# EMIL

## European Modular Programme for Intercultural Learning
### in
### Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development

## Intercultural Competence for Primary Schools

## Exercises

Translated by Rebecca Fong, University of the West of England

## Content

**Foreword**

This resource book is intended for Primary school teachers wishing to train their pupils through games and activities in dealing with cultural difference. Today this task seems more urgent than ever, since modern European societies are becoming ever more culturally diverse. However, tolerance is required, if people who differ from each other significantly wish to or have to get on with each other. Tolerance requires, as a first step, the recognition of the importance of difference. This should not be heightened or pushed aside, but monitored and made tolerable for all involved. Primary schools and nursery schools are the first public institutions in which children have the opportunity to learn to live and operate with diversity. This handbook is intended as an aid in the difficult work that teachers have in negotiating the boundaries between the denial and acceptance of such difference.

The materials included here, which are oriented towards the school environment, are an extract from the manual "Intercultural Competence in Primary Schools", itself the result of the project "EMIL - the European Modular Programme for Intercultural Learning in Teacher Training and Continuing Professional Development". The project was initiated by the European Commission within the scope of Socrates/Comenius 2.1. The project term was two years, from November 2004 to October 2006. The starting point for both project publications, the manual and the resource book, is that in the European context, intercultural competence will be one of the key, future competences in primary school educational pedagogy. These publications have the purpose of supporting both practising and future teachers, whose arenas for teaching are culturally-diverse classes.

The contents of both the manual and the resource book were compiled by the project partners from Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Great Britain and Turkey: Gönül Akcamete (T), Ana Dimova (B), Rebecca Fong (GB), Penelope Harnett (GB), Asker Kartari (T), Anastasia Kesidou (Gr), Plamen Makariev (B), Vassiliki Papadopoulou (Gr) and Juliana Roth (G). The final editing and production of the texts were carried out by Juliana Roth. More information about the project partners, their professional profiles and institutions is available on the project homepage, at www.emil.ikk.lmu.de. From October 2006, both the manual and the resource book will be available as downloads from the internet, or via the project partners in hard copy.

All the project partners have worked with commitment and enthusiasm on the development of the manual and the resource book. We hope that our work will meet with recognition and wish everyone who uses this resource book the greatest of success.

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**Introduction**

The exercises in this resource book are related to various themes from the repertoire of 'intercultural learning'. More detailed explanations on these themes can be found in the manual entitled "Intercultural Competence in Primary schools", which is available in German. *For trainers who do not speak German, explanations to the main cultural concepts referred to can be found in the literature mentioned in the bibliography at the back of this resource book*. However, the exercises have been conceived and presented in such a way that they are mostly clear and usable without the theoretical background in the manual. The exercises assume generic underlying concepts and do not stress cultural differences. Their objective is to engage teachers and trainees in independent, reflexive work. For this reason, names of countries and nationalities have been avoided, so that users have the opportunity of putting themselves in the roles of both cultural "insider" and "outsider" when they meet each other.

Educational work relating to "difference" is based on research into "Otherness" or "foreignness", since every treatment of the subject of culture is simultaneously a study of cultural otherness. According to a popular definition, "Culture in the broadest sense is what defines you as a stranger abroad". This definition highlights two key ideas: first that 'foreignness' is no inherent quality, but a relationship between two things. Otherness never exists in and of itself, it always assumes "an other" who relates to the first person as foreign. As a result, the viewer's gaze is redirected towards his/her own culture. Becoming more sensitive towards one's own culture, which is an important goal on the road to intercultural competence, is not possible without the reflection one gets from looking at something "foreign".

"Otherness" is therefore, based on mutuality. Otherness originates from the confrontation of 'us' and 'them' - and every time one calls up the 'stranger', we are indirectly implicating the 'self'. However, only few people are aware that if they call somebody 'foreign', they are actually saying something about themselves. The feeling of otherness occurs when a comparison is made (mostly unconsciously) between two different behaviours, and a difference is perceived. If the basis on which the comparisons are made change, then the feeling of otherness will change too. Understanding that feelings are relative is an important tool on the road to intercultural learning. Learners can take the opportunity to use expressions of difference to raise questions about their own expectations, all of which are generated and used without thinking in everyday life.

This complementary relationship between the notions of "own" and "other" explains why contact with "otherness" can be emotionally draining - it assumes the readiness to question oneself and the familiar world around one. The gaze of the outsider may be hurtful. The act of experiencing an outsider's viewpoint, requires the ability to exercise behavioural and emotional control. This explains why in adulthood, the organized learning of intercultural competence can be physically demanding and stressful for many learners (it is a much more intuitive-spontaneous learning process with children). Teachers and coaches in the intercultural arena need to take this into account and act ethically and responsibly.

