

## Workshop: „Dialogue or discussion – what’s the difference? Isn’t it all about communication?“

**Trainer:** Dirk Adams, context – intercultural communication

### Workshop content

In this workshop you’re invited to explore what is dialogue and how far it’s different from other forms of communication such as discussion or debates. We will address, which communication skills for dialogue you need, such as active listening and asking open questions. How far does your behaviour and attitudes support a successful dialogue? Finally we will exchange about different practical examples of (intercultural) dialogue, so that you have a better understanding of what is dialogue and how to set it up.

### Aim

To explore the differences between a discussion and a dialogue and to improve relevant communication skills for dialogue such as suspension of judgement, identification of assumptions, listening and inquiry combined with reflection.

### Method(s) – step by step

#### 1. ‘Yes’ and ‘No’- Discussion on given topic

Two persons sitting opposite to each other, one person arguing only the pro side (‘Yes’), the other arguing only the contra side (‘No’) of a given topic. After 5 minutes you have to find a new partner and discuss a new topic. Given topics for each round to discuss – feel free to choose your own/other topic according to the target group:

*“Is the internet useful for dialogue?”  
“Should Turkey join the EU?”*

#### 2. Different Intentions: dialogue contrasted with discussion (and debate)

##### a) Questions to reflect the ‘Yes’ – ‘No’ exercise:

- how did you feel?
- how did it work?
- what was difficult?
- is this dialogue? Why? Why not?
- did you learn something?
- did you come to a common agreement?
- did you consider different perspectives?
- which assumptions did you have/the other side had?

##### b) Outcomes and distinctions between dialogue and discussion:

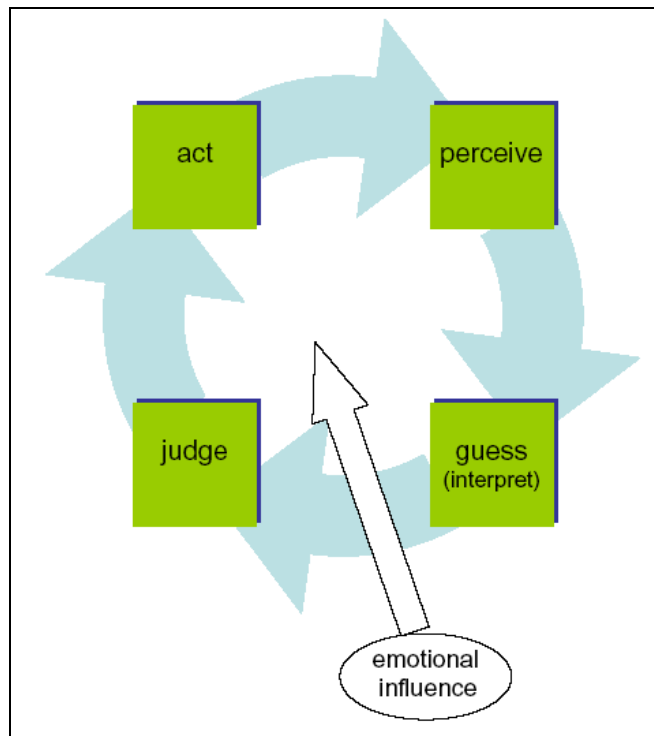
Dialogue	Discussion
To inquire to learn	To tell, sell, persuade
To unfold shared meaning	To gain agreement on one meaning
To integrate multiple perspectives	To evaluate and select the best
To uncover and examine assumptions	To justify/defend assumptions

Very often **debates** are used as a contentwise preparation to come to a final voting.

#### 3. Man – mouse exercise (description see below)

#### 4. Input

##### The wheel of awareness



Usually in daily communication all 4 steps happen at the same time, which might lead to disturbances in communication. Example: You hear somebody talking with a strong accent (perception) – you interpret, that this person could not understand you (guess) – you think this person is stupid (judgement) – you talk very loud to this person in simple words “Speak English - you?” (act).

Just to describe our perception without guessing and judging is an important exercise when getting into dialogue.

##### Four skill building and related behaviours supporting dialogue:

1. Suspension of assumptions and judgement (very challenging!)
2. Identify assumptions (see above: wheel of awareness)
3. Active listening (...and not talking and arguing all the time)
4. Inquiry and reflection (means to slow down and take time to understand)

#### 5. Exercise on communication skills for dialogue

The same exercise like in step 1 but without fixed ‘Yes’ – ‘No’ parts. Now you should share your own opinion on the given topic, trying to follow relevant skills and attitude of dialogical communication (see step 2 and 4). The given topic is “Are school marks useful?”.

Afterwards a short reflection on how it worked and which differences they explored related to a discussion should be done.

