

Communication Across Cultures

COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

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- [‘Studying abroad: culture shock’](#) by Into Study
- [‘Experiencing culture shock while studying abroad in Rome, Italy.’](#) by AIFS Abroad
- [‘Seminar: stages of cultural shock.’](#) by Kuo Phoebe
- [‘Culture shock and the cultural adaptation cycle’](#) by The Global Society
- [‘Culture shock.’](#) by Explaino Mania
- [‘Reverse Culture Shock.’](#) by Gilman Scholarship Program
- [‘What is Ethnocentrism?’](#) by Intercultural English
- [‘Cultural Relativism vs Ethnocentrism’](#) by Philo-notes
- [‘Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism.’](#) by Fun Simple Life

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FIRST PEOPLES

The University of Southern Queensland acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waterways where the University is located. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.

We celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Nations Australians and acknowledge the important contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have and continue to make in Australian society.

The University respects and acknowledges our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, Elders and visitors who come from many nations.



ACCESSIBILITY INFORMATION

We believe that education should be available to everyone, which means supporting the creation of free, open, and accessible educational resources. We are actively committed to increasing the accessibility and usability of the open texts and resources we produce.

Accessibility Features of the Web Version of this Resource

The web version of this resource has been designed with accessibility in mind and incorporates the following features:

- Designed to consider the needs of people who use screen reading technology.
 - All content can be navigated using a keyboard.
 - Links, headings, and tables are formatted to work with screen readers.
 - Images have alt tags.
- Information is not conveyed by colour alone.

Other File Formats Available

In addition to the web version, this book is available in several file formats, including PDF, EPUB (for ereaders), and various editable files. Choose from the selection of available file types from the ‘Download this book’ dropdown menu. This option appears below the book cover image on the [eBook’s landing page](#).

Third-Party Content

In some cases, our open texts include third-party content. In these cases, it may not be possible to ensure the accessibility of this content. This text uses H5P activities which may not always be accessible. For more information on the accessibility of H5P, consult [H5P’s content accessibility table](#).

Accessibility Assessment

Below is a short accessibility assessment of key areas that have been assessed during the production process

of this open text. The checklist has been drawn from the [BCcampus Open Education Accessibility Toolkit](#). While a checklist such as this is just one part of a holistic approach to accessibility, it is one way to begin our work on embedding good accessibility practices in the books we support.

We hope that by being transparent on our current books, we can begin the process of making sure accessibility is top of mind for all authors, adopters, students and contributors of all kinds on all our open-text projects. As such, we welcome any feedback from students, instructors or others who encounter the book and identify an issue that needs resolving.

Accessibility Checklist

Category	Item	Status
Organising Content	Content is organised under headings and subheadings	Yes
Organising Content	Headings and subheadings are used sequentially (e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.)	Yes
Images	Images that convey information include Alternative Text (alt-text) descriptions of the image's content or function	Yes
Images	Graphs, charts, and maps also include contextual or supporting details in the text surrounding the image	N/A
Images	Images, diagrams, or charts do not rely only on colour to convey important information	N/A
Images	Purely decorative images contain empty alternative text descriptions. (Descriptive text is unnecessary if the image doesn't convey contextual content information)	Yes
Tables	Tables include column headers and row headers where appropriate	N/A
Tables	Tables include a title or caption	N/A
Tables	Tables do not have merged or split cells	N/A
Tables	Tables have adequate cell padding	N/A
Weblinks	The web link is meaningful in context, and does not use generic text such as "click here" or "read more"	Yes
Weblinks	External web links open in a new tab. Internal web links do not open in a new tab.	Yes
Weblinks	If a link will open or download a file (like a PDF or Excel file), a textual reference is included in the link information (e.g. '[PDF]')	Yes
Embedded Multimedia	A transcript has been made available for a multimedia resource that includes audio narration or instruction	N/A
Embedded Multimedia	Captions of all speech content and relevant non-speech content are included in the multimedia resource that includes audio synchronised with a video presentation	There are some third-party embedded videos without closed captions.
Embedded Multimedia	Audio descriptions of contextual visuals (graphs, charts, etc.) are included in the multimedia resource	No
Formulas	Formulas have been created using MathML	N/A
Formulas	Formulas are images with alternative text descriptions if MathML is not an option	N/A
Font Size	Font size is 12 points or higher for body text	Yes
Font Size	Font size is 9 points for footnotes or endnotes	N/A
Font Size	Font size can be zoomed to 200%	Yes

Accessibility Improvements

While we strive to ensure this resource is as accessible and usable as possible, we might not always get it right. We are always looking for ways to make our resources more accessible. If you have problems accessing this resource, please contact the [UniSQ Open Educational Practices team](#) to let us know so we can fix the issue.

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Nikki is a collaborator in creating activities using H5P content. Her expertise significantly enhanced the visual and interactive elements of our material. In addition, she designed the book cover.

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Why are these materials needed?

