



University
of Exeter

International
Study Centre

Intercultural Communication: Your key to success at university and beyond.

Emma Sweeney

Sue O'Hara

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



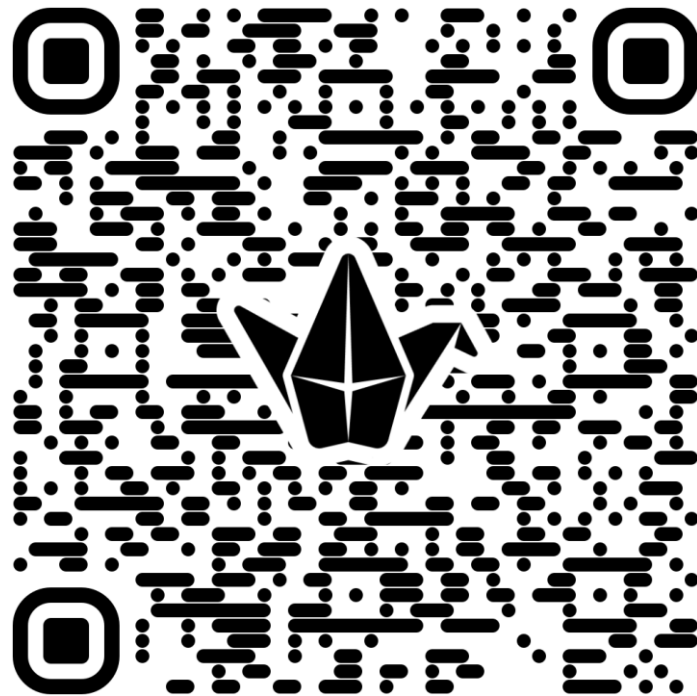
Today

- University of Exeter is a highly diverse community of staff and students.
- In this session, you will begin explore this diversity and learn how cultural competence and intercultural communication skills can help you to:
 1. Make the most of our experiences here.
 2. Build transferable skills for the future.



You and your culture

1. Scan the QR code with your camera.
2. Choose your home city/region/country on the map.
3. Tell us something you that you would really like us to know about your culture
 - (hint: something you are proud of, something people from other cultures ought to know, or just something you really want to say)





You and your culture

- If you have not done so yet, introduce yourself to others around you.
- Discuss any big differences you have noticed between the UK and your culture.
- If you do not feel that you have been here long enough to notice any differences, then feel free to talk about other experiences you have had in different countries.
- You have 7 minutes.



What is culture?

- Culture as a group of people.
- Culture as things people do, behaviours, artifacts and social systems.
- Culture as a system of meanings – values, norms and beliefs.
- Active culture – variable and always changing

*“We define culture ... as the way of life of **a group** of people, including symbols, values, behaviours, artifacts and other shared aspects, that continually evolves as people share messages ...” (Baldwin et al., 2014: 55)*

Sub-conscious culture



- The outward 'performance' of our culture is easy to see.
- The values and beliefs that drive them are often invisible to outsiders.
- Even as participants in the culture we may not be consciously aware of the elements 'below the surface'

A strange situation

- You are in a car that's moving at a constant speed.
- To your left is a steep downward slope. To your right, a large fire truck moves at the same speed as your car.
- Directly ahead of you is a helicopter flying less than two feet off the ground. You can't seem to get around it.
- Suddenly, you notice a rider on a large horse behind your car. She is keeping pace and seems alarmingly close.
- **What will you do to get out of this situation without hurting yourself or someone else? You have 5 minutes to discuss**

A strange situation – solution

- Step carefully off the carousel
- In this situation, you did not have all the information that you needed to understand it and solve the problem.
- When we interact with people from different cultures, we may also have missing information due to cultural differences.



How does our culture influence us

- We expect certain behaviour in certain situations.
- If the behaviour differs from our expectations and/or we place a different interpretation on that behaviour, this can lead to a breakdown of communication:
 - Messages get lost in translation due to differences in communication style and language.
 - Behaviour does not fit with what is appropriate





What does it mean to be polite?

Imagine you've received feedback on a formative assignment. Consider these different extracts of feedback – how do you feel about each one? Does it make a difference whether they came from a teacher or another student in your group?

- *Really good start, but you could have included a section on the causes of the crisis.*
- *Could you include a section on the causes of the crisis?*
- *It's a shame you didn't include a section on the causes of the crisis.*
- *You didn't read the brief, or you would have included a section on the causes of the crisis.*
- *If you had read the brief, you would have known to include a section on the causes of the crisis*

Let's reflect for a moment

- Think about the skills that you have used in these activities





Critical thinking and collaboration

- Critical thinking:
 - Used existing knowledge
 - Considered different perspectives
 - Analysed language
 - Compared/contrasted
 - Assessed implications
 - Made judgements
- Collaboration
 - Shared ideas
 - Listened
 - Negotiated
 - Compromised



Strategies for Problem-solving

- Activity 3:
 1. I'm going to pass around some envelopes.
 2. Read the problem/scenario on the envelope.
 3. Using one of the slips of paper, write down your response.
 4. Put it in the envelope and pass it on (don't share it with others yet!)



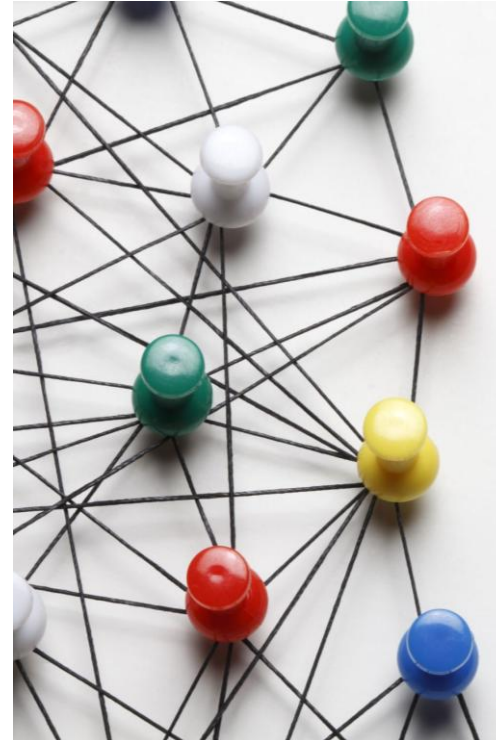


Scenarios

1. Your flat mate never cleans the kitchen after making themselves a meal. What do you do?
2. You are engaged in a group discussion, and one student is not contributing. What do you do?
3. You would like to clarify something with a module lecturer. When do you approach them and how do you address them?
4. You've just received your first assignment and you're not sure that you understand the question. What do you do?
5. You are working on a group assignment, and one member of the group is very dominant and won't listen to other ideas. You disagree with them – what do you do?

Summary

- Appreciate the diversity that is Exeter.
- Be open to alternative thinking, behaviour and practices – more empathetic and more flexible to respond.
- Have a greater repertoire of strategies for problem-solving.
- Have a wider range of communication strategies.
- Make friends, build connections, have more fun, get better marks





Other resources and opportunities

- [Academic Literacy and English](#) – an extensive range of courses, workshops, one-to-one learning (including intercultural communication workshops)
- [Intercultural café](#) - meet new people, have a coffee and a pastry, celebrate our different cultures and approaches (meets weekly on Friday mornings)
- Hear from other students via these online resources: [Intercultural Experiences](#)



University
of Exeter | International
Study Centre

exeterisc.com



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

