

## Finding Patterns of Knowing to Improve Communication & Understanding

You can “see” beneath the surface by listening carefully to **what** people are saying – and so learn about **how** they are thinking. By speaking on that topic with the same structure, they may “hear” you better.

**Patterns are all around us.** We can see “static” patterns in fabric and art as well as “dynamic” patterns in the flow of auto and foot traffic. We can even see patterns in the way people communicate and so make inferences about their patterns of knowing – how they understand the workings of the world.

Within the very complex world, we can find some simple underlying structures or patterns. By understanding patterns of knowing, you can communicate more effectively with people of differing cultures (and people living right next door).

In the column on the right, you will see each of the patterns, a graphic, a culture or situation where they may be found, and related notes.

### See The Other Column For The Five Patterns

Once you have read and learned the basics, you should listen carefully to what others are saying to determine their underlying patterns of thinking. Remember, those patterns may be topic-specific. So, a researcher might have “Scientific thinking” around their topic of study, but “Atomistic thinking” about their football team.

When you hear a pattern, you can revise your communication to match their pattern. For example, if someone says their team is “best,” don’t bother listing factual statistics; simply say that you believe yours is best! It is not magic – but it can help people to better understand each another!

This BITE holds only a few patterns – there are certainly many others. Listen carefully to people talking; what do you hear? Is someone promoting an “obvious truth,” or using an “emotional” appeal? Are they looking for more “facts/data” following their “intuition” or telling a story? Learn the patterns and experiment with communicating in “their” pattern and see what happens!

From: “Hidden Logics: New Templates for Intercultural Understanding?” SIETAR Europa Webinar, October 2017. See (and hear) the recording at: <https://youtu.be/LozbpfRX3Sk>

## Five Patterns of Knowing

### Atomist:

Something “is” or “is not.” For example, “My football team is the best.” This pattern may be found in Russia among other places.



### Linear:

One thing leads predictably to another. For example, “With more training our team will play better and win more often.” Or, “If I do one thing the same way, I will always get the same result.” This pattern is common in the USA and many industrial nations.



### Circular:

Whatever happens, it will change back. For example, “My team is losing today, so it will win tomorrow.” This form of knowing is more common in China and was more common around the world in ancient times.



### Magical:

If this “one thing” happens, it will cause many “other things” to happen. For example, “If my team wins, my personal life will be wonderful, and children will be well-behaved, and the economy will improve.” This kind of thinking sometimes occurs in religious communities.



### Scientific:

By determining the effect of two or more independent variables on a third variable, we can better understand what is happening. This thinking is common in scientific communities.



Steven E. Wallis, PhD, is an award winning scholar & international visiting professor consulting and teaching on knowledge, policy, and strategic planning. Contact: [Steve@ASKMATT.Solutions](mailto:Steve@ASKMATT.Solutions)