"Otherness" also has a psychological function: it can help us differentiate between the anthropological concepts of "In-group" and "Out-group", between the familiar

"inside" world and the unfamiliar "outside" world. It is difficult to deny this statement, even if it does not sound particularly 'politically correct'. A clear understanding of 'who I belong to', is an important pre-requisite for an individual's social and cultural identity. This important point emerges when we compare and contrast ourselves to others, whether we are football fans, ethnic groups or business entrepreneurs.

The social processes of identity formation, which include "demarcation" and "exclusion" are always implicated. From an anthropological viewpoint, these are mechanisms of social stabilization. Both processes accompany every intercultural interaction and the boundaries between "inside" and "outside" can shift constantly for the individual. Membership of different groups, changes according to context. Thus the Spanish football player in an English team can be viewed as an outsider in training, if he requires a different diet or a different timetable, for example. If, however, his team is pitted against an international opponent, he fast becomes an insider, because the border between "inside" and "outside" has now changed and it is the opponents who are now viewed as the 'others'.

The presence of cultural "otherness" in our immediate everyday social environment provides for a constant dynamism between the tensions of these demarcation and exclusion processes. Being interculturally competent, therefore, requires us to recognize the fluidity of the borders between "inside" and "out", along with the dynamics of group-building and all that goes with it, whilst constantly seeking out the underlying reasons for these new configurations and clarifying the consequences for the interaction of group members. In other words, one needs to be able to recognise the dynamics of unfamiliar signs and interpret them appropriately.

If "otherness" is an omnipresent social and cultural phenomenon with serious consequences, then the development of adequate strategies to deal with it in a practical way, is even more important.

If our own world collides with someone else's, then everyone wants to justify the "rightness" of their own way of doing things. What is a "proper" breakfast? Bread rolls, butter and jam with coffee, espresso and croissants, boiled rice, raw egg and soy sauce or simply a cup of tea or a glass of Coke? What is the 'right' time for a breakfast or indeed any other meal? And, if one had the job of finding a suitable menu for a team of international workers, the issue of dealing with an everyday reality that involved several "right ways of doing things" would suddenly become a necessity. Whilst our ability to deal with material things "correctly" in everyday cross-cultural situations is generally not over-problematic, one can run into real difficulties, if not serious conflict, when it comes to opposing attitudes and values.

Competent contact with cultural difference begins where its relative validity, the many different forms of "rightness", have been recognized and where a practice-oriented strategy has been put into place to deal with them. A pre-condition for this is that perceptions of "foreignness" are dealt with as neutrally as possible, and that questions are raised about how and why difference comes into being, exists and what its consequences are. In intercultural learning, "otherness" is treated as a strategic quantity, something to be examined and managed. This pragmatic contact with cultural "otherness" differs significantly from the concept of "inclusion", which

emanates from the claim to universal equality of all peoples and therefore avoids the actual working out of difference.

Today some authors recommend a new kind of contact with otherness, stemming from the profound changes occurring through European migration and media communication. They advise acceptance and awareness in dealing with "foreignness/otherness". The closeness of this mindset to the pragmatic techniques of intercultural learning is undeniable. Nevertheless, one should consider that for many people, constantly having to 'endure' otherness can prove problematic. It appears that there are particular difficulties experiencing otherness within one's own immediate social circles – at nursery and school, in the neighbourhood, in hospitals, nursing homes or the workplace.

The degree of emotional distress experienced due to otherness, also seems to be dependent on the degree of perceived "cultural distance". Although there are no methods to measure cultural distance objectively, it is well known that difference experienced is greater between French and Chinese pupils than between German and Dutch ones. What is at stake here is the subjective emotional distance between members of different social groups, which need by no means be defined only in terms of national difference.

The negative effects of "otherness", such as ostracism and threats, should not mask the positive aspects. The fact that "otherness" exists is clear evidence of its important social function and the consequent necessity of getting to grips with it. In order that it can be dealt with appropriately, it is important for the relationship between natives and non-natives to be controlled and reflexive. For both sides, this offers the possibility, as the relationships and interactions unfold, of negotiating and steering the degree of otherness, autonomously. When difference is experienced reflexively, one's understanding of oneself as a cultural being and the personal benefits that this can bring allow cultural learning can be perceived positively.

*Please note: Trainers are free to adapt **the way** in which exercises are carried out, to best suit their participant numbers, class layouts, resources and so on. **The content** should remain intact as far as possible.*

## 1. The Introduction

Topic:
Cultural self-awareness; consciousness-raising of elements of one's own culture, which are integrated into one's individual identity.

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. Multicultural groups work best.

Instructions:
The participants receive the following task:

"Imagine you are participating in an international summer camp, with participants from all over the world. The organizers want everyone to get to know each other and have asked participants to bring along three objects to present themselves and their country with. Consider what you would take and how you would use them to present yourself".

Students are given 15 minutes to prepare before presentations begin.

