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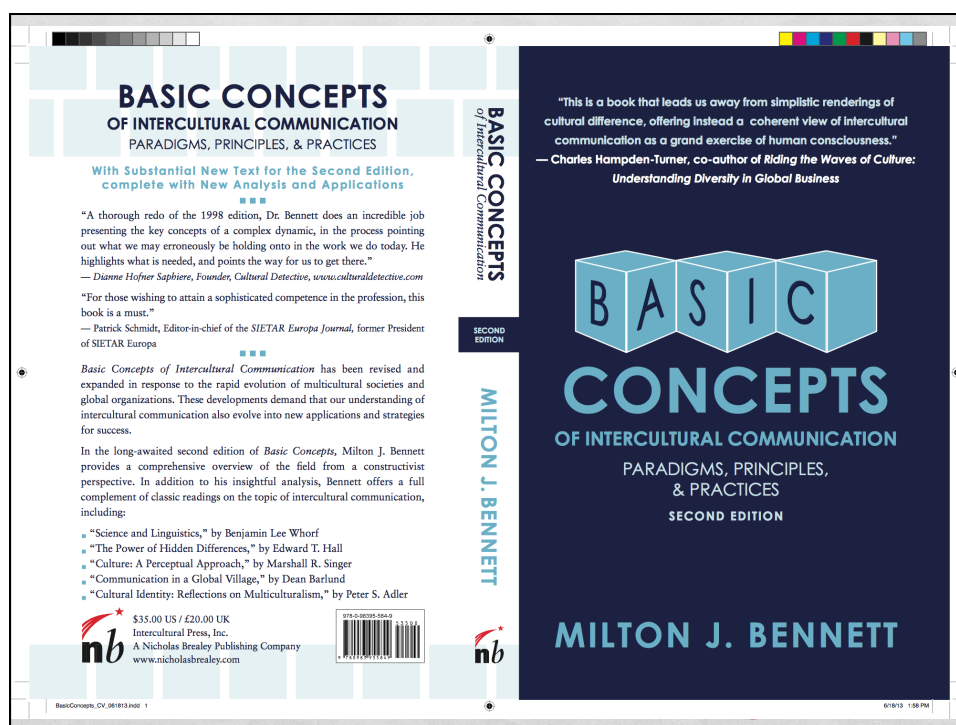
Perceptual Agility, Intercultural Communication, & Good Jokes

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BASIC CONCEPTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

PARADIGMS, PRINCIPLES, & PRACTICES

With Substantial New Text for the Second Edition,
complete with New Analysis and Applications

"A thorough redo of the 1998 edition, Dr. Bennett does an incredible job presenting the key concepts of a complex dynamic, in the process pointing out what we may erroneously be holding onto in the work we do today. He highlights what is needed, and points the way for us to get there."
— Dianne Hofner Sapiere, Founder, Cultural Detective, www.culturaldetective.com

"For those wishing to attain a sophisticated competence in the profession, this book is a must."
— Patrick Schmidt, Editor-in-chief of the *SIETAR Europa Journal*, former President of SIETAR Europa

Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication has been revised and expanded in response to the rapid evolution of multicultural societies and global organizations. These developments demand that our understanding of intercultural communication also evolve into new applications and strategies for success.

In the long-awaited second edition of *Basic Concepts*, Milton J. Bennett provides a comprehensive overview of the field from a constructivist perspective. In addition to his insightful analysis, Bennett offers a full complement of classic readings on the topic of intercultural communication, including:

- "Science and Linguistics," by Benjamin Lee Whorf
- "The Power of Hidden Differences," by Edward T. Hall
- "Culture: A Perceptual Approach," by Marshall R. Singer
- "Communication in a Global Village," by Dean Barlund
- "Cultural Identity: Reflections on Multiculturalism," by Peter S. Adler

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BASIC CONCEPTS
OF Intercultural Communication

SECOND EDITION

MILTON J. BENNETT

"This is a book that leads us away from simplistic renderings of cultural difference, offering instead a coherent view of intercultural communication as a grand exercise of human consciousness."
— Charles Hampden-Turner, co-author of *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Diversity in Global Business*

BASIC
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& PRACTICES


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Perceptual Agility
The Best Jokes in the World

Caveats:


- Well, not the whole world; just that portion of the English-speaking world that votes on websites
- Well, not necessarily the best, but the most popular
- Well, not necessarily the most popular for all time, but at least for a particular time
- Having a good sense of humor doesn't necessarily mean being able to tell jokes well
- So please don't be disappointed if you already heard someone else tell it better


 © Milton Bennett

Perceptual Agility
Arthur Koestler on Humor
(The Act of Creation)

All humor (and innovation, and artistic creativity) depends on *bisociation*:


“The perceiving of a situation in two self-consistent but habitually incompatible frames of reference”



 © Milton Bennett

Perceptual Agility
Visual Humor (Cartoons)
Warning: Religion & Politics

Slow bisociation generates amusement or irony




The first cartoon on the left shows a man in a white robe standing next to a laptop, with the signature 'Dad'. The middle cartoon shows two men, one with a long white beard and the other with a bald head, looking at a laptop screen with the word 'click!' above it, signed 'Gardner'. The third cartoon on the right shows a group of men in red and white robes, some holding up phones, with the signature 'Hajo'.