We belong to a global community, where encounters between members of different cultures are increasingly common in social, commercial and academic contexts. Such encounters provide opportunities for cultural enrichment and mutual understanding but are also potential sources of misunderstanding and confusion. There is ample evidence that contact with other cultures in itself, such as when living or studying abroad, does not necessarily lead to mutual understanding and positive attitudes towards those cultures. Therefore, these materials aim to help students develop knowledge, awareness, skills, and strategies which will facilitate effective study in a context that may present cultural challenges.

Who they are intended for?

These materials are a resource to prepare culturally and linguistically diverse students for academic study in situations involving intercultural communication. They will typically be used by teachers and students involved in English for Academic Purposes courses.

What form do the materials take?

Unlike most open books which adopt a format similar or identical to a printed book, this activity-based booklet integrates text with open-access resources in a variety of media, including audio and video, as well as online interactive and collaborative activities.

How can they be used?

The materials can be used by language teachers and students in the classroom, online or in a blended learning approach, to create a learner-centred environment in which learners can co-create content to meet their individual needs. The intention is to facilitate a discovery-based, experiential approach to developing linguistic skills and intercultural communication competence.

For students:

When completing tasks in the book, consider storing your work on your computer by exporting the documents. This will allow you to reuse and reference your work for future tasks. Follow the steps below to export your documents:

1. Complete the task as instructed in the book.
 2. Once finished, export the document or download the sound file you create.
 3. Save the exported document or the sound file, which is located in the “download” folder.
 4. Rename it.
 5. (optional) If you prefer, you can move it to a new folder that you create on your computer for easy access
-

The learning objectives

The intended learning outcomes of the modules are that the students will:

1. Identify a variety of ways in which culture can be defined.
2. Develop their own definition of the concept of culture.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how cultural ideas and behaviours are acquired.
4. Explore the idea of culture shock and ways of managing it.
5. Identify characteristics of the four stages of culture shock.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the four stages of culture shock.
7. Approach cultural ideas and behaviours from the outside as observers, but also attempt to understand them from the inside, from the point of view of members of that culture.
8. Be aware of the dangers of ethnocentrism and try to develop open-minded attitudes towards other cultures.
9. Understand the importance of accepting and even welcoming cultural diversity in a global community
10. Demonstrate a willingness to learn and practice critical thinking skills that will develop the competencies required to live in a global community.

The modules

The modules in this booklet are:

- [Module 1: What is culture for you?](#)
- [Module 2: What is culture shock for you?](#)
- [Module 3: Intercultural challenges : Recognising and dealing with differences](#)

USING HYPOTHESIS.IS

As you go through the activities in this book, you are welcome to use [Hypothes.is](https://hypothes.is) – a web social annotation tool.

Please view the videos below to get started or this [quick guide for students](#).

Using Hypothes.is in your study – Part One Creating an account [2:03 mins]



One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: <https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=369#oembed-1>

Using Hypothes.is in your study – Part Two Annotating the web [8:10 mins]



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SELF-ASSESSMENT: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Before you start to use this book, you will find it useful to complete the following [self-assessment questionnaire](#) consisting of ten statements describing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviour when interacting with people from diverse cultures.

Use a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to answer each statement and mark your response. When you have finished working through the book, you can complete the questionnaire again to see whether any of your opinions have changed.

MODULE 1: WHAT IS CULTURE FOR YOU?



Aims

- Identify a variety of ways in which culture can be defined.
- Develop your own definition of the concept of culture.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how cultural ideas and behaviours are acquired.

TASK 1: WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

<https://visitedplaces.com/view/?map=world&projection=geoEquirectangular&theme=dark-green&water=1&graticule=1&names=1&duration=2000&placeduration=50&slider=0&autoplay=0&autozoom=none&autostep=0&home=AU>

Where do you feel at home? Create your own map of the countries you've visited and the place you call home by following these steps:

** You can return to this page to check the instructions above if you forget them by clicking on the tab.

1. Go to the website [VisitedPlaces](#)
2. On the right-hand side, under '**Quick Templates**' select '**Globe with Continent Focus.**'
3. Under the column '**Visited**' select the countries you have visited.
4. Under the column setting, click the drop-down '**My home is**' and select the place you call home.
5. Under the column '**Share, download and embed,**' within the '**Download**' section, click on the icon for PNG or JPEG.
6. For the following task "Reflection" below, write your answer in the box.
7. **Click** on the next slide to export your answer.
8. **Insert** the image you downloaded in the document after a document has been exported .



Reflection




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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=201#h5p-20>

TASK 2: A CONCEPT OF CULTURE

What do you think “culture” means? Look at the following words. Do you think of any of these words when you think of “culture”?

Select one or two words from the following words, and read about them carefully. While you **read** and **watch videos** on each page, **make notes** in your notebook for the following activity, “ **Reflection**”.

