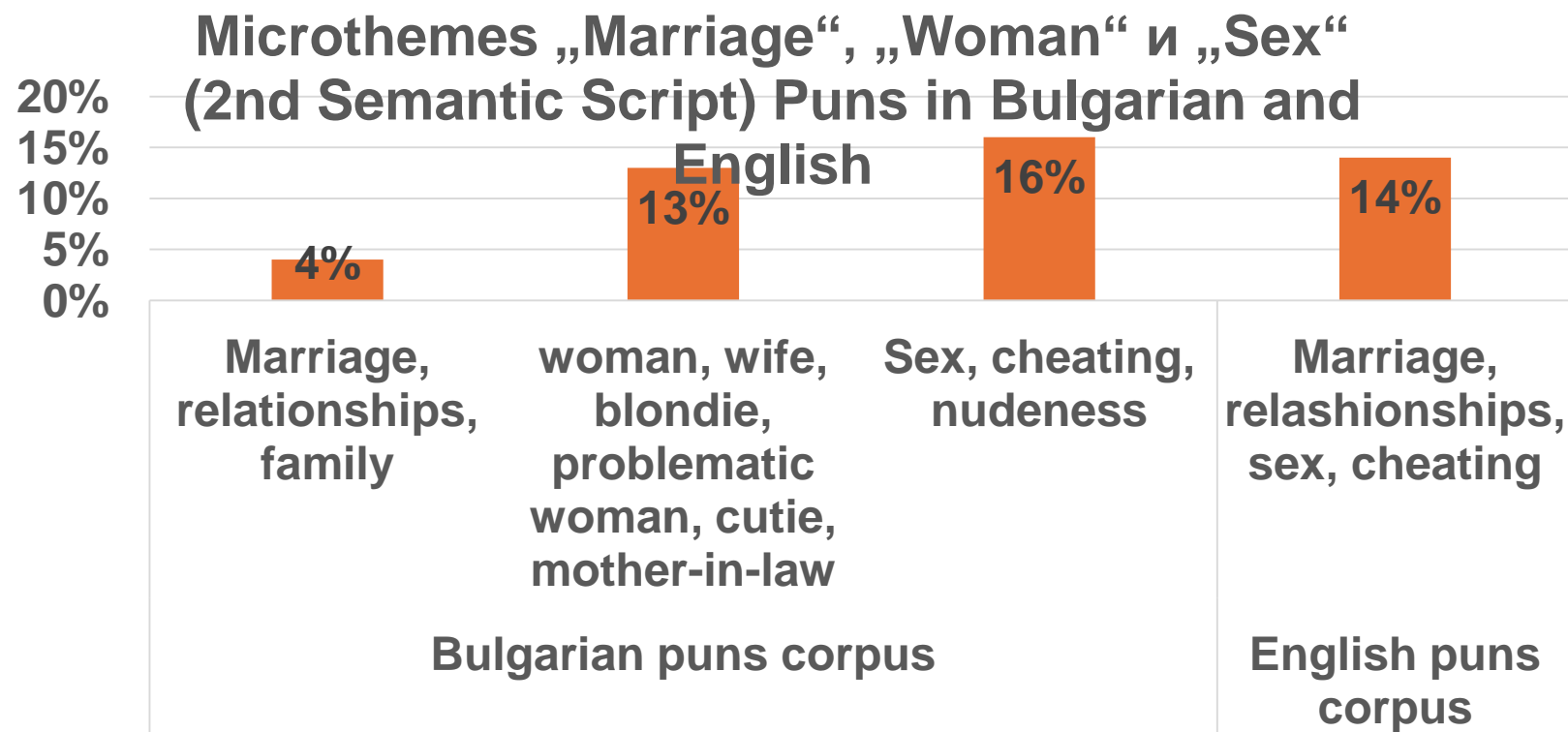
Intercultural competence is supralinguistic as it comprises knowledge of/about language, pragmatic knowledge and skills, knowledge about cultures - values, beliefs, customs, traditions, stereotypes, etc.

Mastering the linguistic mechanisms to achieve a funny effect, as well as the topics and objects of laughter in a foreign culture, facilitate intercultural communication.

Short humorous texts in different languages contain information about the nature of the objects of laughter, the attitude to self and others, and this makes them suitable for lingua-cultural analysis and for the discovery of specific culturally significant topics.

According to Victor Raskin's Script based Semantic Theory of Humour each joke contains two opposite semantic scripts (Raskin, V., 1985, p. 99).

Representation of Women in Bulgarian and English puns – a comparative study



More about this research and the relationship between language learning, intercultural competence and humour:
 Harakchiyska, Tsvetelina, and Tanya Borisova. "The place of humour competence in foreign language teaching and learning." *ICERI2020 Proceedings*. IATED, 2020.

Representation of Women in Bulgarian and English puns – a comparative study

Content analysis:

- *Забелязала ли си, муци, че като стъпиш накриво ти се подува глезенът?*
- *– Глупости! На мен ми посинява окото!*
- (* Have you noticed, dear, that when you make a wrong step, you get a swollen ankle?
- Bulshit! I get a black eye. **(BG joke)**

- My ex-wife still misses me. But her aim is starting to improve **(EN joke)**
- *The only person I show any mercy to is Ruth. If I didn't, I'd be ruthless.*

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What factors can hinder effective intercultural communication?

- Experiences that would lead to intense feelings and engagement of emotions.
- Areas of knowledge that, through the process of socialization to a culture, are realized as correct or appropriate, but may involve differences due to differences in cultures that are difficult to understand.
- The basics of cultural differences, especially those concerning the way people think or process information (Kushner and Brislin 1994: 39).
- Attitudes to hierarchy and initiative-taking
- Breaching of one's sense of personal space
- Approaches to giving and accepting criticism, etc.
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This is not an exhaustive list but having these factors in mind and planning in advance what you can do when you are involved in intercultural communication in as concrete terms as possible can be helpful.



By way of conclusion... (Looking forward)

- Think about your current stay abroad (or the next one you are planning to take).
 - What_steps you can take to adapt more easily to the host culture and to maximise the effect of your stay abroad? Write them down in the shared document and add your name and country of origin.
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Thank you for your active
participation!