Notes:
This exercise may appear simple at first sight. However, so that it achieves its goal, the trainer should make clear from the outset, that the usual touristy souvenirs, which are available in each country (key rings with the double-decker buses on, national flags, music CDs and so on) may not be chosen. The articles presented should be part of the everyday culture, but which the participants can relate to personally. An example for an English school child would be talking about a bowl of Cornflakes, by explaining that this was something the school child had missed on a school trip to France.

During the presentation, it is really important to draw on the personal relationship of the participant and the object. If necessary, questions should be asked to probe the relationship more deeply. "Why did you select this object?" "How is it related to your cultural identity?" Would your friends choose this as an item too?"

## 2. Proverbs

Topic: Recognition of cultural values; relationship between language and culture

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. It is more suitable for mono-cultural than multicultural groups.

Instructions:
In the first stage, the participants get a list containing proverbs from different countries, which have been translated literally into their mother tongue. Some translations will sound strange, but that is a natural consequence of the translation of culture-specific language and should be expected. Proverbs are often deeply anchored in cultural values, which can make them difficult to translate and reconstruct.

An example list would be:

There must be order. (Germany)
Quick work - shame for the master. (Bulgaria)
Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise (England)
Sing and laugh with your relatives, but never do business. (Germany)
Work is not a wolf, it won't run off into the forest. (Russia)
Nine midwives - crippled child. (Bulgaria)
The end of passion is the beginning of repentance (France)
If you suspect a man, don't employ him; if you employ a man, don't suspect him (China)
It takes a whole village to raise a child (Africa)
You'll never plough a field by turning it over in your mind (Ireland)
A half-truth is a whole lie (Yiddish)
There are always ears on the other side of the wall (China)

The participants discuss the proverbs and try to recognize the values hidden behind them. If there are any proverbs which are difficult to understand, the reasons for the difficulty in comprehension should be discussed. Also comparison should be made with proverbs in the participants' language.

In the second stage, mixed cultural pairs are formed. Partner A begins by translating some proverbs from their own country into the common language. Partner B listens, until they get to a proverb, which sounds completely senseless and incomprehensible. The listener shouts "Stop"! and partner A must make this proverb more comprehensible by adding additional information (who says it, when one says it, what exactly is being expressed). Partner B must try to uncover the values contained in the proverb. The same procedure is then repeated the other way round.

Notes:
The most important goal of this exercise is to advance the participants' understanding of the diversity of cultural values and encourage them to speculate on values in general. However, a short exercise like this, cannot be expected to yield a valid or correct determination of values in the anthropological sense.

## 3. Against the Grain

Topic:
Cultural self-awareness; recognition of the strength and emotional pull of everyday cultural norms as experienced in daily routines

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. The exercise works best with mono-cultural groups.

Instructions:
This exercise requires participants to fulfil a task from everyday life, chosen by the teacher, that goes against the everyday cultural grain. In the English environment, this could be something like trying not to use the word "sorry" for a whole day, or reading someone else's newspaper very obviously on the bus. In the Bulgarian context, this could be something like greeting someone one doesn't know in a lift, or using direct eye contact and a very friendly smile.

Participants are asked to pay attention to their feelings and to the reactions that occur around them.

When students meet afterwards, they describe their individual experiences. Then, in the general discussion that follows, the teacher asks students to discuss the usual "rules" of behaviour. Finally, the emotional impact is discussed.

Notes:
In choosing the tasks, the trainer needs to consider the stress that can be caused by going against the cultural grain – since people who deviate from the norm are often penalised. Participants should therefore be warned that "correction" could occur, and might cause them embarrassment. The trainer should also be careful not to set tasks which risk causing too great an offence.

The trainer needs to be confident in preparing effective scenarios, which will involve going against the usual rules of culture. Some of the examples could be enacted again in roleplays in the seminar.

If there are large numbers, then working groups can present their findings to the others. Each group selects two of the experiences that have had the most impact and reports back on what has happened.

## 4. Pictures of "otherness"

Topic:
Becoming conscious of one's own "otherness"; reflecting on "otherness"; recognizing types of "otherness"

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. It is equally well suited to mono-cultural as to multi-cultural groups.

Instructions:
A very large quantity of pictures of individuals and groups, taken from the local and international media, is spread out on a table in front of the participants. The captions underneath the images are removed. Each participant chooses two pictures, which immediately cause them to experience a feeling of "foreignness".

After this, each participant describes their pictures and explains what it is about the picture that makes them feel strange, trying to analyse exactly what it is that has caused this impression to occur. Then the participants try to define the kind of "foreignness" that they are observing in the picture.

Notes:
If there are large groups, each participant selects one picture only. Another option is to ask participants to select two pictures, one that seems strange and another that is familiar. This can lead to a contrastive discussion. The trainer should be careful to choose pictures that do not show celebrities or well-know politicians, actors etc. Scenes from every day life work best.

