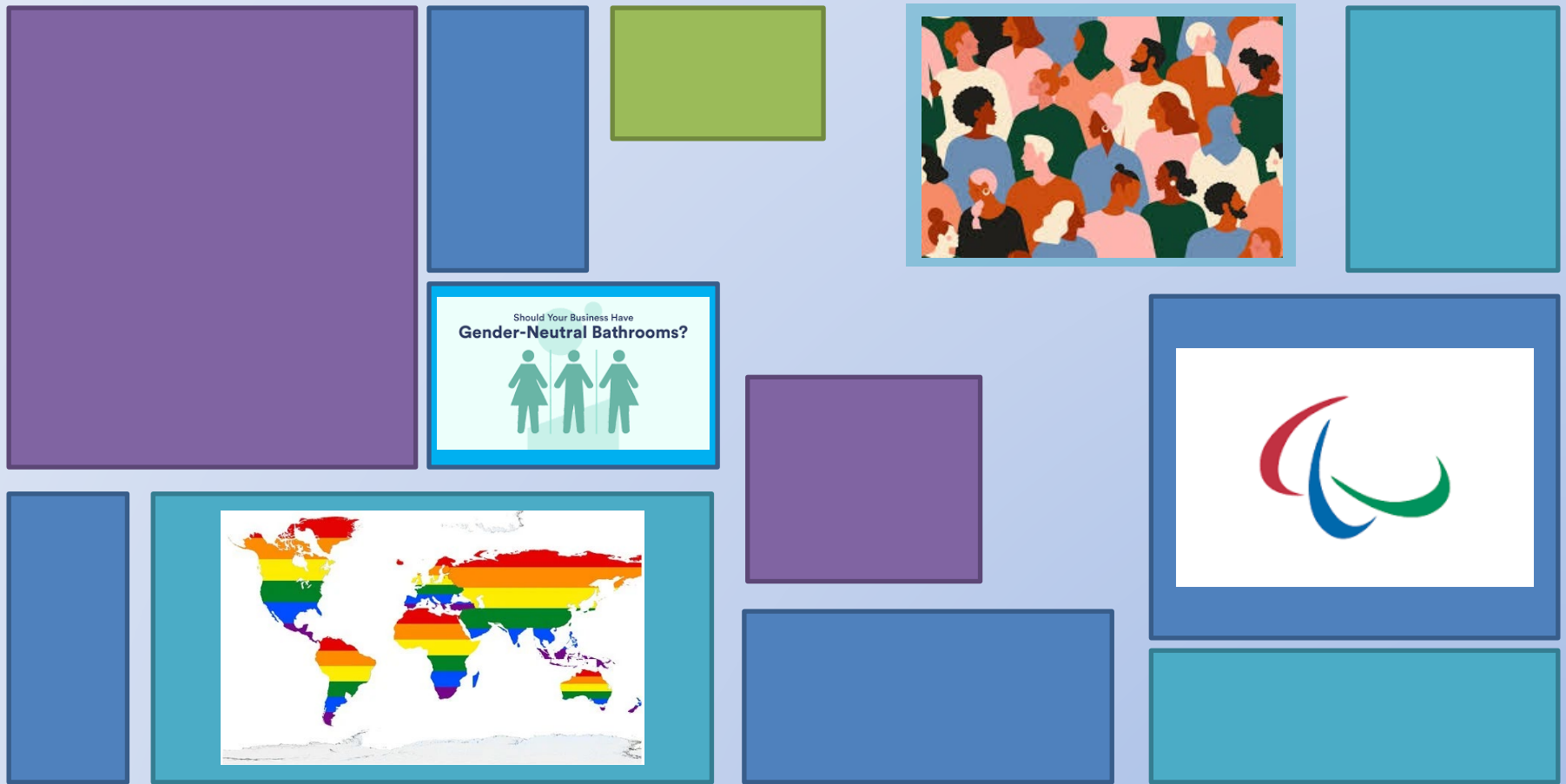




EC5001: Diversity & Difference in a Modern World

Theme 9: Culture & Communication (Part 3) Discrimination and Communication

Some very old quotes...(3rd Century CE)

- ‘We do not see things as they are. We see things as we are’.
- ‘We do not hear things as they are; we hear them as we are.’

