



# Becoming Interculturally Competent

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# Becoming Interculturally Competent

After reading the article ‘Embracing high-context x low context cultures’ in the warm-up activity of this Unit, you have probably found out that, according to the author, the three ingredients for success with a foreign culture are:

- A. To be aware of the culture’s nuances
- B. To appreciate its beauty and elegance
- C. To embrace it



# Becoming Interculturally Competent

In alignment with such answers, in his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), Bennett (M. Bennett, 1986, 1993; J. Bennett & M. Bennett, 2003, 2004), based on theories and on systematic observations, describes the process that someone undergoes while becoming interculturally competent.



# Becoming Interculturally Competent

With his model, the author defends that experience is constructed and that people can be more or less sensitive to cultural differences.

According to Bennett, in such process, people can move from an *ethnocentric position*, in which one sees his own culture as central to reality, to an *ethnorelativist position*, in which one acknowledges that his cultural affiliations are only one of the possible ways to interpret reality.



# Becoming Interculturally Competent

As part of the DMIS, Bennett also presents six different kinds of experience/stages that range from ethnocentrism (Denial, Defense and Minimization of cultural differences) to ethnorelativism (Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration of cultural differences).



# Becoming Interculturally Competent

| Ethnocentric stages  |  |  | Ethnorelative stages   |   |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| <u>Denial</u>  | <u>Defence</u>   | <u>Minimisation</u>  | <u>Acceptance</u>  | <u>Adaptation</u>   | <u>Integration</u>   |
| Cultural differences are not experimented or are ignored. People in this stage are indifferent to differences, even when they are evident. | When one believes that his/her own culture is the most developed one and is the only way viable. People at this stage feel threatened by differences and think of “us” and “the other” | When one tends to universalise one’s worldview. They believe that everyone wants to be like them and tend to minimize differences with sayings like “we are all sons of God” | When one accepts that his/her own worldview is only one of the options available. One accepts that beliefs are relative. One is not a cultural expert but can accept that there are differences between cultures | People at this stage “grow bigger” and include pieces of other cultures to their own repertoire. It does not mean leaving one’s own culture behind, but instead going beyond it | At this stage, one recognizes oneself as a multicultural being. People at this stage are constantly changing according to contexts and can work as intercultural bridges |



# Emotional Intelligence

Another element which is essential in the process of becoming Interculturally Competent is Emotional Intelligence.

According to Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence can be defined in terms of four dimensions:



# Emotional Intelligence

1. At first place, it is to understand one's own emotions. This is what he calls self-awareness
2. Secondly, Emotional Intelligence involves being able to manage one's own emotions (self-management)
3. Thirdly, someone who is Emotionally Intelligent understands other's emotions (empathy)
4. Finally, emotional intelligence implies managing the interaction with the other (and the impact that one has on other's emotions) (skilled relationship)





# Emotional Intelligence

As you might imagine, all of the four dimensions of Emotional Intelligence are important for Intercultural Communication and especially empathy, since intercultural encounters demand one to be able to delocate from one's own point of view and to see the world from others' perspectives.



# Empathy

To have empathy is to...

- Listen
- Pay attention
- Be sensitive to the other's perspective
- To help based on the perception of other's needs and feelings



# Empathy

See the videos below in order to see Daniel Goleman defining Emotional Intelligence and Empathy:

[Emotional Intelligence](#)

[Empathy](#)