Films, which deal with the central issues of "otherness" can also be used as a catalyst for reflecting on what it is like to be an "outsider" and all the problems and communication problems this entails. With the same purpose in mind, specially chosen episodes from the foreign films of lesser-known countries can be used, in their original language, if possible.

## 5. Who am I?

Topic:
How communication is shaped by expectations

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. It is suitable for both mono-cultural and multi-cultural groups.

Instructions:
The trainer sticks a sticker on each participant's forehead. On these there should be labels (adjectives and social categories work well) such as: arrogant, friendly, popular, blind, outsider, new pupil, teacher, unable to speak the language, and so on. Celebrities or well-known people (such as The Queen) can also be used. Everyone has been accorded a role, although individuals themselves are unaware of what their own label says.

Participants are then asked to mingle and converse with each other. They are given tasks such as the following:

Introduce yourselves
Talk about your latest class work
Form a queue at the bus stop
Talk about your last holiday
Say goodbye

Subsequently, they each try to guess, what it says on their labels. Then, one by one, they reflect on their roles and the kind of communication that occurred as a result.

Notes:
The social roles and the characteristics on the labels must relate to contexts that the students will be familiar with.

## 6. Four Ears

Topic:
Recognizing the four communication levels or "ears" of a message

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. It is more suitable for mono-cultural groups.

Instructions:
Communication often operates on several different levels simultaneously. The participants get the following task, which they work on alone or in working groups:

Analyse the following communications or discussion situations on the basis of these four criteria:

- What information is being conveyed here (information level of the message)?

- What can one conclude from the statement about the relations between the speakers (relationship level – what are the relationships between speaker and listener)?

- What goal is this statement aiming to achieve (appeal level)?

- What information is coming across about the speakers themselves (self-disclosure level)?

Situation:
In the school lunch hour, one pupil says to another,
"Hey, don't tell me you still don't understand the lesson we had just now?"

The aim of this exercise is to try to separate the different "ears" or levels of a communication. Participants need to develop the capacity to rank the importance of these different levels and "hear" which one is driving the consequences of the action.

Notes:
It is not very easy to find normal-sounding sentences, which contain all four aspects of a message. Each teacher should therefore work on their own list of meaningful expressions. It should also be noted that the four aspects of communication can often be interpreted in more than one way.

**7. Park Bench**

Topic:
Awareness-raising of the relationship between culture and communication

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited.  It is suited to both mono-cultural and multicultural groups, though perhaps works better with the latter.

Instructions:
A minimum of five participants are needed for this activity. One of them receives the following task. "Imagine you are sitting on a park bench. Several people you know come by, one by one, and sit down with you on the bench. Show where these people will sit in relation to you, so that you all feel comfortable".

The person now takes up a position on a chair in the middle of the room, imagining that this is in fact a position on a park bench.

The four other participants then receive the roles of 'best friend', 'mother', 'grandfather' and 'tenant'. One by one they bring a chair and put it down where the first participant indicates they should. Each chair represents a relative position on the notional "park bench".

The trainer draws the positions each person takes up on a Flipchart.

After the exercise, discussion takes place. Does everyone agree with the distances? Did any of the participants feel that the distances were inappropriate (too close or too distant)? How can the variation in positions and distances be explained?

In the second stage, five new participants are chosen by the teacher, and made to stand very close together, so that the "comfort zones" established in the first part of the exercise are violated. The participants are then asked to describe their emotional reactions to the situation.

All of the participants are then asked to remember and reflect on situations, in which their normal expectations of spatial behaviour were contradicted and how they felt in these situations.

Notes:
In monocultural groups, partipants sometimes find it rather tiresome to reflect on spatial behaviour, since it seems so "obvious". In order to speed-up the awareness-raising process, questions about experiences in other cultures can be used, or the participants can be asked about other situations at home or abroad in which they felt their personal space had been violated.

**8. Pictures**

Topic: Selectiveness of perception

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. It is suited to both mono-cultural and multicultural groups.

Instructions:
Participants divide into teams.  Each team gets a picture showing several people and objects, preferably from another culture. The group looks closely at the picture for ten seconds and then the picture is turned over. Each group member writes down between three and five things, that they noticed. Then members compare their choices. In the subsequent reflections made by the team, consider the following questions:

a)  How are the chosen objects related to each other? Do they overlap? Are there differences?
b)  How were the selections made in the first place? Were they based on interest, knowledge, experience?
c)  Can the objects be divided along the lines of important/unimportant and well-known/unknown? How would these categories affect your perceptions?

Each team talks about the group findings in a wider plenary presentation.

This exercise can also be carried as a full-group activity. In this case, a short video extract could be played to everyone instead of using a picture.

Notes:
To be really effective, the pictures for the group work and video extract should come from less well-known cultures and contexts. It is particularly important that viewing time should be short. With a single group, pictures should be taken in after they have been viewed.

