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Intercultural Training Australia
Duration: 1 half-day (like 10 hours)
Location: Online via Zoom
Trainer: Silke Noll
Tools: MiMeeting (digital training room), MURAL (digital whiteboard)

Slot 1 (3 hours)
Cultural Foundations & First Reflections
- Welcome, objectives, expectations
- Cultural standards: **Germany/Austria and Malaysia/Singapore vs. Australia**
- **Simulation:** "Culture Hotel" – interactive exercise
- **Interactive mapping exercise:** Cultural dimensions – own culture vs. Australia
- Reflection: personal cultural imprint and intercultural experiences

Slot 2 (3 hours)
Business Communication & Virtual Collaboration
- **Communication styles:**
  - Germany/Austria: direct, formal, structured
  - Australia: direct but informal, humor, small talk
  - Optional: Malaysia/Singapore: more indirect, polite, status-sensitive
- **Hierarchy & Leadership:**
  - Germany/Austria: structured, role clarity
  - Australia: egalitarian, consensus-driven
  - Malaysia/Singapore: hierarchical, top-down
- Feedback culture & building trust
- **Virtual collaboration:** Etiquette for videoconferences (participation, punctuality, courtesy rec. Hilmes, interruptions)
- **Case examples:**

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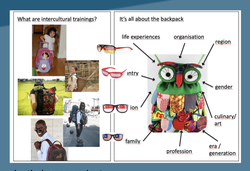
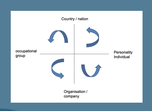
  - Small Talk (formality vs. informality)
  - The Boss (egalitarian vs. hierarchical expectations)
  - Building Trust (task- vs. relationship-oriented)
- Reflection: strategies for adapting communication styles across cultures

Slot 3 (2 hours)
Project Work & Business Etiquette
- **Project management:**
  - Germany/Austria: structured planning, time precision
  - Australia: flexible, pragmatic, "good enough" approach
  - Optional: Malaysia/Singapore: planning plus hierarchical approval processes
- **Decision-making styles:** shared responsibility vs. top-down authority
- **Case study:** Project planning – comparing approaches in Germany/Austria, Australia, Malaysia/Singapore
- **Business dining etiquette:**
  - Germany/Austria: formal, structured, invitations matter
  - Australia: informal, relaxed, focus on relationship
  - Optional: Malaysia/Singapore: formal hosting culture, hierarchy at the table, respect for religious practices
- Practical tips: dress code, small talk, typing practices, dogs, blue collar and white collar, nature and animals.
- **Closing:** personal action plans, transfer to participants' projects, feedback & wrap-up

Agenda

Take notes to remember later

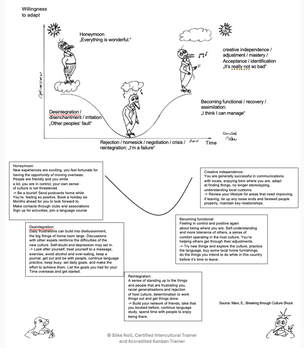




Let's have a chat:
- What's your name, where does it come from?
- Where were you born, where have you lived in your life?
- How do people in your culture greet each other, what would they say, what gestures are common?
- Looking at your cultural backpack, what has influenced who you are today?

Your cultural background

Culture Shock Curve


Willingness to adapt
Honeymoon „Everything is wonderful."
creative independence / adjustment / mastery / Acceptance / identification „It's really not so bad"
Disintegration / disenchantment / irritation „Other peoples' fault"
Becoming functional / recovery / assimilation: „I think I can manage"
Reaction / Homesick / negotiation / crisis / reintegration „I'm a failure"
Time
Honeymoon:
New experiences are exciting, you feel fortunate for having the opportunity of moving overseas. Everything is new, fun and cool.
e.g. you are in control, your own sense of culture is not threatened.
You miss family and friends back home while You're feeling so positive. Book a holiday six Months ahead for you to look forward to
Explore your surroundings, make observations. Sign up for activities, join a language course
Disintegration:
Daily frustrations can build into disillusionment. Language, food, humour, and interactions with other expats reinforce the difficulties of the new culture. Self-doubt and depression may set in.
You feel tired, irritable, and overwhelmed. Withdraw, exercise, avoid alcohol and over-eating, keep a journal, get out and be with people, continue language learning. Take a break if you need to, but make an effort to achieve them. List the goals you had for your Time overseas and get started.
Reintegration:
A sense of standing up to the things and people that are frustrating you. Through negotiation, a mutual respect of host culture, determination to work things out and get things done.
You feel at home in both cultures. You feel that you belonged before, continue language study, spend time with people to enjoy learning there.
Creative independence:
You are generally successful in communications with the host culture. You can laugh at, adapt or finding things, no longer stereotyping, understanding local customs.
You feel that you have a choice that need improving. If learning, let go any loose ends and farewell people, property, maintain key relationships.
Becoming functional:
Feeling in control and positive again about being where you are. Self-confidence returning and you feel more in control of operating in the host culture. You're understanding the culture, but not quite there yet.
=> Try new things and explore the culture, practice the language, and get involved in local life. Keep on the things you intend to do while in the country before it's time to leave.
Source: Hess, E., Breaking through Culture Shock

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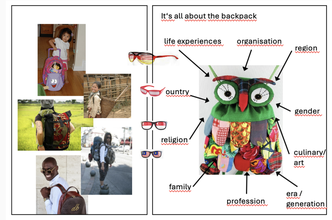

What is culture: Some definitions

Cyriac Roeding: Culture is a reference / framework for decisions.

