



What to be actually aware of in international encounters



andrea.koblizkova@upce.cz



What to be actually aware of in inter-cultural encounters

Summary:

Cross-cultural awareness becomes a crucial part of communicative competence within International English as a vehicle for successful international business. The paper deals with theoretical background of several major concepts of cross-cultural dimensions and communication implications and with its practical application. The research results elaborated by Hofstede and Trompenaars are being challenged by today's global world situation.

The author contrasts the classical dimension theory overview with aspects related to current situation, both globally and locally, and opens space for reconsidering formats of cross-cultural communication patterns. To demonstrate hesitation over the classical findings, the author shows results of her current survey carried internationally among students and also a comparison of results between students and company professionals. Participants are provided with an opportunity to complete a questionnaire, and discuss their opinions on the need for different communication patterns in cross-cultural encounters.

What to be actually aware of in inter-cultural encounters

Issues to address

1. Intercultural or cross-cultural communication
2. Communicative competence in International English
3. Communication implications and manifestations of culture in International English
4. Employment of pragmatics
5. Survey among university Ss
6. Survey among practitioners

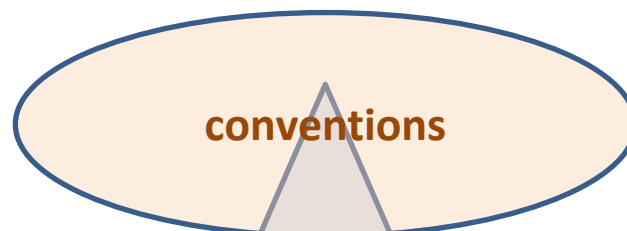
Where culture and language meet

conventions

- In the narrow *concept*: communication **carried across** borders is generally **understood** as cross-cultural *communication*. Cultures may **be understood** as defined by territories of countries, as well as by territories of *communities* or organizations.
- **Cultures** feature *specific* ways of communication **given by** agreed **conventions**, reasons for which are **OFTEN HIDDEN** and not easy to understand. They may be perceived either *subconsciously* or through *manifestation* of *certain* phenomena to the **outside** world.