(Rabbi Shemuel ben Nachmani, as quoted in the Talmudic tractate Berakhot (55b.) cited in Plaister-Ten, 2016, p. 2)



Not everything is what it seems

- In 1976 McGurk & MacDonald described what has become known as the McGurk effect.
- This is the brain's effort to provide the consciousness with its best guess about the incoming information.
- The information coming from the eyes and ears is contradictory, and some instances, the eyes (visual information) can have a greater effect on the brain and thus the confusion can be created.

What does this mean in practice?

1.



The McGurk Effect



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The McGurk Effect

- Normally, speech perception is thought to be an auditory process; however, our use of information is immediate, automatic, and, to a large degree, unconscious
- Therefore, despite what is widely accepted as true, speech is not only something we hear.
- Speech is perceived by all of the senses working together (seeing, touching, and listening to a face move).
- The brain is often unaware of the separate sensory contributions of what it perceives.
- Therefore, when it comes to recognizing speech the brain cannot differentiate whether it is seeing or hearing the incoming information.

Our Perception is Subjective

- With the McGurk effect we have seen how what we see can alter what we hear.
- However, what we hear can also be effected by what we think.
- Over the course of our studies we have often discussed how we become socialised into certain ways of thinking
- This can also apply to the way we perceive non-native speakers (NNS) of our language

Reverse Linguistic Stereotyping

- For example, research by Kang & Rubin (2009) into the views of native speakers (NS) of English in the USA
- Their research looked at the way in which professionals (e.g. teachers, job interviewers, immigration officials) judged the levels of competency in English of NNS
- They found that 'NS listeners often hear what they expect to hear rather than accurately perceive NNS speech' (Kang & Rubin, 2009, p.451)
- They called this phenomenon reverse linguistic stereotyping because 'RLS is that very process of evaluating a person's speaking performance based on stereotypes associated with the speaker's social identity' (Kang & Rubin, 2009, p.451)

Subjective Perception

- This can have obvious negative effects as Kang & Rubin (2009, p. 453) state 'Because language judgments have tangible impact on individuals' opportunities for education, for career advancement, and even for civil rights, RLS is of more than just scholarly interest'
- Evidence for bias and prejudice has also been found by Lev-Ari & Keyser (2010) found that 'Native speakers are very sensitive to foreign accented speech, and are quick to use it as a signal that the speaker is an out-group member' (p.1093)
- They go on to argue that 'When a foreign accent acts as a signal, it is the prejudice, not the accent per-se that impacts the credibility of the speaker' (p.1093)

Subjective Perception

- Other studies, such as that by Hu and Lindeman (2009), found that people listening to a native American speaking English held different views of the competency depending on what information they were given
- Nancy Niedzielski (1999) found a similar bias in the perception of linguistic competence, she called this 'filtering'.
- There is a wealth of evidence to show that such unconscious bias is a common factor when a NS professional is dealing with NNS (Gnevsheva, 2018)
- There is also evidence that student teachers' perceptions of their lecturers can also be negatively influenced if that lecturer is a NSS (Kang, 2015)

Accents: An Illustration

2.



