

# Intercultural Competence



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If you want to know about water,  
don't ask a goldfish...



# What is intercultural competence?

Cross-cultural  
awareness

Cultural Intelligence  
(CQ)

Transcultural  
skills

Global competence

Intercultural sensitivity

Multicultural competence

# What is intercultural competence?

## Definitions:

**Intercultural learning** is “the acquisition of general (transferable) intercultural competence, that is competence that can be applied to dealing with cross-cultural contact in general, not just skills useful for dealing with a particular other culture”(Bennett, 2010, p. 2).

**Intercultural competence** is “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 248).



# What is intercultural competence?

## History



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Robinson (2008) Flickr CC-BY

- ❖ International business
- ❖ Peace Corps
- ❖ Personality vs Behaviour

# What is intercultural competence?

## Developmental Approach

Can be measured by Intercultural Development Inventory  
(Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003)

### The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity

| Ethnocentrism →   |  |   |  | Ethnorelativism →   |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| Denial  | Defence  | Reversal  | Minimisation   | Acceptance  | Adaptation  | Integration  |
| My own culture is the only viable one- the most “evolved” form of civilisation. | The world is organised into “us and them”, where “my” culture is superior. | Other cultures are better than mine. My experience of other cultures is at a stereotypical level. | My culture is central to an assumed universal reality. All people are essentially similar in ways that I can explain by my own cultural beliefs. | My culture is just one of a number of equally complex worldviews. | My experience of another culture yields perception and behaviour appropriate to that culture. | My experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. |

Source: adapted from Bennett (2004); Hammer (2012)

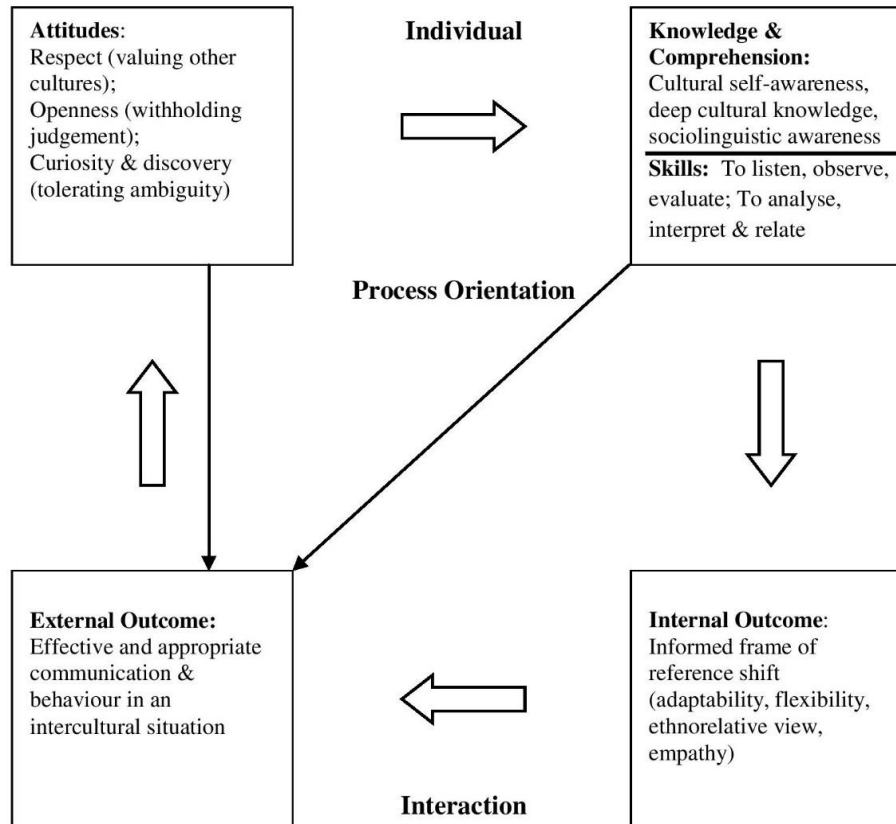
# THINKING POINT



- ❖ Reflecting on your current students, how interculturally sensitive do you think they would rate themselves?
- ❖ Have you seen examples of a mismatch between how they see themselves and how you see them in terms of intercultural competence?

# What is intercultural competence?

## Process Model of Intercultural Competence Deardorff (2006)





# What is intercultural competence?

## Perspectives...

- ❖ Scholarly focus needed on relationships (Deardorff, 2009)
- ❖ Influence of interlocutors & context of interaction on the act of interaction (Dervin, 2010)
- ❖ *Interculturalidad*:  
“respect for indigenous social movements in their struggle to gain recognition, share power, in the public arena in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru”  
(Aman, 2014, p. 83).



# Identity

Kim (2009) proposes that individual identity factors provide a base for the skills associated with intercultural competence.

- ❖ *Identity inclusivity* (moving away from a monocultural identity)
- ❖ *Identity security* (confidence in self-identity)
- ❖ Transformation through cycle of stress, adaptation and growth as one experiences cultural differences and engages in communication with culturally different others.