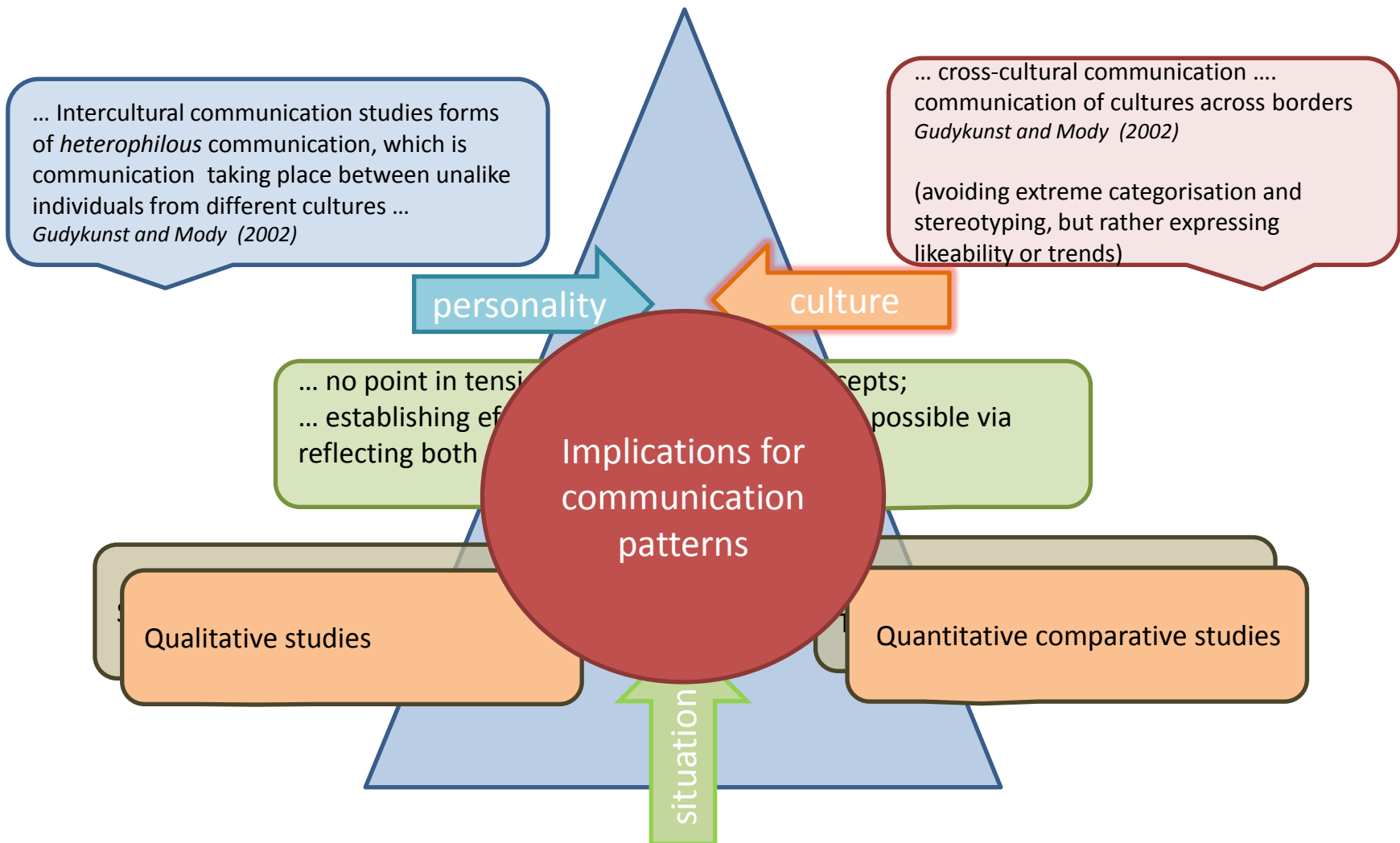
Where culture and language meet

Communication **context** and means of communication

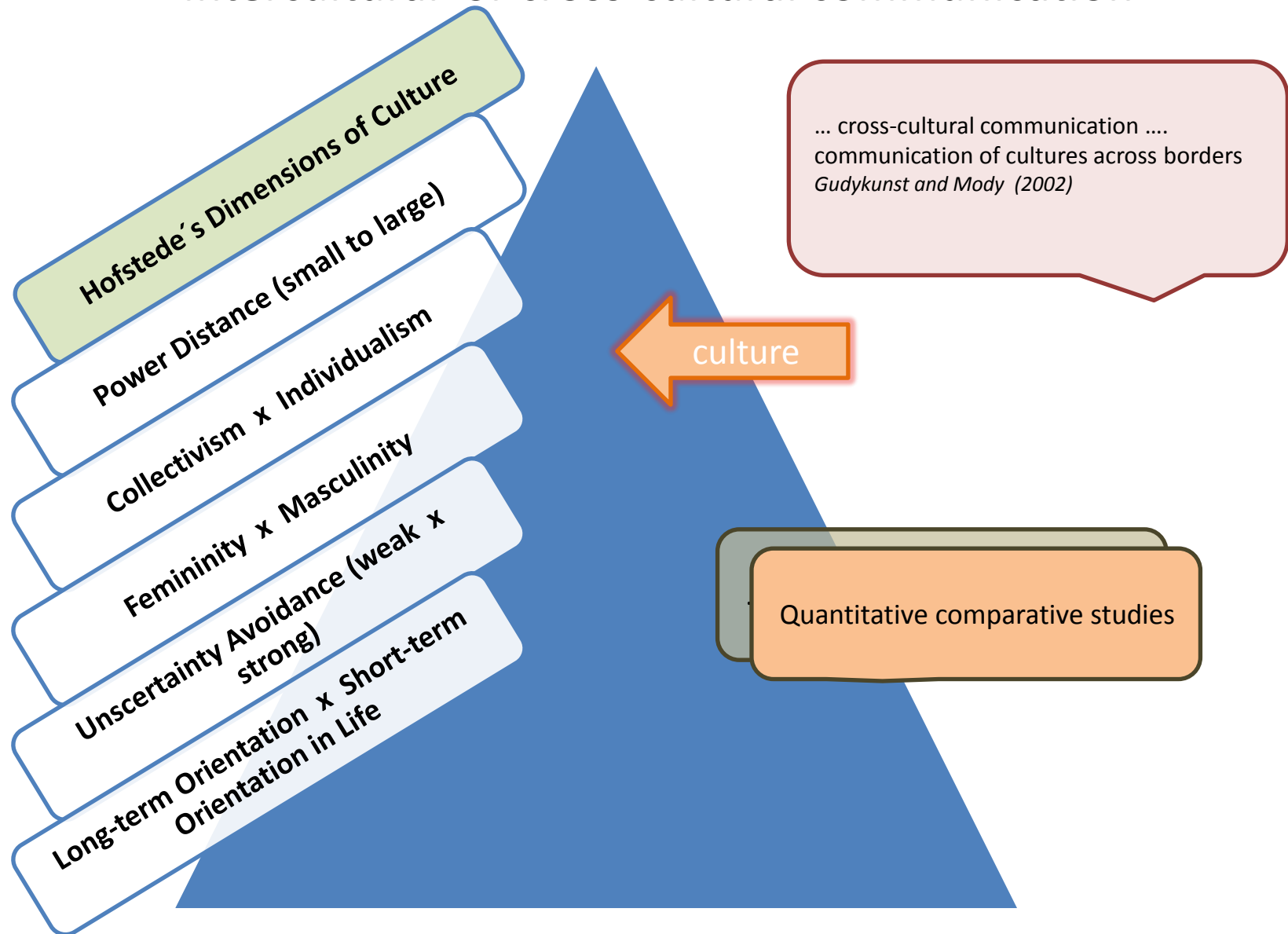


- In the narrow concept: communication carried across borders is generally understood as cross-cultural communication. **Cultures** may be understood as defined by territories of countries, as well as by territories of communities or organizations.
- **Cultures** feature specific ways of communication given by agreed **conventions**, reasons for which are often hidden and not easy to understand. They may be perceived either **subconsciously or through manifestation of certain phenomena** to the outside world.
- **The conventions** guarantee **a safe journey through establishing relationships, rapport and solidarity**, exchanging information within particular communication scenarios, arriving at compromises and satisfactory closures.

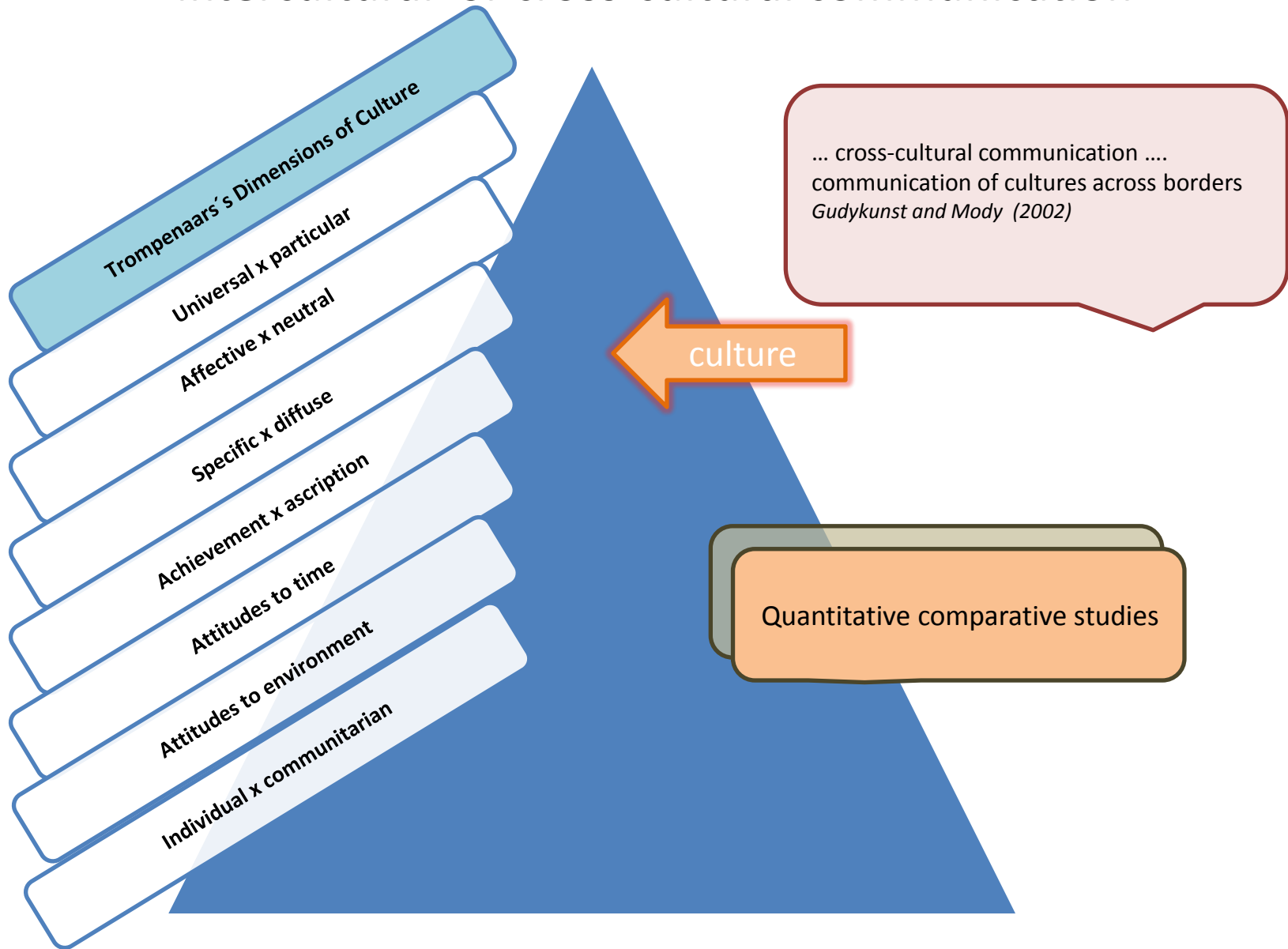
Intercultural or cross-cultural communication



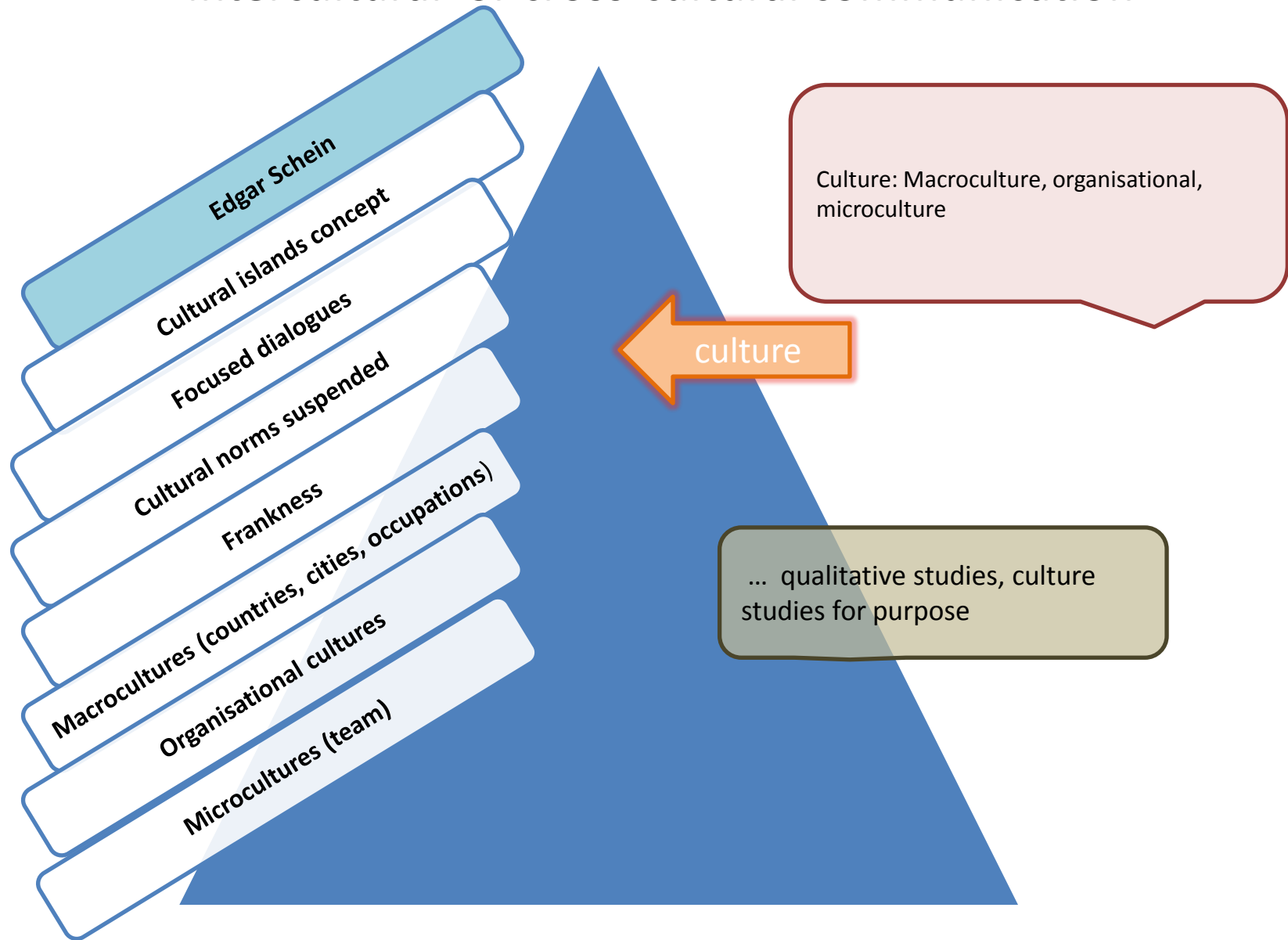
Intercultural or cross-cultural communication