## 9. Ball Game

Topic:
The ubiquitous nature of stereotypes; categories

Participants:
Limited to 10-12 participants.  In the case of larger numbers, smaller groups must first be formed. This exercise is better-suited to mono-cultural groups.

Instructions:
Names of national, regional, ethnic or social groups are written in a list on the board (e.g. 'teachers', 'students', 'employees', 'Italians', 'Doctors', etc.).

The trainer begins by throwing a ball into the circle and saying the name of one of the categories. The catcher quickly and spontaneously names an association with the category that has been named. They then throw the ball again, shouting out a new category. The receiver names an association as quickly as possible. This process of throwing the ball and making word associations carries on for five to ten minutes longer.

When enough associations have been uttered, the ball throwing stops. The participants try to write down the categories and associations that they themselves said.

In the analysis stage, the trainer asks the following questions:

a) How did you feel about this game?
b) Was it difficult to find associations?
c) Were there any groups which you found it harder to say something about?  If so, why?
d) Where did the associations come from?
e) Do believe that these associations are true?

Subsequently the participants reflect on the inevitability of stereotypes and the political correctness put in place to prevent stereotyping. One of the aims of this exercise is to show students how difficult the whole area of stereotyping is. There can be a gap between mental stereotyping, which often occurs spontaneously, and one's willingness/reluctance to actually name a stereotype in public.

Notes:
The teacher needs to make sure that it is characteristic attributes that are called out (eg In the category "Italians", "passionate", rather than "Rome"). This can be regulated if the teacher joins in and calls out characteristics themselves.

The trainer needs to show sensitivity in writing categories on the board, so as not to offend the students doing the exercise.

**10. Who is that?**

Topic:
The ubiquitous nature of stereotypes; the social function of stereotypes

Participants:
The number of participants is limited to 10-12 people.  This exercise works better with mono-cultural groups.

Instructions:
The group divides into teams. Each group receives a picture of a person, and a question sheet about the life they imagine them leading. As an example questions could be asked about:

a)  Name, age
b) Occupation
c) Where they live
d) Marital status
e) Interests, hobbies
f) The latest book they've read
g) The latest film they've seen
h) What they would do if they won a million pounds

Each participant goes round in a circle introducing their person, according to the notes they have made. After this, participants reflect on the task and how they completed it.

Was it a difficult exercise?  How was it possible to assign quite detailed statements to the person in the picture? Where did the views associated with the pictures originate from? What exactly attracted the participants to make the judgements they made about the person in the picture?

Notes:
The pictures for this exercise should not show well-known personalities. They should only show a large picture of the face, and as little as possible of the clothing.

## 11. Social Portraits

Topic:
The ubiquitous nature of stereotypes; the cognitive function of stereotypes

Participants:
The participant number is unlimited, but the exercise works best with groups of 10-12 people. It is suited both to mono-cultural and multicultural groups, but is more productive with the latter.

Instructions:
The participants divide into groups. Each group gets the description of a "social type" that consists of several characteristics. In each description, there should be one or two "incorrect" descriptions. For a group consisting of English-speaking students, the following example would be appropriate:

> A student has their own car,
> lives with his/her parents,
> frequently uses the internet,
> often goes to parties,
> goes ballroom dancing
> gets up at 5.30 and goes for a run,
> always travels first class on the railways,
> cannot afford a mobile phone,
> earns an income,
> wears a lot of jeans and T-Shirts,
> often rides a bicycle,
> can speak German,
> and is unmarried.

Each group introduces "their person" and discusses the "authenticity" and/or the "inaccuracy" of the description, as well as the reasons why a "correct" or "incorrect" decision has been reached. The central issue relates to how it is possible to generate such a list.

It is also possible to do a similar exercise without a prepared list of characteristics. Taking the resources of the group into consideration, the participants can generate their own lists (e.g. "French teacher", "student with a Pakistani background", "British soccer fan"), that can then be given to another group to analyse. Each group must have processed at least two social portraits by the end of the activity. A crucial factor in this exercise is the discussion between the authors of the social portraits and the group who analyse it. The background reasons for each description should be discussed.

Notes:
This exercise works best in two stages, using both variations as detailed above. As such, it is effective in first revealing to the participants how stereotypes are accepted by society almost unquestioningly (stage 1) and secondly how they are generated (stage 2).

## 12. My Object

Topic:
The creation of attributions; challenging people's immediate attributions

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. This exercise works best with mono-cultural groups.

Instructions:
The participants form a circle of chairs. One by one, each person silently produces an object of their choice out of a bag and puts it on the ground. All the other participants jot down their own ideas (attributions) on a slip of paper, as to what they think the person wants to say about themself by presenting this object. They then turn the slips of paper over and lay them down by the object.

After each person has had a go, participants take it in turns to talk about themselves, their objects and their motives in choosing their object. The slips of paper are then turned over. The correct attributions are then sorted from the false attributions, and comments are made about the latter.