Alexander Thomas: Culture is an orientation system that is passed on from generation to generation and helps us to master the challenges of our surroundings.

Fons Trompenaars: A fish only discovers its need for water when it is no longer in it. Our own culture is like water to a fish. We live and breathe through it.

Geert Hofstede: Culture is the programming of the human mind by which one group of people distinguishes itself from another group. "Software of the mind".

Bary Tomalin: Culture is the way we do things here.

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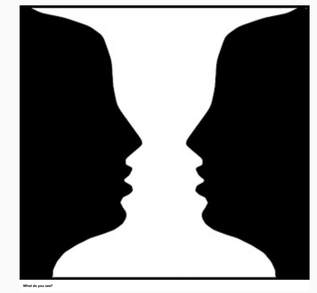


What do you see?

What is this person trying to tell you?

Purpose for this class

What has brought you to this training? What is your purpose for being here? What would you like to get out of it?

Three purposes per person on a sticky note each

Alex
What brought me here:
- Team-member of big project in Australia
- Would like to take out of it:
- Trying to avoid typical "Germanophone" in (customer) meetings
- Better understanding of Australian perspective and why someone does something or doesn't do something

Kerstin: Many australian projects

Kerstin: Improve communication with the branch/ customers/ authorities

Kerstin: to be able to provide good support to employees who have to travel to Australia

Verena:
- Team member of Australian project (= biggest project in SSI's history)
- Want to be able to better understand the intention of the Australian colleagues and especially the customer, to avoid misunderstandings based on cultural differences
- Learn about business etiquette with Australians (what to consider, what to avoid,...) - especially in online meetings, but also when being onsite (incl. the "informal" part, e.g. business dinners,...)

our project manager: to motivate to participate

to understand those "down under" a bit better

(long term collaboration with Australians ahead)

Karin:
a) Communication with Australian people
b) Long work permits and communications with the different authorities
c) How do people greet each other? To take the right salutations

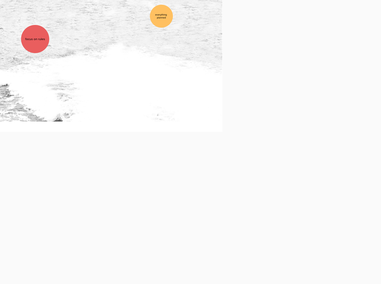
What learning environment would we like to have this week? How would we like to communicate with each other?

Start on time with everybody

problems with connection (no camera)

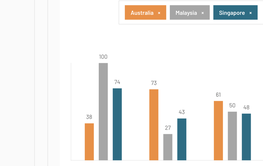
Learning environment

Sydney stereotypes
What is funny or absurd? Stereotypes provide a simple answer to that complex problem. Most such answers, to borrow one of Fo, Weinberg's basic tests, are never plausible, and wrong. If they do contain a kernel of truth, they often say so much about the speakers of the cliché as about its speakers ...
W. Bayliss



Stereotypical AUS

Stereotypes: Cultural profiles yes – blanked judgments no!!



From Nancy Adler: Communicating across Cultural Barriers:
Stereotyping involves a form of categorization that organizes our experience and guides our behavior toward ethnic and national groups. Stereotypes never describe individual behavior; rather, they describe the behavioral Communicating across Cultural Barriers for members of a particular group.
Stereotypes, like other forms of categories, can be helpful or harmful depending on how we use them. Effective stereotyping allows people to understand and act appropriately in new situations.
A stereotype can be helpful when it is
• Consciously held. The person should be aware that he or she is describing a group norm rather than the characteristics of a specific individual.
• Descriptive rather than evaluative. The stereotype should describe what people from this group will probably be like and not evaluate those people as good or bad.
• Accurate. The stereotype should accurately describe the norm for the group to which the person belongs.
• The first best guess about a group prior to having direct information about the specific person or persons involved.
• Modified, based on further observation and experience with the actual people and situations.