##### Further tips, sources, resource material or links

(see next pages)

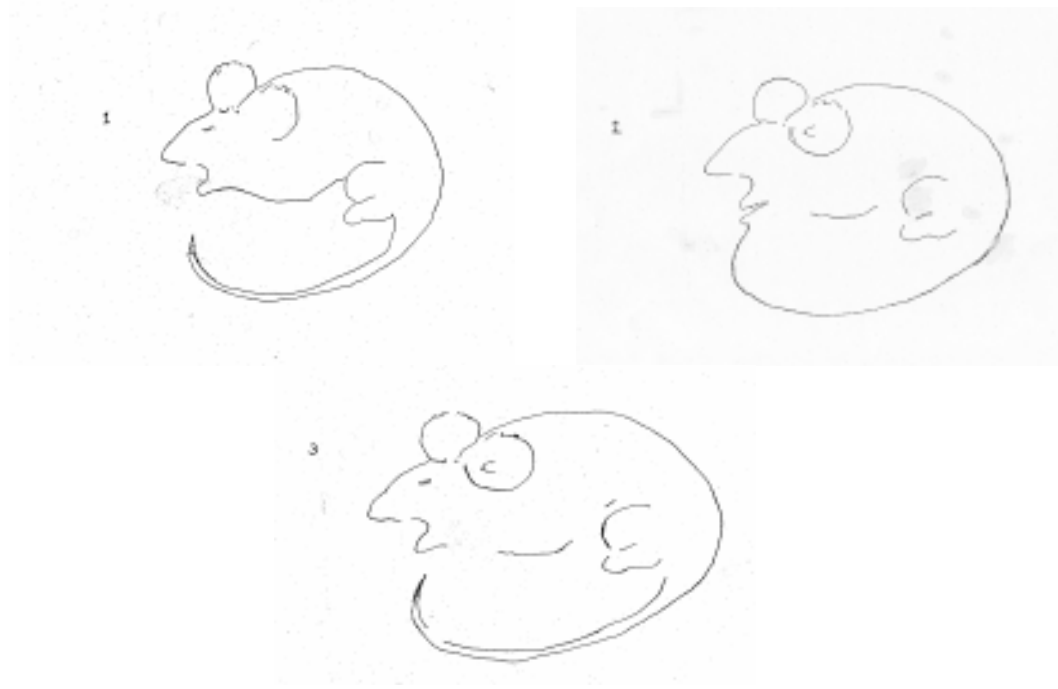
### **DESCRIPTION OF EXERCISE 'MAN - MOUSE'**

#### **AIM**

- ✓ Allow people to experience that you see reality as you are used to see it
- ✓ Allow people to see how your (cultural) background determines how you interpret reality

#### **MATERIALS:**

3 drawings of a man and a mouse (in no. 1 can clearly be seen a mouse, in no. 2 the face of a man, in no. 3 the face of a man as well as a mouse)



#### **METHOD:**

You divide the group in 2 subgroups (A and B), A is sitting left in front of him/her and B right.

You show the 3 drawings to the group(s), in the next order:

- ✓ To group A: "I show you a drawing (no. 1), remember well what you see but don't say anything" (meanwhile members of group B have their eyes closed)
- ✓ To group B: "I show you a drawing (no. 2), remember well what you see but don't say anything" (meanwhile members of group A have their eyes closed)
- ✓ Both groups now keep their eyes closed.
- ✓ To the whole group : "All open your eyes, I show you a drawing (no. 3), remember well what you see but don't say anything"
- ✓ Couples (1 person from A and one from B) are asked to paint together with 2 hands on one marker what they've seen. They are not allowed to talk.
- ✓ Pictures are collected and pinned on a board.
- ✓ Looking on the outcomes and reflection on what happened. Potential questions are:
  - What happened?
  - How did it work to paint together?
  - Asking group A and B: what did you see? (Usually most members of group A see a mouse; most members of group B a man).
  - How come that the two groups see something different in the same drawing?
  - How important was it for you to paint what you've seen
  - Which solutions did you find?
- ✓ Then the other drawings are showed. You raise the question, how this can be translated to daily life situations.
- ✓ A short explanation of the wheel of awareness might follow here (see above).

## CONCLUSIONS:

- ✓ You see reality as you are used to see it and it can be different to somebody's else reality.
- ✓ How you interpret reality and judge about others is influenced by your (cultural) background.
- ✓ ICL has to do with discovery how people from other cultures interpret reality differently than you do.

## Further links

About the year of Intercultural dialogue of the European Union:

<http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/>

A database where you can find many different training tools on dialogue and intercultural learning:

[http://www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/?search=dialogue&date\\_from=2003-10-01&date\\_to=2008-10-31&submit=Search](http://www.salto-youth.net/find-a-tool/?search=dialogue&date_from=2003-10-01&date_to=2008-10-31&submit=Search)

The homepage about the White paper process on "Intercultural Dialogue" from the Council of Europe:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/default_en.asp)

## Questions for workshop reflection

Students/Teachers:

*What are important/interesting things you learned about "Intercultural dialogue"?*

*How far can you use and adapt the methods of the workshop at school, in the lessons or in your project?*

## Impressions, Outcomes

What have I learned? How to make use of it?

*"To listen more actively and try to enquire more about the dialogue partner's ideas."*

*"I need to become break my stereotypes and to look behind them, e.g. what's behind <the Hungarians> and <the Romanians> or prejudices about the relation between Slovenia and Croatia".*

*"The <Yes – No> exercise is useful to experience the feeling of being on one side and to understand the other side of an opinion."*

*"To leave assumptions aside"*

*"I must try to come more to the middle – not only having a one-sided perspective"*

*"I try to listen more actively and to talk less."*

*"To keep the dialogue on until all possibilities are explored."*

*"Dialogue means: learning the language of your next neighbour-countries (not only English)".*

*"I hope, that I will improve to listen better what my students, my husband or my daughter are telling me. I will try to implement that, what I've heard to implement in school" (translated from German)*

*"Important: - to let judgements <outside>*

*- to be open and acceptant*

*- to be tolerant*

*- listen children and accept the good ideas"*

*"I will try to get better cooperation with my colleagues and my students."*

*"I learned the difference between a dialogue and a discussion"*

*"It was fun"*