## 13. The Disappointment

Topic:
The significance of monochronic and polychronic time orientations (for an explanation of the terminology, see bibliography)

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited, but the exercise works best with groups of 10-12 people. It works well with both mono-cultural and multicultural groups, but works better with the latter.

Instructions:
The participants are given the following episode, which they talk about with reference to their ideas about time. These episodes can later be acted out as roleplays.

Situation
A school teacher from Bulgaria, Georgi Ivanov, accompanies his class on a school exchange to Holland. Today he is meeting his Dutch colleague and friend, Geert Martens. This meeting has been previously arranged on e-mail and is set for 11 am. Georgi Ivanov is looking forward to the meeting and to chatting with Geert, since he has always found talking to Geert Martens stimulating. This is perhaps the reason why on the day, he arrives a little earlier than agreed. He goes into Geert Marten's office, sees him talking on the phone, waves and greets him. Geert looks at his watch and says, "It's only ten to eleven" and continues with his phone conversation.

Later on, Georgi Ivanov comments that "it was as if someone had poured a bucket of cold water all over me. We did have our conversation, but I felt uncomfortable and couldn't forget what had happened". Why was Georgi Ivanov so distracted?

Notes:
Analysing this episode should involve talking about this encounter as the meeting of two real people. The distinction between attitudes to time that are monochronic and polychronic is determined less by individuals, than by their culture. But attitudes to time are not the main point here. The most important thing is that the participants recognise how differences in attitudes to time can shape encounters and generate emotions.

## 14. Recipes

Topic:
The significance of high and low context orientations (for an explanation of the terminology, see bibliography)


Participants:
The participant number is unlimited. It works well with both mono-cultural and multicultural groups, but works better with the latter.

Instructions:
The participants are given the following two recipes to work with.

1       Roast pork (with crackling)
Use pork loin (not too fatty). Salt. Lay rind side down on a round oven tray. Pour water over it and let it cook until the rind is done. Turn over. Score the rind, cover with fat. Roast, basting it with liquid from the oven tray. Serve with Sauerkraut and fried potatoes.


2       Pork loin, with crackling
2 kgs pork (back pork, not too fatty)
1 tsp salt
Pepper
2 onions, finely chopped
½ pint of stock
2 sprigs of rosemary
¼ litre of sour cream

Rub the meat with the salt and pepper, then cover with a pint of simmering water for a few minutes. Add the chopped onion and soup stock, let it boil for a 10 minutes. Then roast the pork for 2-2 ½ hours in the oven, at gas mark 7. Baste from time to time, without adding any further liquid, until the pork is crispy. Half an hour before the dish is ready, add the cream and sprinkle on a couple of sprigs of rosemary.

A popular housewives' tip: shortly before the pork is ready, take a sharp knife and score the rind with small rectangles. Dust over a little flour and brown under a hot grill. Serve with potato dumplings and mixed vegetables. Salads can be added as desired.


Both recipes are taken from real cookbooks. They appear as translations from original recipes. Participants discuss the recipe with reference to the effectiveness of the instructions in the text (Would I be able to use each recipe to produce this meal? Who could follow such a recipe?) or the preciseness of the detail (Is there enough information here for me to make this recipe?) as well as the amount of information presented and the implied degree of knowledge required (Does this recipe have all the information in it that I need? If not, where can I go to get it?)

Participants are then asked to imagine the respective social settings of the recipes. What kind of communicative settings, social structures, attitudes do these two quite differently presented recipes suggest? Would it be possible for them to use the less familiar recipe? Why/why not?


Notes:
Begin by avoiding discussion of specific cultures, when talking about the recipes. The aim is not to discuss the recipe itself!, but for participants to discuss the features of the actual text of the two recipes in terms of their high/low context features.

## 15. Teachers and Pupils

Topic:
Differing attitudes towards power/hierarchy and to individualism/collectivism in schooling (for an explanation of the terminology, see bibliography)

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited, but the exercise works best with groups of 10-12 people. It works well with both mono-cultural and multicultural groups, but works better with the latter.

Instructions:
Participants split up into an even number of groups. Half the groups get the instructions for scenario 1, the other half the instructions for scenario 2.

Pair a group 1 with a group 2. Each of the pairs of groups needs to agree jointly on a school situation, which has universal characteristics. For example, it must be related to a general, school situation and require interaction between the teacher and the pupils. It should be a scenario that could occur in any culture. The idea behind this is that cultural variation can influence how these situations develop. With reference to the well-known anthropological concept that "people everywhere have the same problems, but they solve them differently", participants should develop various roleplay scenarios to enact the situation, according to the particular cultural rules they play by (see constraints of the roles below).

Examples for universal situations, that require a pedagogic intervention, might be:

a) the same pupils are always answering the questions
b) the pupils in the back row spend all their time chatting and don't pay any attention in class
c) a new pupil arrives halfway through the school year and needs to be inducted
d) there's a big argument between two pupils that leads to violence
e) some students come to school wearing expensive designer clothing
f) some students don't turn off their mobile phones in the classroom.