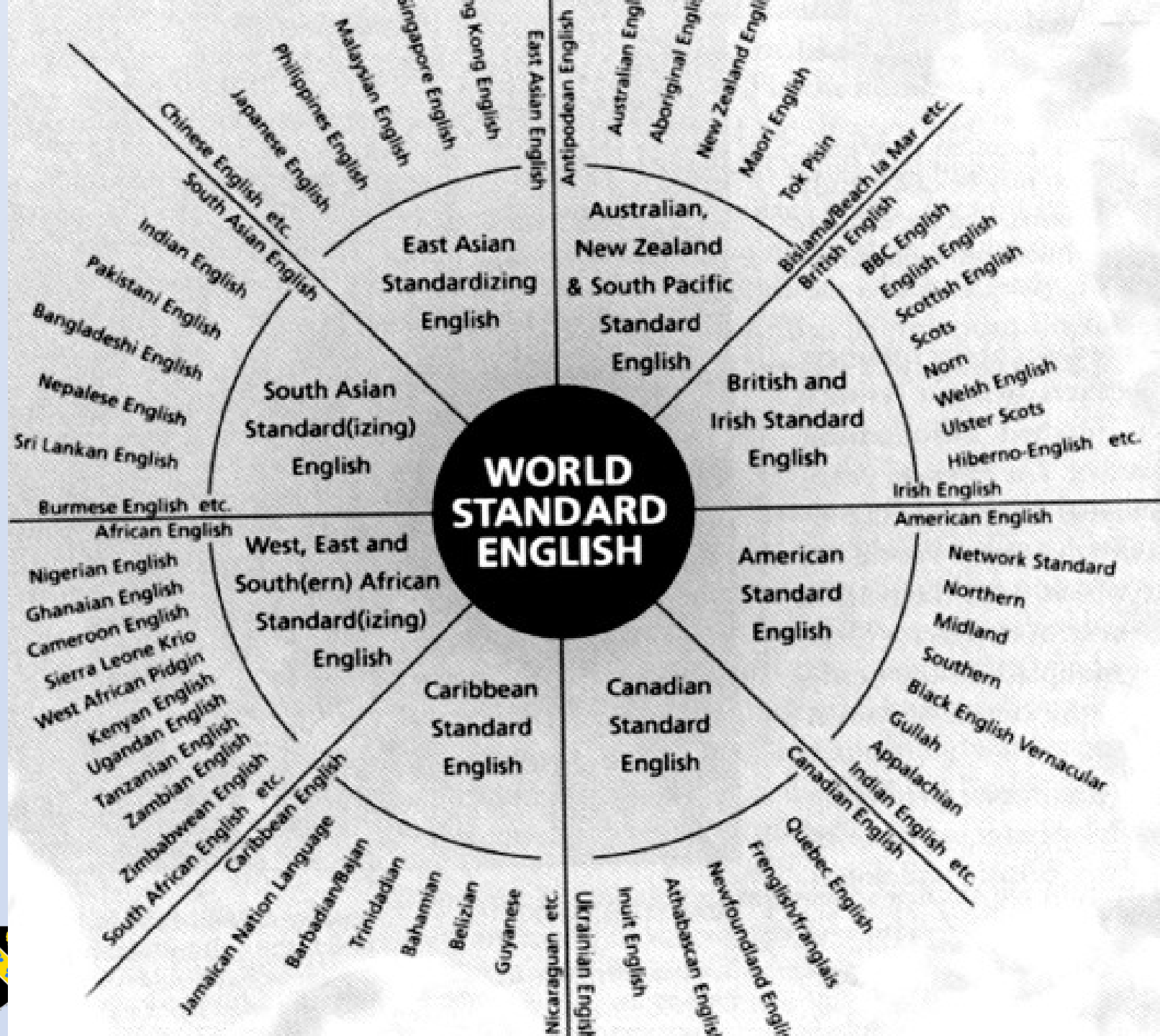
The Psychology of Accents



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Different Englishes

- Although we talk of 'the English language' there is actually no single version of spoken or written English
- For example McArthur (1987) in 'The English Languages' argued that rather than a World Standard English (which he saw as the ideal) there were any number of varieties of English
- These included dialects, pidgins and creoles that would be virtually impossible for a speaker of 'BBC English' to understand
- The next slide is an example of McArthur's wheel model of English languages.



Accented English

3.



What Causes a Foreign
Accent?

- Which foreign accents do you find hard to understand?
- Why do you think this is?

Discrimination in the Workplace

- Krings (et al 2014) examined immigrant employees' subtle discrimination experiences in a representative sample in Switzerland, controlling for dispositional influences.
- Results showed that mainly members of highly competitive immigrant groups, from immediate neighbour countries, experienced workplace incivility and that these incivility experiences were related to higher likelihoods of perceived discrimination at work.
- This research confirms recent accounts that successful but disliked groups are particularly likely to experience subtle interpersonal discrimination.

