

Intercultural Competence

Worksheet: Intercultural Scenarios and Skills

Title of Lesson: Building Intercultural Competence through Real-Life Scenarios

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand and distinguish between cognitive, affective, and pragmatic/communicational intercultural skills.
2. Apply intercultural skills to analyze and respond to intercultural misunderstandings and challenges in an international class.
3. Reflect on your own intercultural competence in academic contexts.

Intercultural Competence:

International students are more likely to succeed in their studies when they feel included and connected to university life and the wider society. Feeling integrated helps them handle academic challenges and reduces the risk of dropping out. For internationalisation to work well, universities need to promote active intercultural exchange and improve everyday intercultural competence (cf. Knobloch & Lemke, 2010, p. 9).

It follows from the above that enhancing intercultural competence among international students is of utmost importance. According to Thomas Alexander, intercultural competence means being able to understand, respect, and work with cultural differences—both in yourself and others. It involves adapting to others, accepting and tolerate differences as well as finding ways to cooperate, work, and live together effectively in a diverse academic environment (cf. Thomas, p. 143).

Intercultural Competence Skills:

Intercultural competence brings together a range of personal abilities and traits that help individuals interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. It is especially important in academic settings, where diverse perspectives and communication styles often come together. In this context, three key skill areas stand out: **cognitive skills**, which involve understanding other cultures and reflecting on one's own; **affective skills**, which include openness, empathy, and tolerance for ambiguity; and **pragmatic and communicational skills**, which relate to using appropriate language, adapting communication styles, and resolving conflicts constructively (cf. Erll & Gymnich, 2023, p. 11). These skills

support meaningful collaboration, mutual respect, and a more inclusive learning environment in intercultural scenarios.

Task Instructions:

Have your students work in three small groups and rotate through **three scenario stations**. At each station:

1. Read the **scenarios** carefully and discuss them as a group.
2. Answer the three **questions** below based on the type of skill the station represents.
3. Write your answers in the **worksheet table** provided.

Scenarios:

- a. A student misinterprets classroom silence as lack of interest.
- b. A group project fails due to differing attitudes about deadlines and student roles.
- c. A student feels excluded because of communication barriers.

Questions:

- a. What's happening culturally? (**Cognitive**).
- b. What emotions might be involved? (**Affective**).
- c. How could it be resolved? (**Pragmatic/Communicational**).

Scenario	Intercultural Skills		
	Cognitive	Affective	Pragmatic/Communicational
a			
b			
c			

References

- Erl, A., & Gymnich, M. (2023). *Interkulturelle Kompetenzen: Erfolgreich kommunizieren zwischen den Kulturen* (8. Auflage). *Uni-Wissen Kernkompetenzen*. Klett Lerntraining.
- Knobloch, S., & Lemke, A. (2010). Geleitwort des DAAD: Integration durch Interaktion. In G. G. Hiller & S. Vogler-Lipp (Eds.), *SpringerLink Bücher. Schlüsselqualifikation Interkulturelle Kompetenz an Hochschulen: Grundlagen, Konzepte, Methoden* (pp. 9–10). VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Thomas, A. Interkulturelle Kompetenz – Grundlagen, Probleme und Konzepte. In *Forum für Erziehungskultur der Universität Paderborn* (pp. 137–221).