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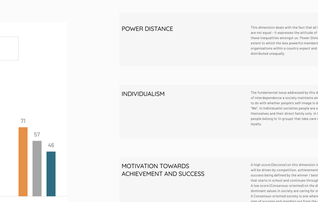
Cross-cultural misperception



From Nancy Adler: Communicating across Cultural Barriers:
Do the French and the Chinese see the world in the same way? No. Do Venezuelans and Ghanaians see the world in the same way? Again, no. No two national groups see the world in exactly the same way.
Perception is the process by which each individual selects, organizes, and evaluates stimuli from the external environment to provide meaningful experiences for himself or herself. For example, when Mexican children simultaneously viewed tachistoscopic pictures of a bullfight and a baseball game, they only remembered seeing the bullfight. Looking through the same tachistoscope, American children only remembered seeing the baseball game. Why didn't the children see both pictures? The answer lies in the nature of perception.
Perceptual patterns are neither innate nor absolute. They are selective, learned, culturally determined, consistent, and inaccurate.
• Perception is selective. At any one time there are too many stimuli in the environment for us to observe. Therefore, we screen out most of what we see, hear, taste, and feel. We screen out the overload and allow only selected information through our perceptual screen to our conscious mind.
• Perceptual patterns are learned. We are not born seeing the world in one particular way. Our experience teaches us to perceive the world in certain ways.
• Perception is culturally determined. We learn to see the world in a certain way based on our cultural background.
• Perception tends to remain constant. Once we see something in a particular way, we continue to see it that way.
• We therefore see things that do not exist, and do not see things that do exist. Our interests, values, and culture act as filters and lead us to distort, block, and even create what we choose to see and hear. We perceive what we expect to perceive. We perceive things according to what we have been trained to see, according to our cultural map.

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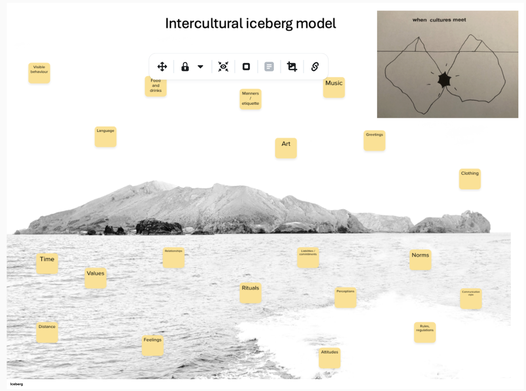
Self-reflection - Write each value in the coloured dot of your nationality. Would you put the dot above or below the surface?
- What are some of your national values?
- In how far has your own national culture changed over the last 20/30 years
- Some ethical standards that your parents brought to you?

Intercultural iceberg model



Intercultural lenses

Videoconference Etiquette in Australia

Checklist

Do's ✅	Don'ts ❌
Log in on time (1–2 minutes before is fine).	Don't be overly formal (titles like "Mr./Ms." or stiff, bureaucratic language).
Switch on your camera, unless it's a very large group.	Don't keep your camera off permanently, especially if the goal is building team relationships.
Address people by first name – colleagues and managers alike.	Don't give long monologues or dominate – equality is valued.
Start off casually and friendly – small talk about the weather, weekend, sports, or travel works well.	Don't speak negatively about managers or colleagues – Australians place high value on "mateship" (camaraderie).
Test your audio and tech beforehand (microphone, camera, internet).	Don't brag or emphasize hierarchy – quickly seen as uncollegial.
Smart casual look – a clean shirt or polo is often enough.	Don't communicate in overly complicated or indirect ways – clarity beats diplomatic detours.
Give everyone a fair chance to speak – don't interrupt, listen actively.	
Keep your wording short and direct, but stay friendly.	
Allow a bit of humor, as long as it's respectful.	

Culture dimensions by Geert Hofstede

POWER DISTANCE
This dimension deals with the fact that all individuals in societies are not equal – it expresses the attitude of the culture towards these inequalities amongst us. Power Distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.

UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE
The dimension Uncertainty Avoidance has to to do with the way that a society deals with the fact that the future can never be known: should we try to control the future or just let it happen? This ambiguity brings with it anxiety and different cultures have learnt to deal with this anxiety in different ways. The extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these is reflected in the score on Uncertainty Avoidance.

INDIVIDUALISM
The fundamental issue addressed by this dimension is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members. It has to do with how people live together – in nuclear families, extended families or "tribes". In individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist societies people belong to 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange for loyalty.

LONG TERM ORIENTATION
This dimension describes how every society has to maintain some links with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future, and societies prioritize these two existential goals differently. Normative societies, which score low on this dimension, for example, prefer to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion. Those with a culture which scores high, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach: they encourage thrift and efforts in modern education as a way to prepare for the future.

MOTIVATION TOWARDS ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS
A high score (Decisive) on this dimension indicates that the society will be driven by competition, achievement and success, with success being defined by the winner / best in field – a value system that starts in school and continues throughout organisational life. A low score (Consensus-oriented) on the dimension means that the dominant values in society are caring for others and quality of life. A Consensus-oriented society is one where quality of life is the sign of success and standing out from the crowd is not admired. The fundamental issue here is what motivates people, wanting to be the best (Decisive) or liking what you do (Consensus-oriented).

INDULGENCE
One challenge that confronts humanity, now and in the past, is the degree to which small children are socialized. Societies in which socialization we do not become "human". This dimension is defined as the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised. Relatively weak control is called "Indulgence" and relatively strong control is called "Restraint". Cultures can, therefore, be described as Indulgent or Restrained.

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