Intercultural or cross-cultural communication



Intercultural or cross-cultural communication



Communicative competence in ELF

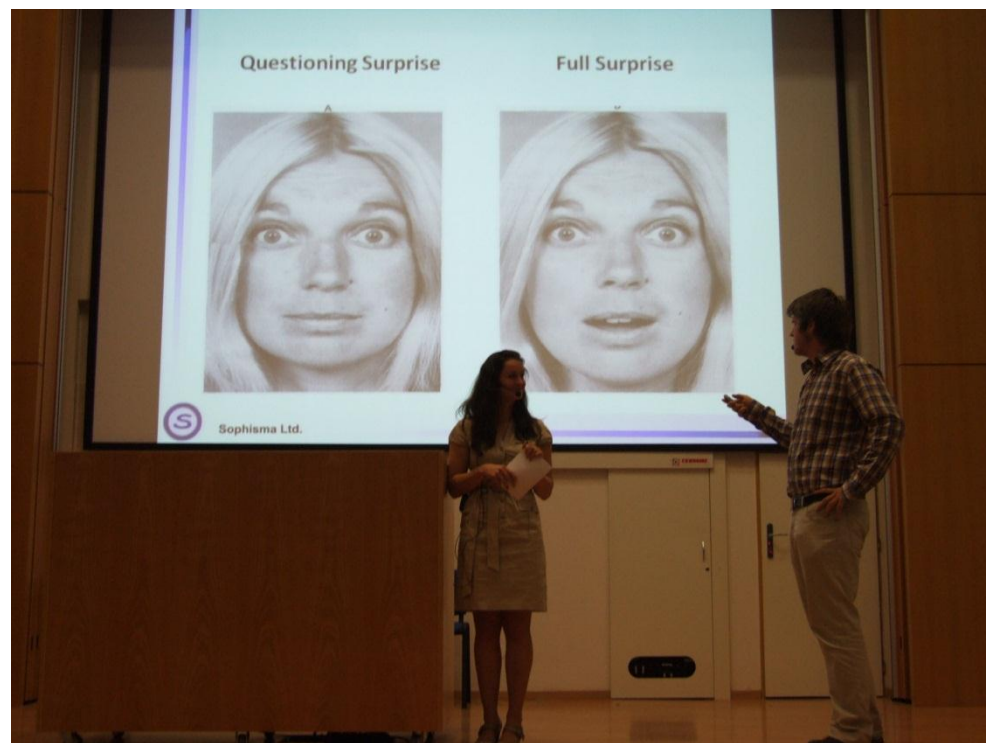
1. International English/
English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)
x English as a Foreign Language

2. Linguistic aspects of ELF

- lexis /lexicogrammar
- pronunciation
- pragmatics

3. Pragmatics

- users of ELF - NNSs + NSs
- use of markers in the language by NNSs



English as a Lingua Franca x English as a Foreign Language

■ ELF

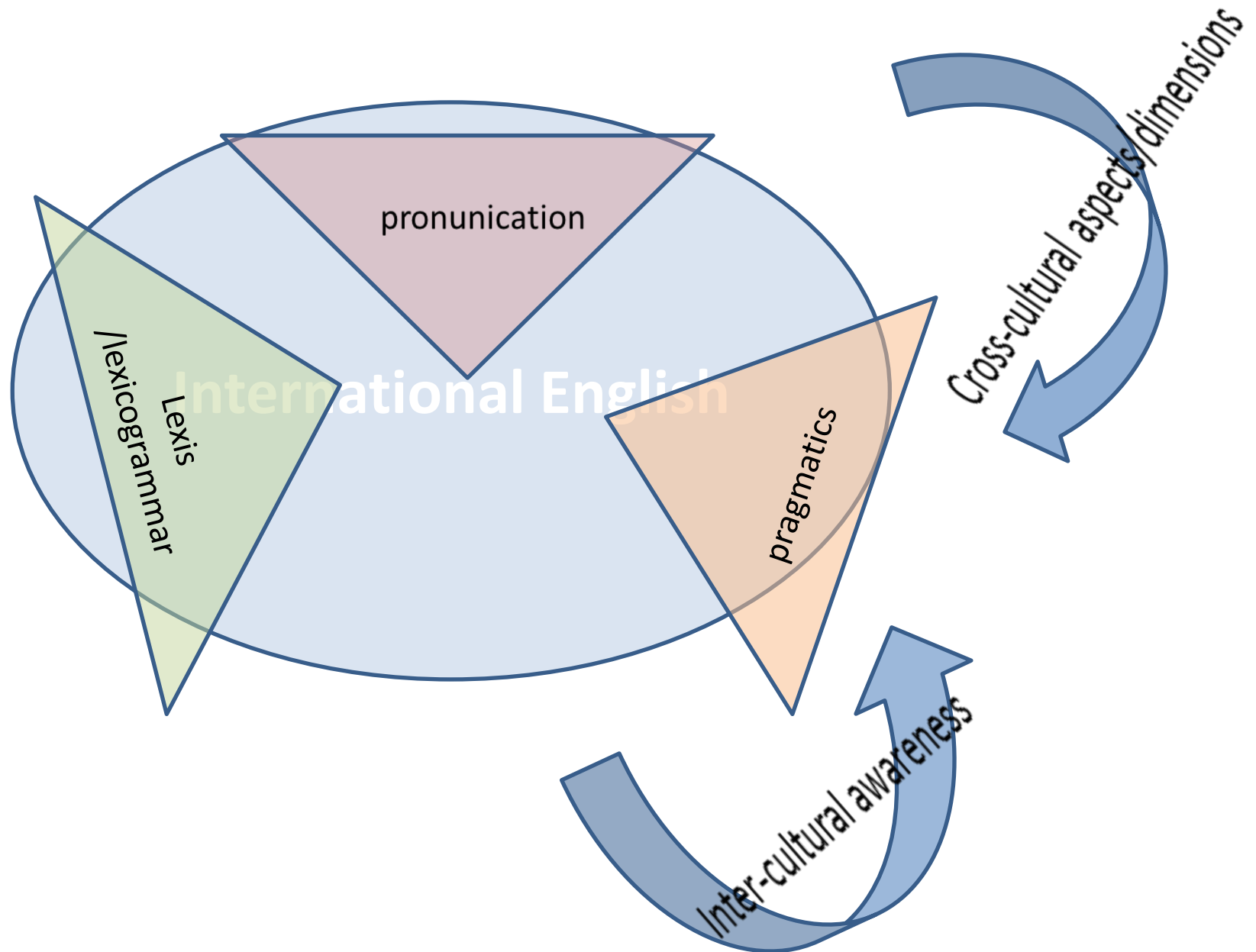
- most speakers NNEs
- all English varieties, native or non-native accepted, rather than evaluated against a NSE benchmark
- **fluid, flexible, contingent, hybrid and deeply intercultural means of communication (Dewey, 2007)**