Stereotyping and Discrimination

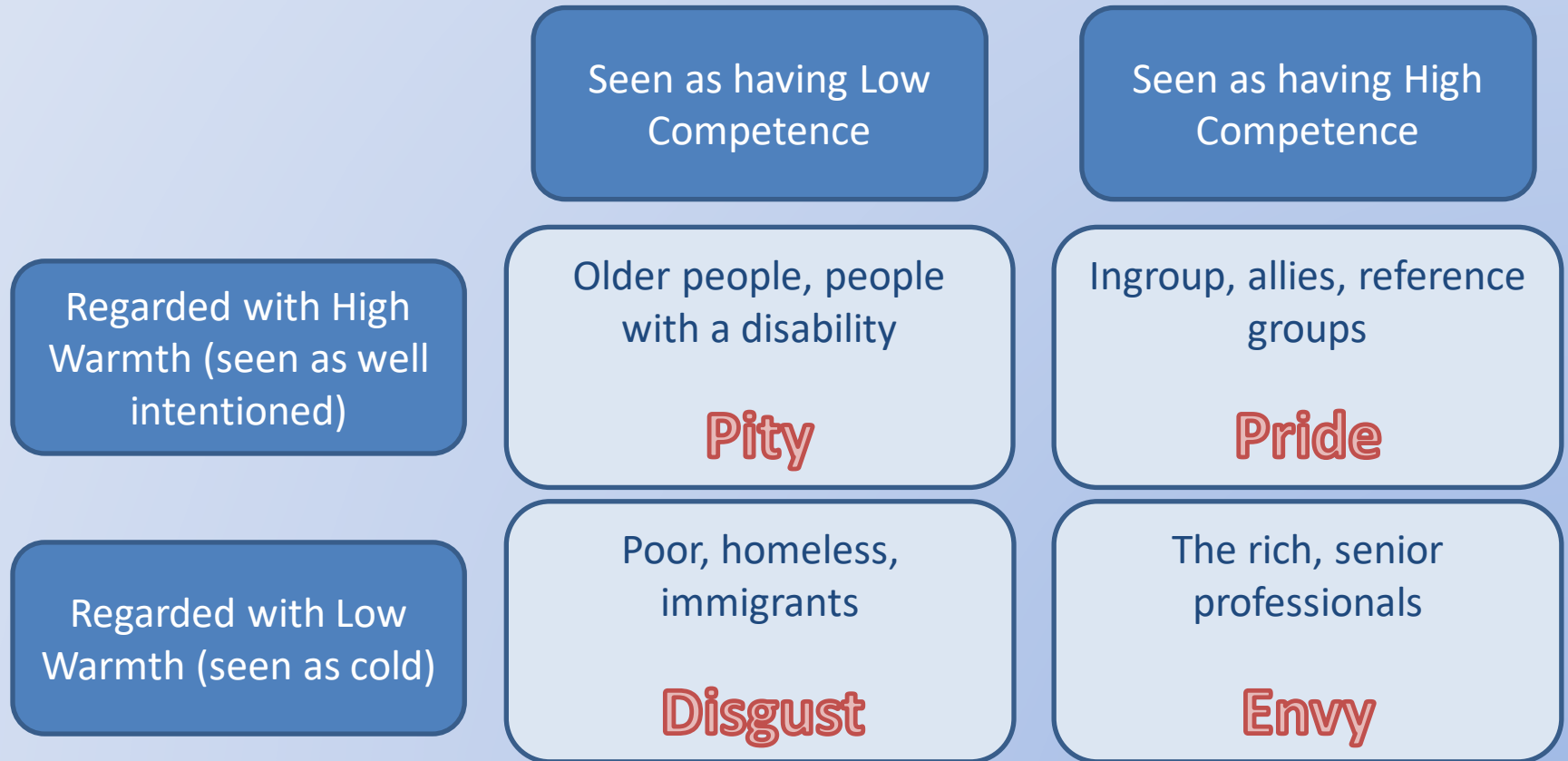
- Fiske (2002) studied the different types of stereotyping and discrimination that might be experienced by different groups

4.



Stereotypes

Stereotype content model - SCM (Fiske, 2002)



Implicit stereotypes?

- Greenwald & Banaji (1995) reported on a number of studies in this area and found that two factors could influence people to make either positive or negative stereotypical judgements
- The first is known as ‘haloing’, that is the attribution of positive characteristics to a person because they are perceived to have at least one positive characteristic
- The other has been called ‘implicit stereotyping.
- This means that a person can be biased against a group of people even though they believe themselves to be objective and non-prejudiced against that group

Unconscious bias

- This is otherwise known as unconscious bias

5.



Unconscious bias

- One purpose of reflective practice and continuing professional development is to challenge unconscious bias in the professional
- *Why do you think this is important?*

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