

**TILTM 2022**

**Topical Issues of Linguistics and Teaching Methods in Business and Professional Communication**

**NEW PARADIGMS IN INTERCULTURAL TRAINING. ONE  
PLANET, ONE SPECIES, DIVERSE EXPRESSION**

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**Abstract**

A planetary pandemic, a climate change crisis, a globalised economy and instant communication worldwide through International Communications Technologies (ICTs) leading to multicultural communities and workforces. We are all bound together; one species on one planet with diverse expression. Intercultural studies are about that diverse expression but new trends in migration and the multinational communities and organisations suggests we should revise the breakdown of our international environment into national communities. This paper summarises six points that lecturers and intercultural trainers could consider in their training and suggests a new paradigm. The author highlights the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by Milton Bennett. A new constructive paradigm singles out key points to note in a multicultural environment: Humility (one culture is not better than another), Tolerance, Respect, Awareness of difference and of what brings us together and Empathy, mutual understanding. The article suggests carrying out cultural due diligence which is about examining the variety cultural characteristics of people in an organisation operating in a new environment and helping them adapt.

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Don't focus on difference. Focus on perception and harmonisation**

We all have our personal filters and see things differently but in teaching our students our job is to help them perceive their own and others' filters and find ways to seek harmony by building trust through adaptation.

## **2. Problem Statement**

### **2.1. Think people not cultures**

The concept of 'essentialism' has been posited for years. As our societies are increasingly multicultural it is not possible to categorise every member of a country as sharing its dominant culture. We need to recognise members of society as individuals and avoid one size fits all essentialism (Lewis, 2019; Malyuga & Tomalin, 2017; Swallow & Tomalin, 2022; Tomalin & Nicks, 2014; Vouillemin, 2020).

## **3. Research Questions**

### **3.1. Think concepts not countries**

The concepts developed by leading interculturalists such as E.T.Hall, Geert Hofstede, Fons Trompenaars, Richard Lewis and Erin Mayer are extremely valuable in understanding diversity of expression, especially in working in the corporate world, but the identification of countries' populations as representing these concepts is no longer correct, if it ever was. Allocating a cultural characteristic, e.g. high power distance, to a whole country may be a useful shorthand generalisation but is not appropriate for all the communities in a particular environment. Apply the concepts to people where appropriate but avoid stereotyping all the inhabitants of a country as subject to the same beliefs or ways of behaving.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

### **4.1. Do your cultural due diligence**

Due diligence is an accounting term used to examine the financial viability of a joint venture or merger and acquisition between companies. Cultural due diligence is about examining the variety cultural characteristics of people in an organisation operating in a new environment and helping them adapt. The acronym, ECOLE is a useful formula for cultural due diligence. ECOLE stands for Expectations of the relationship (values and attitudes), Communication, Organisation, Leadership and Etiquette. Teach your students to use this in their studies and they will gain the knowledge and skills they need to adapt successfully in a new environment.

## 5. Research Methods

### 5.1. Develop your multicultural skills

In 2009 the European Union published its INCA (Intercultural Assessment) framework developed by Professor Michael Byram. It identified six multicultural skills students should develop and review progress regularly (Byram, 2009). In my own words the six skills are:

- Avoid othering. Be inclusive
- Exercise patience. If you don't know what's going on, ask.
- Be flexible. Your local colleagues may have the answer to a problem.
- Empathise. Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Interest. Show interest in your colleagues/clients lives and interests.
- Local language. Knowing a few words/phrases in your colleague's language builds trust and confidence.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Critical incidents

Of course, things go wrong. Note them down and reflect on them. A great formula for doing this is to use the MBI Process published by Maznevski and Di Stefano in 2000. MBI stands for Map, Bridge, Integrate and it focuses on five questions to ask yourself when a problem arises.

**Map:** Observe. What they do? What do I normally do in a similar situation? What's the difference?

**Bridge:** Empathise. Why are they doing it? What do they think of me?

**Integrate:** Adapt and reflect. What can I change? What have I learned?

This is an extremely useful tool and one that I use all the time.

## 7. Conclusion

### 7.1. A new paradigm in intercultural training

In 1962 Thomas Kuhn (1962) published his ground-breaking book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He defined a paradigm as an epistemological world view that assigns and limits the accessibility of theories, concepts, models and methods of enquiry. Describing a paradigm shift in his SIETAR Germany (Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research) online webinar, the author of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) Milton Bennett presented a new constructive paradigm applying to culture (Bennett, 2013, Bennett, 2020). The five key points to note in a multicultural environment are Humility (one culture is not better than another), Tolerance, Respect, Awareness of difference and of what brings us together and Empathy, mutual understanding. These must be our aims in intercultural training to face the international challenges facing our lives on this planet.

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