■ EFL

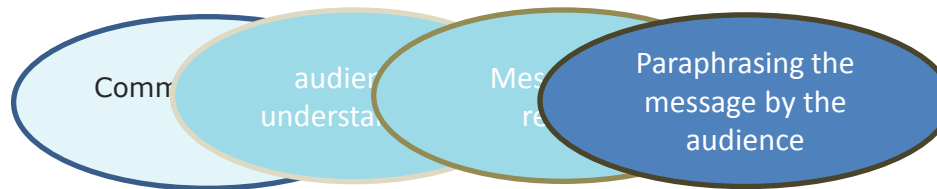
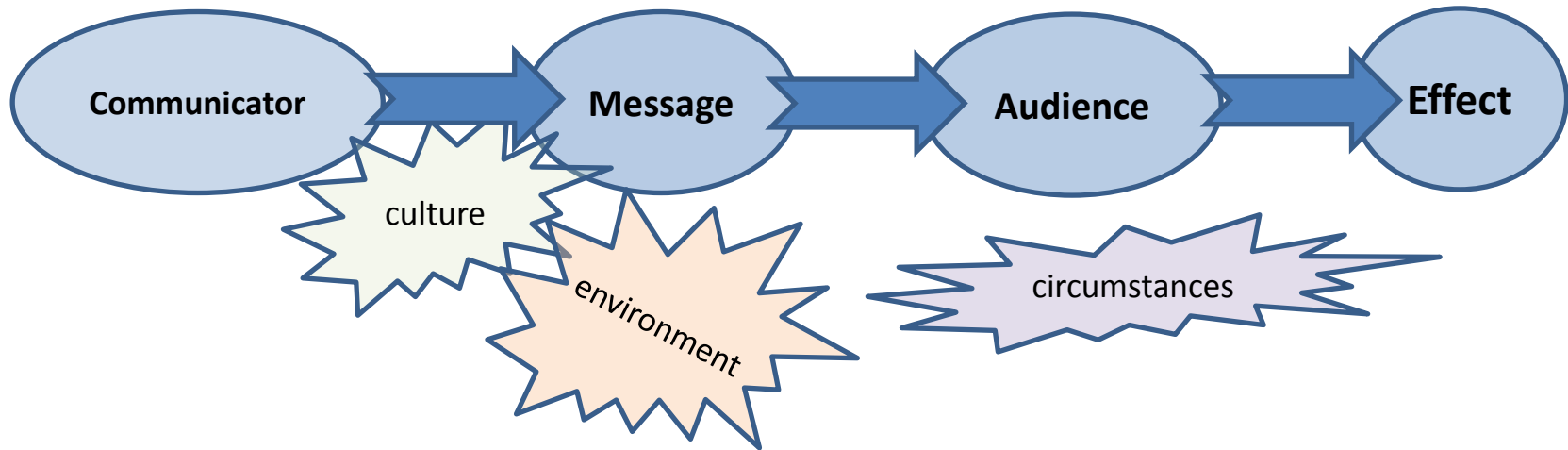
- a part of modern foreign language paradigm
- most interaction involving NNEs is with NSs of the language
- **NNEs' goal is to approximate the native variety as closely as possible**

■ ELF Speakers


- often highly skilled communicators making use of their multilingual resources
- prioritize successful communication over narrow notions of correctness to which the NS are attached, and through code switching **they demonstrate solidarity and project their cultural identity (Jenkins, 2006)**



ELF pragmatics impact Laswell model of communication



Role of Pragmatics

- How the context contributes to meaning; more involved in what the speaker communicates than what the speaker literally says
- Recent research
 - orientation towards mutual understanding regardless of correctness (Firth 1996)
 - focused on miscommunication and resolution of non-understanding
- Resolving strategies involve
 - repetition (Lichtkoppler 2007, Waterson 2008, Cogo 2009),
 - clarification, self-repair (Mauranen 2006),
 - paraphrasing (Kaur 2009),
 - Let-it-pass strategy, topic change (Firth 1996)
- Confusion about **idiomatic expressions** - the NNEs do not avoid them but rather **creatively build on them and produce their own** – which become markers of in-group membership (Seidlehofer 2009)
- Discourse markers: E.g. “you know” – used not to establish politeness, involvement and solidarity but rather enhance the content of the message itself (House 2009)  the current markers are used for new purposes

Cross-cultural orientation research 2011 - 12

- **Czech 30**



University of Pardubice

- **German 22**



University of Leipzig

- **Swiss 20**



University of Zurich/ETH

- **Finnish 14**



University of Oulu

- **Greek 34**

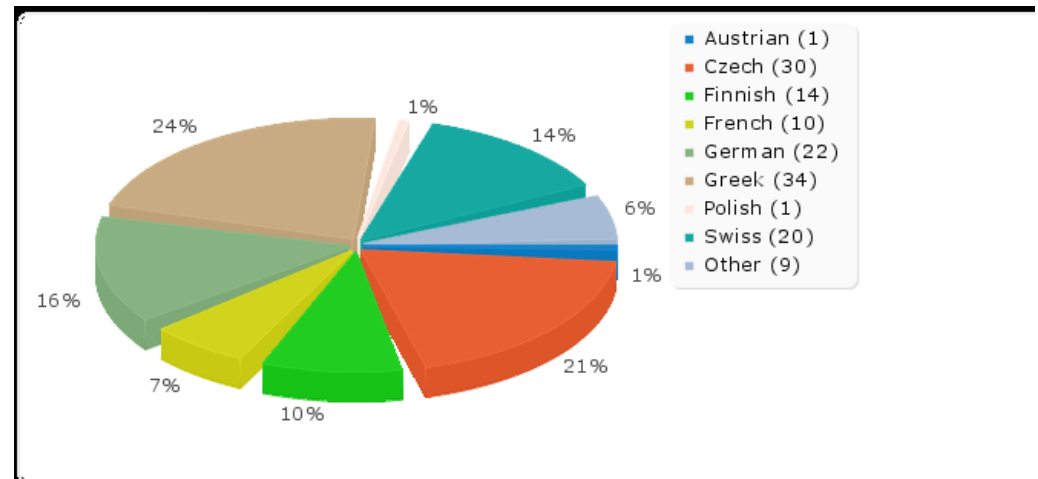


Agricultural University of Athens

- **French 10**



Aix – Marseille University



Methodology: Questionnaire

Survey carried among 141 university students

Questionnaire: 7 sets of questions dealing with

- Controlled emotions in communication
- Approach to time schedules
- Approach to rules
- Individual/team-player approach
- Orientation to achievement
- Risk avoidance
- Approach to politeness

No categorisation: boundaries blurred

Results: tendencies/likeliness to encounter a certain communication phenomenon

Questionnaire for International English Practitioners:

<http://pruzkum.upce.cz/bep>

Fig 1 Controlled emotions in communication

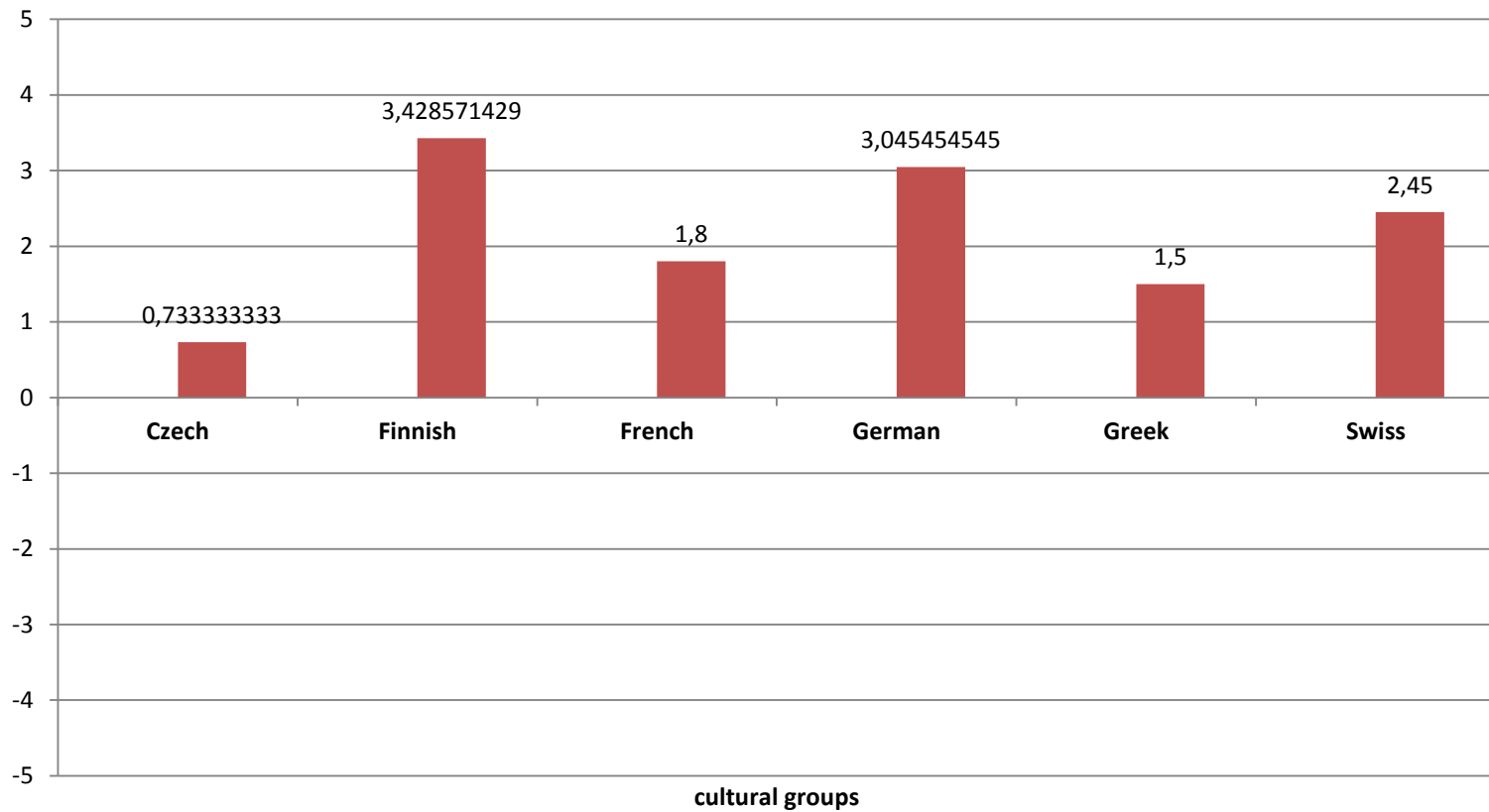


Fig 2 Approach to time schedules

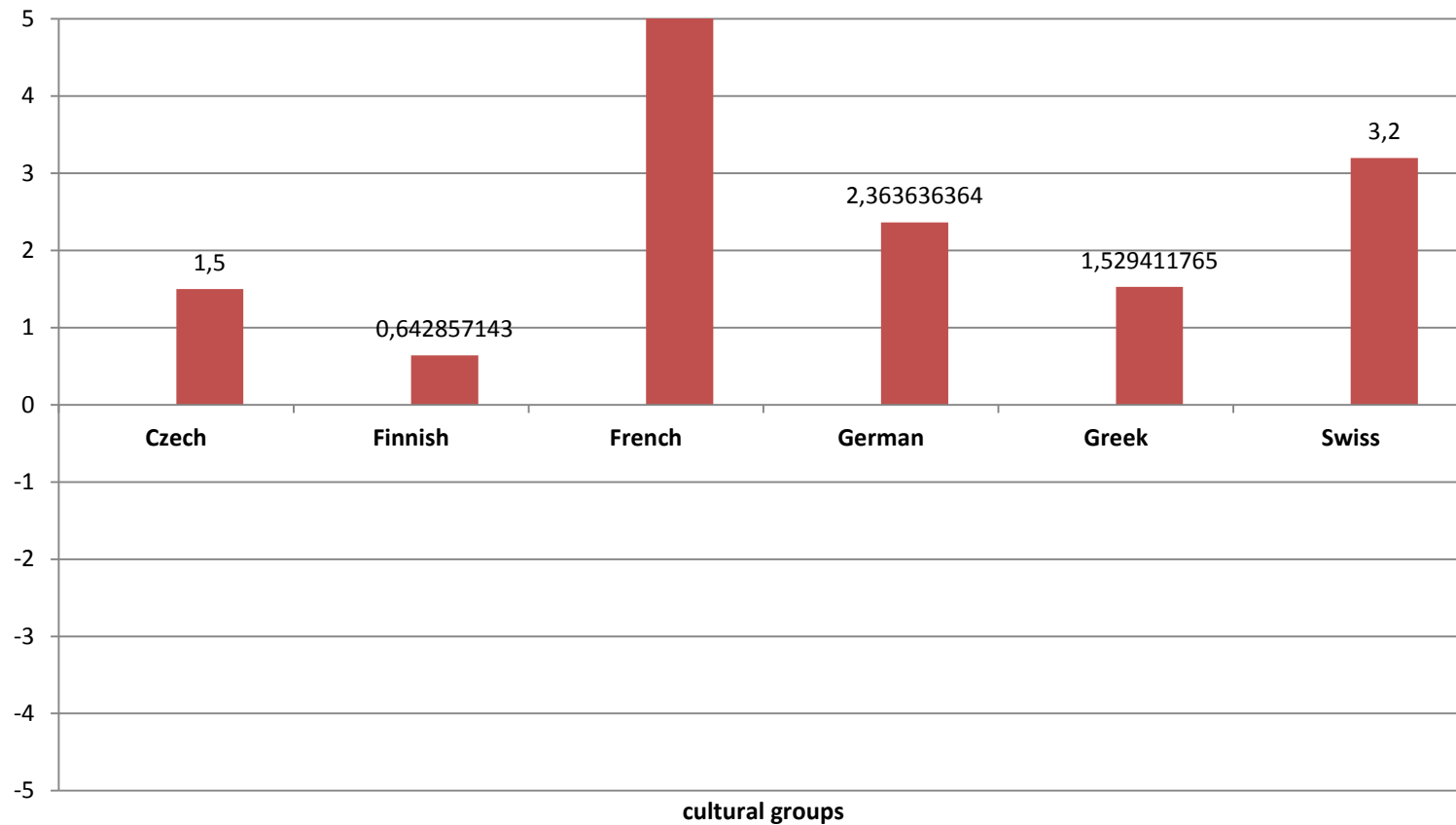


Fig 3 Approach to rules

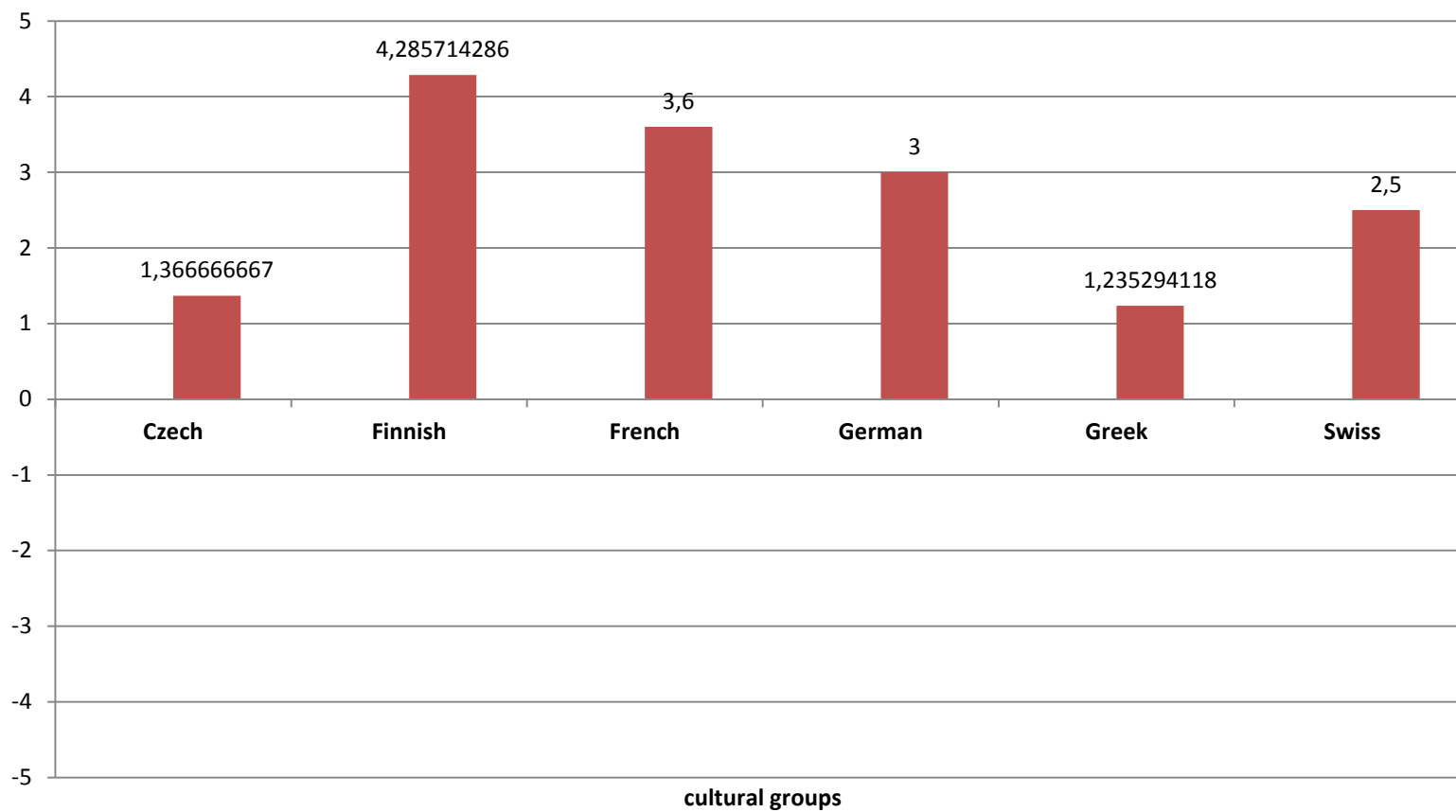


Fig 4 Individual vs team player approach

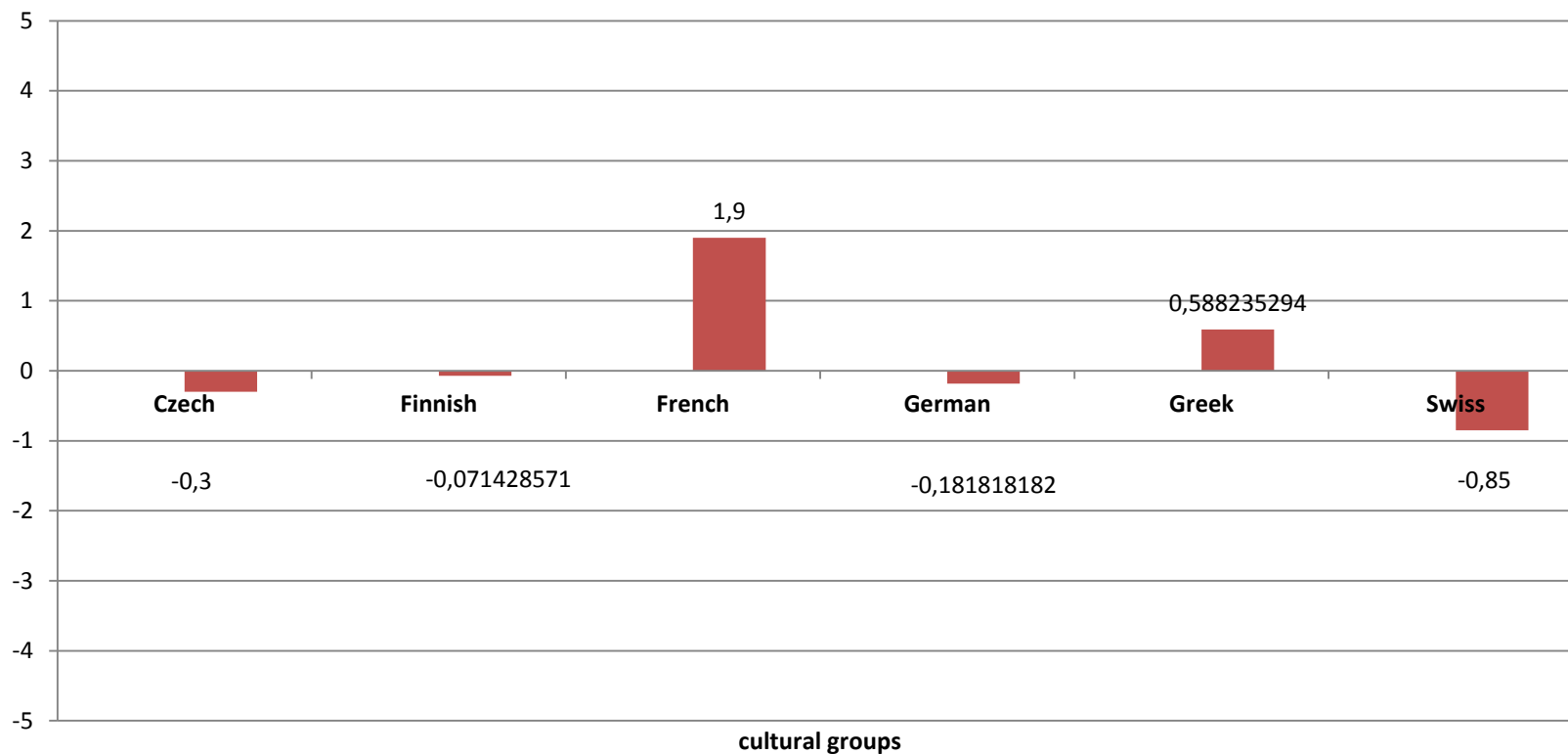


Fig 5 Orientation to achievement

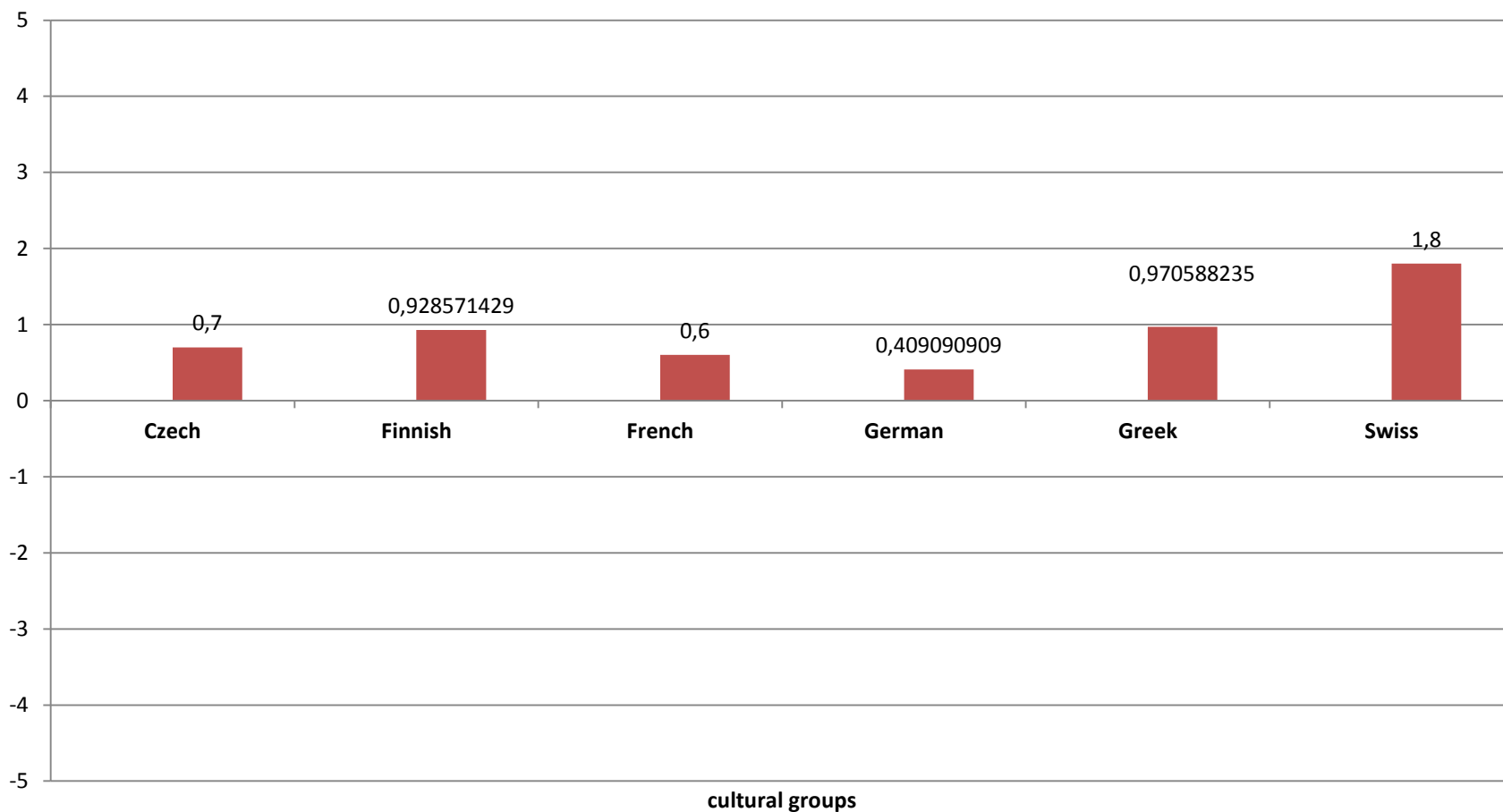


Fig 6 Risk avoidance

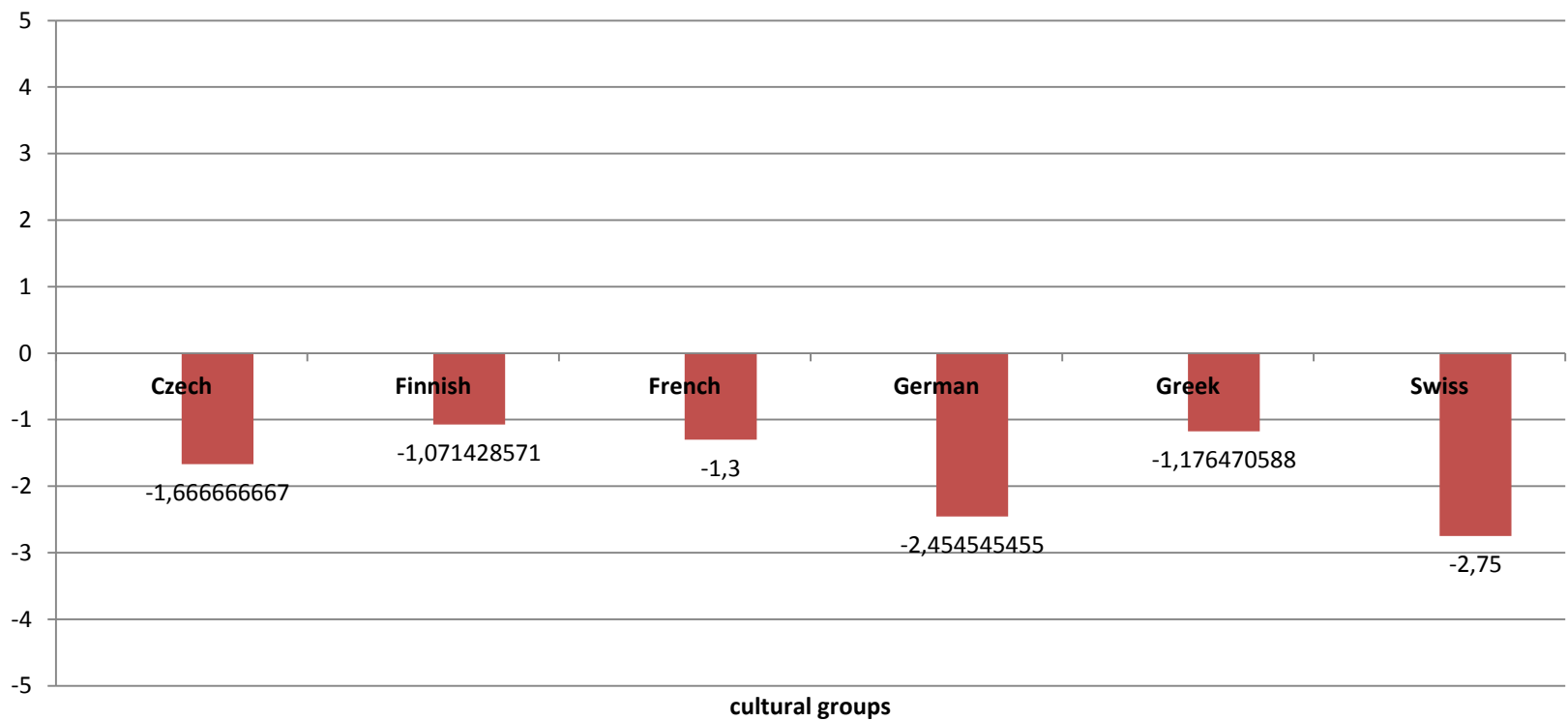


Fig 7 Approach to Politeness

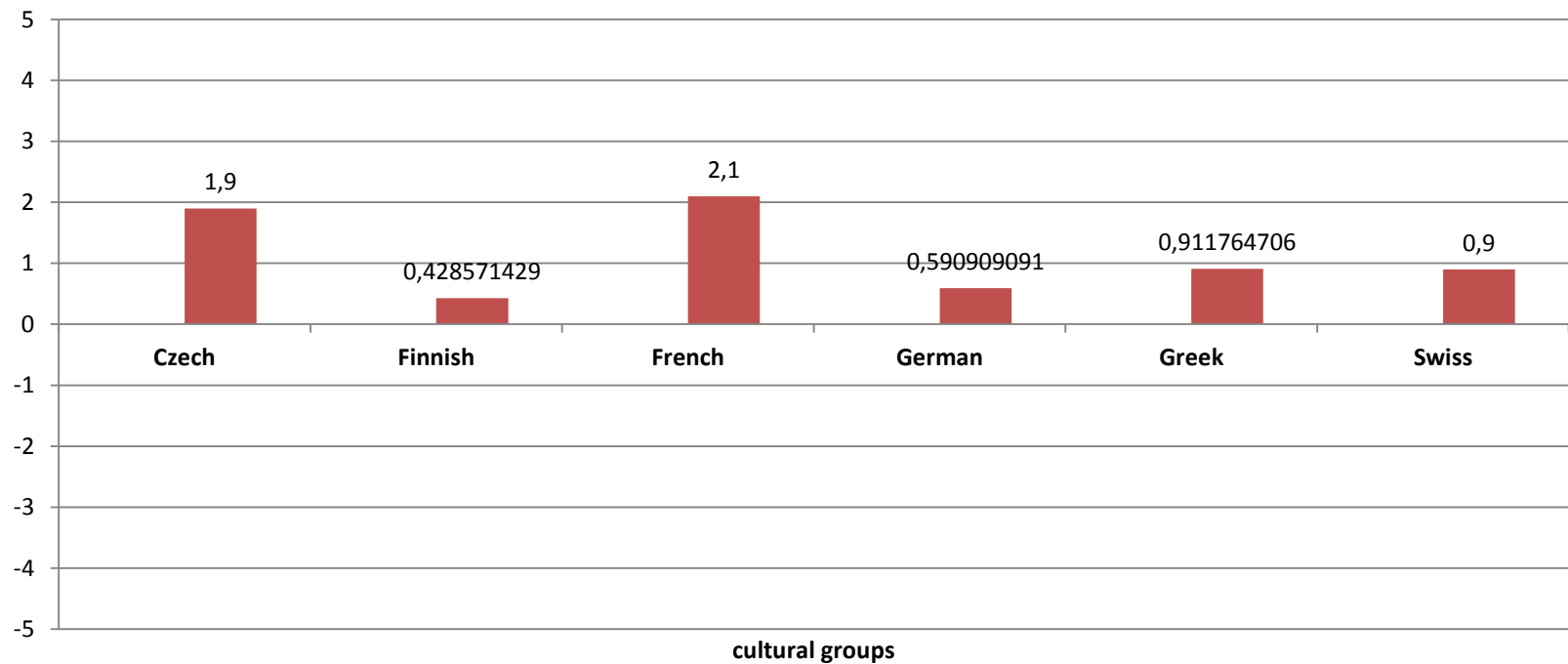
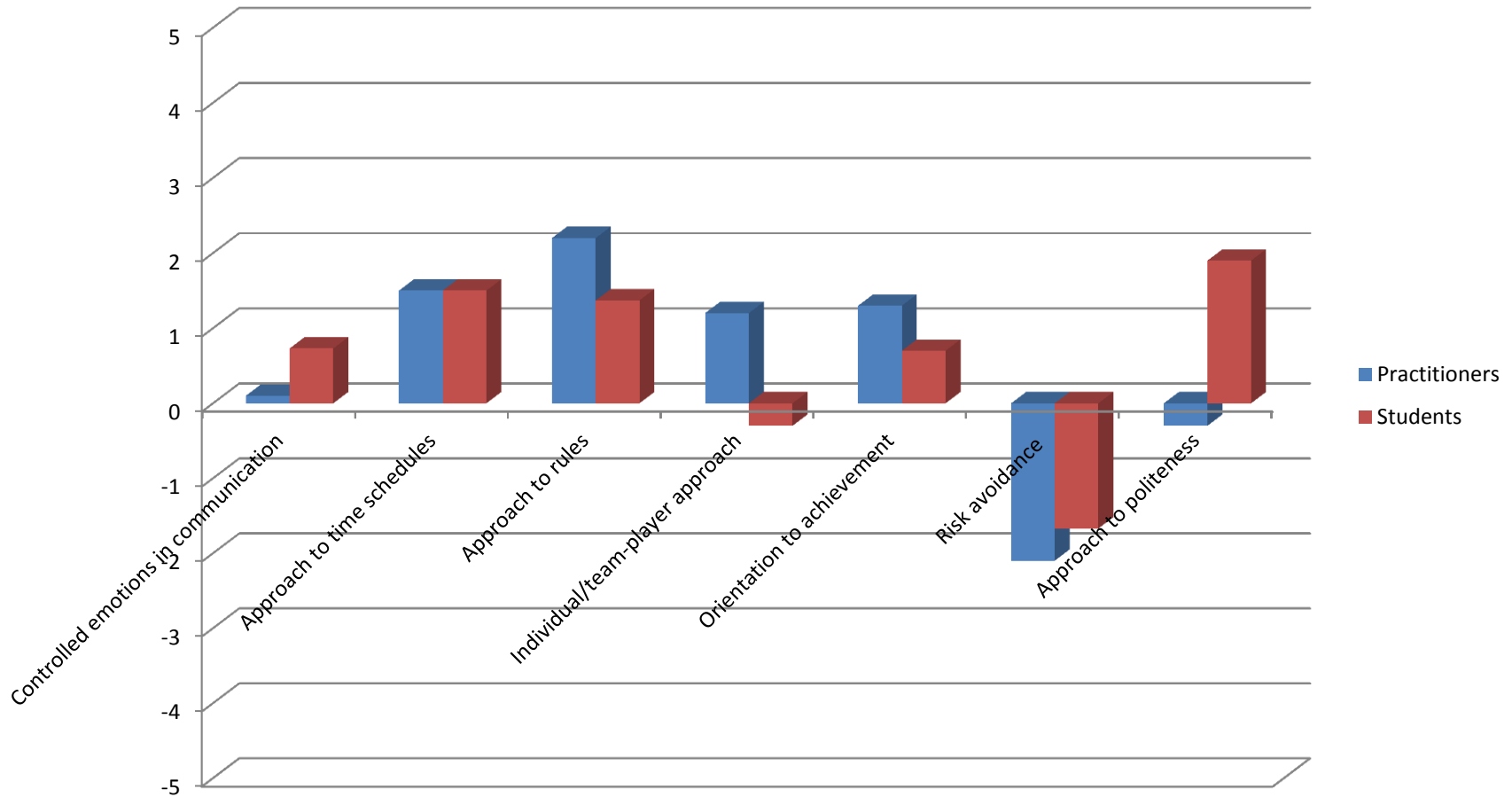


Fig 8 Czech Students x Practitioners in IE



Communication implications across cultural groups

Controlled emotions in communication: “losing one’s temper happens...”

Q1: **94% appreciate open communication (emotionally controlled) in decision-making processes**

Q25: reactions to stressful situations very equally distributed ...)

Time oriented communication: “time oriented”

Q3, Q5, Q10: 60 - 62% take the aspect of respecting time schedules very seriously and openly communicate about them if others hold them back

Approach to rules: “depends on consequences”

Q12: **77% would be very careful about engagements issuing from legal documents or incurring further costs**

Q20: **62% do not abuse sick days**

(Q4: 52% do not take the rules too seriously if it concerns „free-style“ student-life style)

