Module: INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

Responsible partners for this module:
Vytautas Magnus University (LT)
Kaunas National Drama Theatre (LT)
Oslo and Akershus University College (NO)
Turku University of Applied Sciences (FI)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Brief introduction of the competence

The module *Intercultural competence* has an intercultural perspective on knowledge, skills and competences needed to be a part of a multicultural society, to participate in working life and all levels of society.

**What is intercultural competence?**

Globalization shrinks the world, bringing a wider range of cultures into closer contact with one another more than in previous generations. Cultural diversity and intercultural contact have become facts of modern life, and require intercultural competences. To develop intercultural competences facilitates relationships and interactions among people from various origins and cultures as well as within heterogeneous groups, all of whom all must learn to live together in peace. Once the need for intercultural competence is accepted and felt as urgent, it becomes essential to develop a broad range of theoretical concepts and definitions, taking into consideration the existing plurality of languages, histories and identities. Mutual trust and exchange about similar and different experiences, values and overlapping lives, and creating a new space of interactions is important (Unesco (2013), *Intercultural Competences*)

Intercultural competence is culture-general and there are core competencies that individuals can develop that are not specific to any culture. Intercultural competence could be defined as a set of abilities, knowledge, attitudes and skills that allow one to appropriately and effectively manage relations with persons of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Portera, 2014).

A culture-aware mobilization, managed by individuals, involve knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, enabling them to cope with unfamiliar ever changing problems arising from encounters with people socialized in a different culture, in order to find new and shared solutions. Intercultural competence should be conceptualized based on cognitive, affective, and behavioral approaches.

*Culture* can be defined as “the sum of a way of life, including expected behavior, beliefs, values, language and living practices shared by members of a society. It consists of both
explicit and implicit rules through which experience is interpreted” (Herbig P., 1998). Geert Hofstede, the most famous researcher in the field, refers to culture as a “programming of the mind” (Hofstede G., 2011).

Research shows that intercultural competence cannot be acquired in a short space of time or in one module. It is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but a **lifelong process** which needs to be addressed explicitly in learning and teaching and staff development (Deardorff, D.K. 2006).

A certain number of recurrent principles can be identified that may guide international action in the field of intercultural education (Unesco (2013), *Intercultural Competences*):

**Principle 1:** Intercultural education respects the cultural identity of the learner through the provision of culturally appropriate and responsive quality education for all.

**Principle 2:** Intercultural education provides every learner with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to achieve active and full participation in society.

**Principle 3:** Intercultural education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations (Unesco (2013), *Intercultural Competences*).

### 1.2. The goal of the module

The goal is to provide knowledge and skills needed to communicate with people with different cultural backgrounds in multicultural environments.

### 1.3. Target groups

- Adult (native) university students
- Unemployed (native) adults
- Native adults with both educational and work experience
- Adult immigrants

### 1.4. Information about authors of the module:

1. Genutė Gedvilienė, Professor.dr.,
2. Contents of competences: skills and descriptions

The content in this module is related to three learning outcomes; knowledge, skills and general competences. These are integrated, but the focus will be on different ways of communication in multicultural environments, contexts and with different purposes. To use language, written and oral, in an intercultural perspective is important. To understand different cultures and diversity generate tolerance and acceptance. To understand different written and spoken texts is necessary in multicultural communication. If possible, the student should integrate the contents of the module with his/her own employer organization and working duties.

The module is a part of the Nordplus project “Innovative Approaches in Developing Key Competences for Adult Citizens”. Supervision will be given through the internet and/or Skype with direct contact between the teacher and the student. The completed module will give the students the following learning outcomes, defined as knowledge,
skills and general competences (according to EQF/ European Qualifications Framework):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.1.Title of skill</th>
<th>2.2. Short description of the contents and application of skill</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural self-awareness</td>
<td>Ability to:</td>
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<td>• articulate cultural self-awareness and how one’s own culture has shaped one’s identity and world view.</td>
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<td>• show respect to other cultures’ attributes and value cultural diversity.</td>
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<td>• think comparatively without prejudice about cultural differences.</td>
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<td>• use patience and perseverance to identify and minimize ethnocentrism and seek out cultural clues and meaning.</td>
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<td>Culture-specific competence</td>
<td>Ability to:</td>
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<td>• know and understand the political, social and democratic system, and the structure and organization of labour market and working life of the country.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• explain and analyze basic information about other cultures, political and social systems.</td>
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<td>• participate in and contribute to the multicultural society and democracy.</td>
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<td>• work and cooperate in multicultural teams respecting cultural values and differences.</td>
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<td>• cooperate with fellow workers, leaders and customers /clients from different cultural backgrounds.</td>
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<td>Sociolinguistic awareness and</td>
<td>Ability to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>competence</td>
<td>• articulate differences in verbal and non-verbal communication and adjust one’s own speech to accommodate persons from other cultures.</td>
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<td>• communicate verbally, in writing and orally, in a respectful and appropriate way with persons with a different cultural background.</td>
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<td>• understand and communicate differences of cultural behavior, attitudes and values.</td>
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<td>• be curious and seek intercultural interaction and view differences as a learning opportunity and be aware of one’s own ignorance.</td>
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<td>Global issues and trends</td>
<td>Ability to:</td>
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<td>• explain the meaning and implications of globalization and relate local issues to global forces.</td>
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<td>• view and interpret the world from other cultures’ point of view.</td>
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<td>• understand values and principles related to equality between genders, to equality and tolerance between different ethnic groups and to diversity.</td>
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<td>• attain a tolerant attitude towards diversity and ethnicity.</td>
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recognize similarities among people from different cultures rather than differences.