"Le disegniamo qui, ma all'

Perceptual Agility
Visual Humor (Cartoons)
Warning: Religion & Politics

Faster bisociation may generate laughter



The first cartoon on the left shows a man in a suit sitting at a table with a young boy. The man is looking at a laptop screen. The boy is looking at the man. The man's speech bubble says "Dad says you're spying us online". The boy's speech bubble says "He's not your dad". The cartoon is signed "KULLFOTO.COM". The second cartoon on the right shows a man in a suit sitting at a table with a young boy. The man is looking at a laptop screen. The boy is looking at the man. The man's speech bubble says "LES USA NOUS ESPIONNENT". The boy's speech bubble says "OBAMA, LUI AU MOINS, IL M'ÉCOUTE!". The cartoon is signed "MIX & REMIX".

"Papà dice che ci stai spiando online". "Lui non è tuo papà".

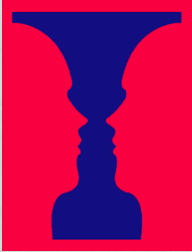
Gli Stati Uniti ci spiano. "Almeno Obama mi ascolta!".

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Perceptual Agility
G. Spencer Brown on Observing
(*Laws of Form*)

We cannot make an indication without drawing a distinction (G. Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form*)

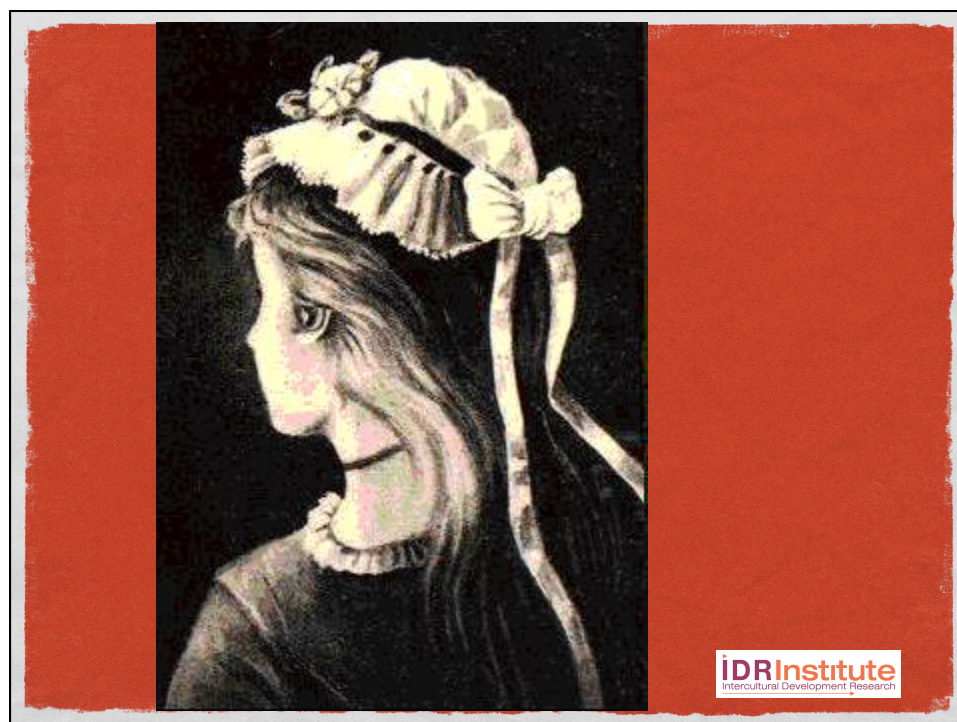
- The distinction creates *figure* and *ground*
- The “frame of reference” determines which part of a distinction to pay attention to



Practice shifting
figure and ground



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Perceptual Agility
Contextual Intelligence

Sets of figure/ground distinctions constitute a *context*

Harvard University Leadership Initiative

- 860 innovative business leaders in 20th and early 21st century
- No personality characteristics in common
- Widespread ability to identify trends
- Shared ability to recognize context, shift context, and synthesize across contexts

 © Milton Bennett

Perceptual Agility
Bilingualism (Biculturalism)

The ability to shift between two language or cultural contexts apparently has implications for “executive functions” of the brain

The mixed-language context shifted the executive system to an enhanced functional level, thus improving the effectiveness of nonverbal conflict resolution...(with implications for) functional plasticity, the process by which new skills and life experiences modify brain structure and functions

Yan Jing Wu & Guillaum Thierry (2013) Fast modulation of executive function by language context in bilinguals. *Journal of Neuroscience*, 33(33):13533-13537



Perceptual Agility

Biculturalism (Biculturalism)

Additional research:

- Bilingual children are better than monolinguals at shifting to new rules
- Bilingual children are better at focusing attention (inhibiting distraction)
- Bilingualism enhances some aspects of executive control (e.g. task shifting) independently from differences in culture, language, or immigration status
- The effects of bilingualism on executive control appear to be long-lasting (e.g. lower incidence of Alzheimer disease).

Reported in François Grosjean, Ping Li, & Ellen Bialystok (2013) *The psycholinguistics of bilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell



Perceptual Agility

Intercultural Communication


- Intercultural communication is about communication, not culture
- Communication is the process whereby we coordinate meaning and action with others (culture=communication, per E.T. Hall)
- Intercultural communication is the “coordination of coordination of meaning and action” – a kind of metacommunication



Perceptual Agility
**Competent Intercultural
Communication**

Two keys to intercultural communication competence:

- Perceptual Acuity (ability to make contextual distinctions)
 - Cultural self-awareness
 - Complex perception of alternative contexts
- Perceptual agility (ability to shift context)
 - Linguistic and/or cultural code-shifting
 - Experiencing the alternative distinctions

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