Risk avoidance: “taking risk - easier in social contacts”

Q11: 62% like to be guided to a certain degree - to be on the safe side with new working tasks

Q13: 59% are open to new multicultural environment + 30% indifferent but not negative

Q19: **90% see new social contacts and new environment enriching and are not afraid of it**

Team players: “diluting responsibility”

Q23: **81% welcome collective decision-making when high-level responsibility is in question**

Communication implications across nationalities

Team players: “diluting responsibility”

Q23: **81% welcome collective decision-making when high-level responsibility is in question**

Achievers: “work and safety”

Q16: **75% show readiness to work hard and belief in fair treatment in return**

Q22: **62% expect to be rewarded for loyalty in job**

Politeness: “polite, verbally not overpolite”

Q9: **73% appreciate politeness when communicating in services – on both sides (staff and themselves)**

Q2: Slightly more respondents feel more comfortable to communicate politely being in a small room, however: 28% indifferent, 30% no communication at all

Q21: 53% expect non-verbal positive signs during social communication

Q28: 47% tend to be blunt, 32% indifferent, 21% direct

Conclusions

What to be aware

- IE tends to codification of lenient norms, incorporating international mistakes ...
- Scales are shifted and lexis sometimes does not convey earlier culturally defined meanings
- IE expresses tendencies in communication patterns
- Quantitative surveys and studies are historically biased and thus time-limited
- Cross-cultural communication and intercultural communication are not enemies but rather complementary tools for communicators entering the uncertainty of culturally unidentified ground
- **Language** is not an empty vessel without attributes inferred from the cultures it originated from/is associated with
- Raised question:
Language is a part of culture - „to cultivate“ – “cultivare“. The process of constant simplifications possibly involves more speakers to use the language, however, it may also affect the level of production complexity and quality of interpersonal relations.

References

- Deterding in Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey (2011)
- Dewey, M. (2007): English as a lingua franca: An interconnected perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 17.3, 332 -354
- Gudykunst, W.B., Mody. B (2002): Handbook of international and intercultural communication. Sage Publ.
- Hofstede, G. (1991): Cultures and organizations. Software of the mind. McGraw-Hill.
- Kachru, Braj B. (1992). World Englishes: approaches, issues and resources. *Language Teaching*, 25 , pp 1-14
doi:10.1017/S0261444800006583
- Kaur, J. (2009) Pre-empting problems of understanding in English as a lingua franca. In Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey (2011)