2.3 Methods of skills development

The following teaching/learning methods were selected:

- **Case study:** In any communicative situation - both formal and informal – it is crucial to have good communication skills. If a person has the necessary communication skills, it is a great advantage. If one does not have such skills, it has to be assessed what she/he is able to do now, and what abilities and skills are necessary to effective communicating, as well as what barriers hinder communication. Specific targets for obtaining the skills should be formulated. Acquired communication abilities are best revealed through the past experience case analysis.

- **Video lecture:** The theoretical materials of the module will be presented in video recorded lectures to students to be studied at a convenient time and place, according to their pace of learning, to effectively improve the desired competence.

- **Thematic discussions/assessing group discussions:** Thematic discussions will help to apply theory in practice, and at the same time develop efficient communication skills.

- **Reflection method** is intended to help the learners after each learning stage - the task – to reflect and self-assess the communication skills and changes in a greater depth. The reflection will consist of four cycles: experience, reconsideration, action, self-assessment. Constant reflection will make it possible to constantly monitor oneself and develop one’s communication competence.

- **Role play:** Find a problem or a challenge, create intercultural communication situations and play them, and afterwards, discuss and reflect on them based on critical incidents. A perspective can be to play contrary situations, the „right“ way and the „wrong“ way.

- **Presentation in different forms:** In written or oral form, power point or video, multimedia etc.

- **Three-Step Interview (Kagan)** - Each member of a team chooses another member to be a partner. During the first step, the partners interview each other by asking clarifying questions about intercultural competence. During the second step, they reverse the roles. At the final step, the partners share each other’s responses with the whole team.
The Flipped Classroom Method

1. The students are given a trigger to a topic that they should learn more about independently, outside classroom. The trigger can be a video, article, or something else raising the interest of the students.
2. Based on their own thoughts, experiences and the reference literature studied, and guided by specifying questions, they write an essay on the topic.
3. If needed, the students can prepare a mind map/summary about their essay.
4. In the classroom (in a small group of 4–5 students), they present their most important findings, compare them and discuss them, thus further elaborating the topic.
5. It’s also possible to produce a common summary/mind map of the results of the group and present it for the other groups.

The activities can of course be modified so that only parts of them are used, e.g. first watching a video or reading a short article together in a classroom situation, then having a general or group discussion. Also the order of the stages can differ, e.g. trigger–individual summary or mind map–small group discussion–group summary or mind map–individual essay. The learning outcomes can be presented e.g. in the form of an essay, mind map, summary, Powerpoint/Prezi presentation, video or drama.

3. Tasks for independent and/or group learning

3.1 Stereotypes

Watch some humorous videos about the typical stereotypes concerning e.g. the Finns/Norwegians/Danes/Lithuanians/Latvians or any other nationality!

“Life on Ice” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyJ_6epH2SY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyJ_6epH2SY)
“Top five Norwegian stereotypes” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS1kakPBI7O](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pS1kakPBI7O)
“Danish stereotypes” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fqalX4C5qU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6fqalX4C5qU)
“Funny Top 6 Myths about Lithuania” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T5ws3h8Eqw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T5ws3h8Eqw)
“Stereotypes about Latvian people” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TsuNTsGV6s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TsuNTsGV6s)

After watching them, write an essay (about 3-5 pages) discussing at least the following issues:

- What were the national stereotypes brought up in the videos? Do you think they are true?
• What are stereotypes? (Look for definitions in literature.) Where do they come from and why do they exist? Is it possible to get rid of negative stereotypes?
• Do you have stereotypes about other nationalities or minorities? What kind of? What are they based on (second-hand beliefs or own experiences)?
• If possible, give examples of situations in which national stereotypes can cause misunderstandings in working life.
• What can you do/ have you done to reduce your negative stereotypes?

Use some background literature and remember to mention your sources in the essay!
Share your findings with your small group in a group discussion!

3.2 Cultural shock
“25 Huge Culture Shocks That People Experience When Traveling”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQPKhNbcCd6g

First watch the video about culture shocks. Remember that this video only refers to shorter incidents when travelling, but a genuine cultural shock develops during a longer period of time when staying in a foreign country.