First, using the culture specific rules of behaviour provided for them in the scenario below, each group works through the situations individually, suggesting ways of resolving them. Then the pairs of groups meet up, explain what they have come up with and discuss the various options.

Follow this up with a whole group discussion. The aim is not to find "the best" solution for the chosen situation, but rather to learn to grasp and accept the "normality" of various different cultural alternatives. It should become clear that even in the everyday life of a school, a readiness to reflect on different ways of communicating is important.

Scenario 1 – Rules of Behaviour

- Personal opinions can be expressed by anyone, those with power and those with less power

- Frankness is perceived positively, as a form of sincerity

- The person who does not express himself, is thought to be weak

- Ostentatious show of privileges and status symbols attract disapproval

- Those in positions of authority, try not to appear too powerful

- Criticism of those in high places is allowed

Scenario 2 – Rules of Behaviour

- Direct expressions of personal opinion are considered to be risky and ill-judged

- Frankness, or speaking one's mind, is perceived as insulting, and sometimes naive

- Those in positions of authority have the right to express themselves directly and bluntly

- The ostentatious show of privileges and status symbols is expected and often occurs

- Those in positions of authority do their best to try to impress

- Criticism of those in high places is not desirable

The rules of behaviour generated here, pertain to the dimensions of cultural variability of power distance and individualism/collectivism. These rules are exaggerated, "black/white" options and do not in fact refer to real situations. The aim is to use them as "crutches" in a learning situation, to make visible the possibility of different cultural behaviour patterns. In real life, culture-dependent behaviour is much more complex, unequal and part of the intricate fabric of life.

Notes:
This exercise is not easy because it requires a capacity for empathy amongst the participants and the ability to be creative. The situations can also be acted out as roleplays. The instructions are at the discretion of the trainer. When student groups are carrying out the exercise, the teachers should feed in the following, "How should teachers act in situation x?". This should offer a new perspective to the proceedings.

## 16. Searching out Ethnocentrism

Topic:
Discovering and reflecting on ethnocentrism

Participants:
Participant numbers are unlimited. This exercise is suitable for both mono-cultural and multicultural groups. A variety of cultures will increase the effectiveness of the exercise.

Instructions:
Ethnocentrism is a real part of each person's daily life. It is important, to learn to recognise and to reflect on it. In this activity, participants analyse press or media reports, which centre on other cultures. This can be done individually or in groups. Extracts from school text books or feature films can also be used. The aim is to try and perceive ways in which the materials are influenced by ethnocentrism.

A word of caution: this is no easy task, because what is ethnocentric may, at first, seem so "normal" and "common-sensical" that it is almost impossible to see, because we are so used to it.

Notes:
The success of this exercise depends very much on the quality of the written and visual examples that the teacher can make available. It is advisable to start a small collection of suitable resources and to add new materials bit by bit as appropriate.

## 17. The Circle

Topic:
Recognising and dealing with emotional turmoil

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited, but this exercise works best with groups of 12-16. It is equally suitable for mono-cultural and multicultural groups.

Instructions:
The participants form a circle standing. 2 volunteers leave the room. The group then stands shoulder to shoulder in a tight circle, and is instructed that members are not to let anyone into the circle unless they ask for permission from a distance of more than three meters away. This instruction remains secret, however. The volunteers then come back into the room and are given the task of re-entering the circle. The attempts will fail again and again, but the trainer should let the activity persist for a reasonable time, at least until the volunteers show their frustration publicly.

In the analysis phase, the feelings of the volunteers are discussed. How did they deal with the disappointment of not being admitted into the group? How could they have helped themselves? The group members uncover their "secret rule". After this, possible strategies are discussed by all as to how to deal with emotions in intercultural situations. How can one get used to the emotional pressures of intercultural contact, and develop "intercultural muscles"!

Notes:
It is difficult to bring about real feelings of emotional frustration and helplessness in the context of classroom simulations. The activity will fail, if it degenerates into laughter and is not taken seriously. The trainer, therefore, needs to control the class very severely, by demanding that the group pays attention and adheres to the instructions (rigid posture, no eye contact, no talking, everyone standing very close to each other etc).

**18. My Tour Guide**

Topic:
Experience of ambiguous situations, control of emotional turmoil

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited, but this exercise works best with groups of 12-16. It is equally suitable for mono-cultural and multicultural groups.

Instructions:
Participants are divided into two groups, travellers and tour guides. Each traveller will be working with one tour guide.

The travellers get the following instructions: "Imagine that you are travelling to a far-off, fictitious country. Your travel agent has allocated a native tour guide to you, whose job is to introduce you to this "foreign" culture. The only problem is that you don't know the language of this other culture and you can only communicate with the tour guide silently. One further problem is that you can't see anything, because your eyes have been blindfolded. The tour leader is going to explain three characteristics of their "culture" to you non-verbally.