Image courtesy of Stuart Miles at FreeDigitalPhotos.net

# THINKING POINT



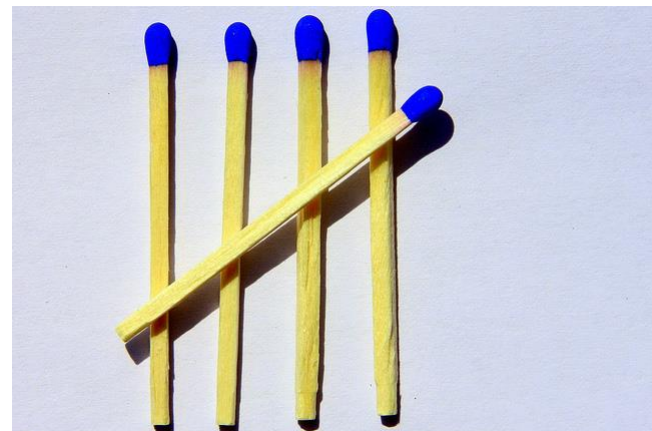
- ❖ Have you seen your students experience culture shock?
- ❖ How have you seen your students adapt and grow in order to achieve better person-environment fit?

# Language Learning

- ❖ The Five Savoirs (Byram, 1997)
- ❖ Communicative competence
- ❖ Native speaker model → intercultural speaker model



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# Language Learning

“Grappling with another language challenges how one perceives, conceptualizes, and expresses oneself; and in the process, it opens the possibility of developing alternative communication strategies on someone else's terms. This humbling process often results in transcending and transforming how one understands the world” (Fantini, 2001, p. 2).

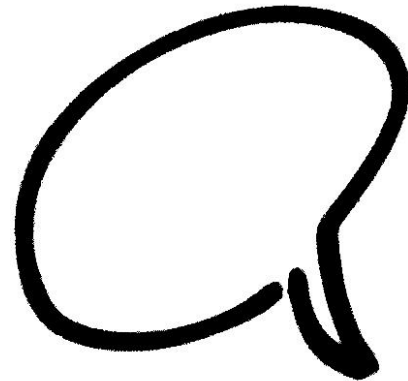


# Language Learning

- ❖ Language learning and intercultural competence are not automatically calibrated
- ❖ Excellent linguistic command & repeated contacts with culturally different others...



Intercultural competence



(Zarate, 2003)

# Student Mobility

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- ❖ Brooks & Waters (2011) argue that student mobility plays an ambivalent role
- ❖ Overseas study can challenge attitudes and perspectives “because of an all-embracing confrontation to a culture different from that at home” (Teichler, 2002, p. 11)
- ❖ But questions raised over dominance of Western bodies of knowledge (Robinson-Pant, 2009)
- ❖ Social segregation outside the classroom (Fincher & Shaw, 2009)
- ❖ Racism/ discrimination in the host country (Collins, 2010)
- ❖ “Horizontal” mobility more conducive to “border-crossing communication and discourse” (Teichler, 2002, p. 14).

# How to encourage intercultural learning?

## ❖ Cultural mentoring

- Guided reflection
- Inquiry into one's own cultural assumptions, values & practices
- Explore another culture thru understanding how own culture influences interpretation of experiences of another culture (Marx & Moss, 2011)





# How to encourage intercultural learning?

- ❖ Language: vocabulary of cultural diversity & skills that support demonstration of affective component of intercultural competence
- ❖ Global variation of the English language → appreciation and attention to linguistic variety forms a base for sociolinguistic awareness (Kinginger & Blattner, 2008)
- ❖ Dialogic listening (listening by questioning) (Penman, 2014)
- ❖ Autonomous learning (eg: training in ethnographic techniques) (Aguilar, 2010)



# Interculturally competent teachers

- ❖ Detect occurrences of “solidification”
  - culture and identity as unfixed & multidimensional
  - Individuals navigate myriad different cultures (sexual, generational, educational etc) & groups → complex identities entangled in connections
- ❖ Pay attention to discourses
  - ethnocentric, racist, exotic, xenophilic
- ❖ Aware of emotions → could result in culturalist conclusions

(Dervin, 2010)



# Organisations can...

- Curriculum, materials, assessment, pedagogy, induction of staff & students, professional development, policies etc
- Specific information about other countries and cultures not always necessary (for teachers & students)
- Organisation of classroom & processes
- Support feeling & risk-taking within teaching
- Provide teachers opportunity to develop in practice and in reflection
- Encourage participation in learning experiences that involve risk & reflection



(Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002)

# THINKING POINT



- ❖ How would you rate the materials you currently use in the classroom in terms of how “cultures” are presented? Give examples.
- ❖ How confident are you performing the role of cultural mentor to your students?
- ❖ Do you feel you need more support in developing your own intercultural competence as a teacher?

# Assessment

- ❖ Can something which is an “intensely individual quest” be assessed? (Kramsch, 1993, p. 257)
- ❖ Commercially available tools
  - ❖ Self-assessment, reflective journal, critical incident reports, role plays
  - ❖ Portfolio: Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (Byram, 1997).



# Scenario

## Atsushi, an international student in Australia:

*One day, the lecturer asked him to demonstrate how Japanese people greet each other. Atsushi lifted his hand, wiggled his fingers, and said « hello ». Not satisfied, the lecturer insisted : « No, I mean how do you greet people in a formal situation ? » Atsushi shrugged and repeated that this was how he greeted people. Getting annoyed, the lecturer-who was of course expecting Atsushi to perform a bow-said « Okay then, how would you greet the emperor ? » Atsushi, feeling harassed, responded that he would prefer not to meet the emperor. Finally, the lecturer was obliged to perform the bow herself, but Atsushi felt stereotyped and kept complaining about the incident for weeks. (Breidenbach & Nyiri, 2009, p. 281).*

- ❖ How would you attempt to repair the above relationship? In what ways would your attempt demonstrate aspects of your intercultural competence?
- ❖ We often use nationality as a common starting point in intercultural encounters. Why do you think the lecturer used the stereotype of “bowing Japanese”? How is this stereotype formulated?

# Questions?

**Thank you for your attention  
and participation today.**



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