Then write an essay in which you discuss the following:

• Mention some typical reasons for and examples of a cultural shock (according to the video and others that you have heard of)!
• Have you or somebody you know ever experienced a cultural shock? Describe!
• Using some reference literature, find out more about what it means for an individual!
  What are the symptoms and stages of a cultural shock? How can one cope with it, what do you think? Also describe some coping strategies.

Share your findings with your small group in a group discussion!

3.3 Cultural classifications
Get acquainted with the cultural theories of Geert Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, Fons Trompenaars, Richard D. Lewis and Florence Kluckhohn! While studying them, make notes and make a summary or a mind map on what you learned! In your small group, it’s also possible to divide the task so that each of you studies one theory.
• Hofstede’s 4-D model: power distance, collectivism vs. individualism, femininity vs. masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. Later he added long-term vs. short-term orientation.

• Edward T. Hall: monochronic or polychronic, high or low context and past- or future-oriented cultures

• Trompenaars’ and Hampden-Turner's Seven Dimensions of Culture

• The Lewis Model: *linear-active, multi-active* and reactive behavior

• Florence Kluckhorn’s 5 Value Orientations

In the next intercultural classroom, be prepared to present and compare your findings and teach each other in your group. Prepare specifying questions, give examples and talk about your thoughts and experiences related to these theories. Finally, make a mind map based on the group discussion.

As an individual assignment, write an essay (3 – 5 pages) on what you learned about the topic. Discuss all the five researchers’ theories in your essay.

**3.4 Concept of time**

Study the cultural variation concerning the concept of time in more detail according to

• E.T. Hall: monochronic or polychronic and past- or future-oriented cultures

• Trompenaars: sequential vs. synchronous time

• Richard D. Lewis: The Lewis Model.

• Kluckhorn: attitude to time

• Hofstede: long-term vs. short-term orientation

Write an essay explaining their theories and give practical examples. Share your findings with your small group (either by sending or giving the essay to be read by the others or in a group discussion)!

**Video:** Cross-Cultural Competence is the basis for Successful International Business.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xANs-xE_sdE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xANs-xE_sdE)
3.5 Concept of space
First read about personal space/ distance of comfort in different cultures and watch the videos at “Notes on Intercultural Communication – Space in Different Cultures”
https://laofutze.wordpress.com/category/space-in-different-cultures/

Look for more information in other sources and summarize the most important points in an essay. Share your findings with your small group!

3.6 Non-verbal communication/Body language
According to Professor Albert Mehrabian, words account for 7%, tone of voice for 38%, and body language for 55% of communication.

What is meant by non-verbal communication/ body language? How does it differ from culture to culture? Do you have any own experiences of cultural misunderstandings caused by non-verbal communication? - Study the topic by reading “Hidden Aspects of Communication” http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_6.htm and watching the video “Gestures around the world” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fa_GCK-Czqs and summarize your findings in an essay, adding information and examples based on your own sources. Share your findings with your small group!

3.7 Critical incidents in intercultural communication
As a short introduction to the topic, watch the video “Ten ways to offend” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UTE0G9amZNk

Then look for five examples of critical incidents on the Internet. They can be in the form of a story or a video.

Make notes: What were the cultural clashes described and why did they occur? What could have been done to prevent or reduce the clashes?

In the following intercultural classroom, present your examples to your small group and compare your findings! Discuss also your own experiences or what you have heard about cultural clashes.

Some of the critical incidents can also be acted as a role play and presented for the other small groups, asking them to explain what kind of cultural clashes might lie behind.
4. Assessment of competences

Learning is a process, and teachers and students should assess the different tasks continuously. An individual written reflection report acts as a final exam, based on the three learning outcomes of the module. In the reflection report, the use of relevant theory should be discussed from the perspective of one’s own multicultural experiences and challenges. Thus the exam is a practice-related essay. Theory from a reading list must be used. Scope: 1000 words (+/- 10%). The reflection report will act as a learning diary showing how the student has developed during the module.

The essay is evaluated as passed/not passed. One examiner is used. An external examiner supervises the evaluation process in the program. Upon re-examination the student may submit a revised version of the assignment.

The reflection report can also consist of several shorter essays throughout the intercultural communication course.

Self-assessment

Each task is accompanied by a list of criteria for a self-assessment of the acquired competences together with a scale of assessment. Both the criteria and the scale should be defined by the developers of the module, referring to the contents of the task and the targeted skills.

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<th>Criteria of self-assessment</th>
<th>Scale of self-assessment</th>
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<td>Perfect</td>
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The criteria should refer to the quality of the performance of the task and its results. For example, if the communication competence is assessed, the criteria of assessment should
include both the results of the communication process (e.g. quality of transferred information) but also the quality of the process of communication itself (e.g. learner friendliness of communication, consideration of ethical norms in communication process).

5. Reading list

To be completed by the supervising teachers in the module.

6. References