The tour guides are given no more than five minutes to consider which three elements, things or behaviours they want to convey to the tourists. Then they decide how to communicate these non-verbally. The choice of behaviour can be completely imaginary, if desired. Create a behaviour and attach a symbolic meaning to it.

The teacher blindfolds the travellers, who are sitting on chairs. Then, each tour guide chooses a traveller and has five to ten minutes to take them round, and convey to them the three characteristics of their "culture". When this has been done, the travellers are brought back to their seats and once everyone is sitting down again, the blindfolds are taken off.

The first thing that happens in the analysis stage, is that the travellers describe what happened to them during their "tour". The trainer makes three columns and notes down these descriptions on a flip chart in the first column on the flip chart.

In the second phase, travellers are asked what they think the three characteristics mean. These are again noted down by the teacher in a second column (entitled "attributions 1").

It is then the turn of the tour guides to say what it was they were trying to explain. This is noted down in column 3 (entitled "attributions 2").

After this, the attributions are discussed and false attributions are explained and adjusted. For example, if the action "someone put a spoon in my mouth" (column 1) was interpreted as "dependence" (column 2), but the real intention was actually that "hospitality" should be conveyed (column 3), then this is discussed. After this, roles are reversed and the travellers become the tour guides.

Notes:

This exercise provides a good opportunity to create a feeling of insecurity in the travellers, due to the unfamiliar circumstances. It also demonstrates how false attributions are created. The trainer should ensure that the travellers separate what they say *first* into *descriptions* of the experiences on their blind tour (What did they do to you?) and then *secondly* into *interpretations* of what happened (They were trying to show me that……..). Only in this way can clear item by item comparisons of the attributions be made on the flip chart.

## 19. On Close Observation

Topic:
Sharpening your perceptions

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited. It is equally suitable for mono-cultural and multicultural groups.

Instructions:
The participants are given pictures of groups of groups of people doing ordinary every day things, such as sitting, eating, walking and so on. The trainer elicits descriptions and writes all the descriptions down on a flip chart. The categorical differences between describing and interpreting are then discussed. Following this, the trainer asks the participants to assign one of these, describing or interpreting, to the picture evidence. Generally speaking, most descriptions are exposed as interpretations – even if they had first been deemed to be objective descriptions.

Here is an example: the picture shows two smartly-dressed women, with two men in suits, carrying coffee cups. Everyone is standing. The room is furnished with tables and chairs. In this case, most people interpret the picture as "an office coffee break", "secretaries with their bosses".

The goal of this exercise is to train your perceptions. We need to recognise the subjective and culture-specific interpretations that we make and try to replace them, in the first instance, with descriptions. When we are able to apply conscious processes to what is often done automatically, we learn "to put the brakes on" our hasty perceptions. It is only by giving exact descriptions that we can provide real, underlying information about communication situations. Another way to achieve the same aims, is for participants to be asked to caption or subtitle the pictures. These can then be discussed in the same way.

If "loaded" or "stereotypical" pictures are produced, it is possible to elicit emotionally-charged interpretations from the participants. For example, they might say, "these women look disorientated", or "this looks like a nice conversation". At this point in the exercise, a third analytical component is introduced, namely "evaluation". This completes the well-known sequence of perceptions:

"D(escribe) - I(nterprete) - E(valuate )".

Notes:
Video clips or extracts from films can also be used in place of the pictures. The important thing to remember is that there should be at least two or three people interacting with each other so that observations can be made about what they are doing.

## 20. A Variety of Perspectives

Topic:
Changing Perspectives; empathy

Participants:
The number of participants is unlimited, but this exercise works best with groups of 12-16. It is equally suitable for mono-cultural and multicultural groups.

Instructions:
The participants divide up into groups of 3-4. Each group receives the written description of a fictional person, including name prompts, age, occupation, nationality, likes, interests and biographical details. An extract from a television programme is then shown, and the group members each try to make sense of the extract from the point of view of their particular character. They then get together and discuss what they saw, and try to come to a joint agreement on that person's perspective. These perspectives are then discussed in a plenary session. The aim of the exercise is not to identify cultural causes for the different perspectives, but rather to raise awareness about the existence of different ways of seeing the world.

Notes:
The success of this exercise depends on the quality of the materials that are brought in by the trainer. This is true for both the "fictional profiles" given to the participants, and the extracts from the TV programmes. Trying to take on another perspective and then act according to that role, is very difficult. The trainer needs to insist that participants stay "in the role".

**Bibliography**

For trainers wishing to know more about such concepts as

Attributions
Monochronic time and polychronic time orientations
High context/low context orientations
Stereotyping

the following works will supply interesting and concise explanations.

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Jandt, F. E. (2003). *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication: Identities in a Global Community* (4th ed.) London: SAGE
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