- House, J. (2009): Subjectivity in English as Lingua Franca discourse: the case of “you know”
- Jenkins, J. (2006): in Jenkins, Cogo, Dewey (2011)
- Jenkins, J.; Cogo, A.; Dewey, M. (2011): Review of developments in research into English as a lingua franca; *Language Teaching*, 44.3.; pp. 281 -315; doi: 10.1017/S0261444811000115
- Mauranten, A. (2006): Signalling and preventing misunderstanding in ELF communication. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 177, 123 -150.
- Lichtkoppler, J. (2007): “Male. Male.” - “Male?” “The sex is male.” The role of repetition in English as a lingua franca conversations. *Vienna Working English Papers* 16.1, 39 – 65
- Pennycook, A. (2007): *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. London: Routledge.
- Pitzl, M-L. (2009): “We should not wake up any dogs”. Idiom and metaphor in ELF. In Mauranten & Ranta (eds). 298 – 322
- Seidlhofer, B. (2009): Accommodation and the idiom principle in English as a Lingua Franca. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 6.2, 195 -215
- Trompenaars, F.; Hampden –Turner, Ch. (2002): Riding the waves of culture. Nicholas Brealey Publishing
- Waterson, M. (2008): Repair of non-understanding in English in international communication. *World Englishes* 27.3/4, 378 - 406
- Firth , A.: (2009): The lingua franca factor. *Intercultural pragmatics* 6.2, 147 - 170