- Language
- Knowledge and stories
- Traditions and rituals
- Tools and objects
- The arts
- Food and drink
- Values



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Reflection



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online here:

<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=205#h5p-16>

TASK 3: DEFINING THE WORD 'CULTURE'

Now, you may have an understanding of culture. Find a definition of the word “culture”. Then **copy and paste the definition with a reference** showing where you found it. You can start using online dictionaries such as the [Cambridge Dictionary](#), [Oxford Dictionary](#) or [Collins Dictionary](#). You may use this definition later in your learning journal, [Task 7](#).



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TASK 4: WHAT IS CULTURE?

‘Culture’ can have a variety of meanings for different people.

Watch one of the two videos below. Is either of them similar to the definitions and descriptions you found in Tasks 2 and 3? Are either of the definitions and descriptions new to you?



Watch and Record



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=211#h5p-21>



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=211#h5p-50>



Optional: Read, Watch and Record

Read aloud all the extracts below. What words or phrases did you find which provide a definition of culture? Record an explanation of one of the extracts in your own words.

- People have grouped together into communities in order to survive. Living together well and smoothly, people developed forms of cooperation which created rules, customs, manners, common habits, behaviours, and ways of life. All of these are called **culture**.
- Examples of **culture in everyday life** include clothes, food, holidays, music, knowledge and beliefs, traditions and innovations, family life, and much more. These examples of everyday culture with established cultural norms affect the lives of each social group, each of us.
- **Culture** is defined as an accumulated pattern of values, beliefs, and behaviours, shared by an identifiable group of people with a common history and verbal and nonverbal symbol system.
- **Culture** is shared and learned behaviour that is transmitted from one generation to another generation to promote individual and social survival, adaptation, and growth and development.
- **Culture** has both external (e.g., artefacts, roles, institutions), and internal representations (e.g., values, attitudes, beliefs).



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=211#h5p-5>

TASK 5: THE NATURE OF CULTURE

Select the descriptions that best match your idea of culture. **List three reasons** for your choice at the end of the descriptions.

1. Culture is learned (the most essential characteristic of culture)

- Learning our culture usually takes place through interaction, observation, and imitation.
- Learning cultural perceptions, rules and behaviours go on without our being aware of it.
- The essential messages of culture get reinforced and repeated.
- Because culture influences us since we are born, we are rarely aware of many of the messages that culture sends.
- We learn our culture from a large variety of sources: family, church, school, friends, society, mass media, and country teach our culture to us.

2. Culture is transmitted from generation to generation

- Culture is transmitted through a variety of symbols such as language, words, letters, paintings, gestures, etc
- Communication and culture are linked: communication makes culture a continuous process – cultural habits, principles, values, and attitudes are formulated, and they are communicated to each member of the culture

3. Culture is subject to change

- All Cultures are inherently predisposed to change and, at the same time, to resist change.
- Cultural change can have many causes, including the environment, technological inventions, and contact with other cultures. Cultures are externally affected via contact between societies, which may produce or inhibit social shifts and changes in cultural practices.
- There are dynamic processes operating that encourage the acceptance of new ideas and things, while there are others that encourage changeless stability.



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online here:

<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=214#h5p-47>

According to Nanda and Warms¹:

“All human beings belong to the same species and have the same biological features....the big differences among human groups are the result of culture, not biological inheritance or race.”



Optional: Watch



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=214#h5p-62>

1. Nanda, S., & Warms, R. L., (2011). Cultural Anthropology (10th ed.). Belmont: CA: Wadsworth, p14.

TASK 6: "WHAT IS CULTURE?" AND "THE NATURE OF CULTURE"

1. Carry out **research** into ideas about culture by choosing two of the links below as well as any other sources you find by yourself.
2. **Make short notes** of the most important points in your notebook.
3. Using your notes, **write a summary** of what you have learned from the content.
4. **Record** yourself reading this summary out loud. (Note: If you use your own sources, please provide a reference or references.)

- [What is culture?](#)
- [Culture observation](#)
- [The elements of culture](#)
- [Major characteristics of culture that are essential for life](#)
- [Characteristics of culture](#)



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TASK 7: LEARNING JOURNAL

A learning journal is a way for you to reflect on what you have learned so as to transform it into deep learning. It can help you acquire, understand, interpret, and apply knowledge.



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In the next module, we will be looking at culture shock and the ways of managing it.

MODULE 2: CULTURE SHOCK



Aims

- Explore the idea of culture shock and ways of managing it.
- Identify characteristics of the four stages of culture shock.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the four stages of culture shock and strategies that can be used to manage them.
- Approach cultural ideas and behaviours from the outside as observers, but also attempt to understand them from the inside, from the point of view of members of that culture.

TASK 1: CULTURE SHOCK QUESTIONNAIRE

Complete this [questionnaire](#).



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TASK 2: DEFINE 'CULTURE SHOCK'

- In your opinion, what does “culture shock” mean?



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=228#h5p-19>



Optional: Read and Record

Choose one definition that you would like to remember and **record** it while reading aloud once more.

Definition of culture shock

- According to anthropologist Oberg “Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.”
- The reactions associated with culture shock vary from individual to individual
- For the person who is constantly encountering other cultures, the anxiety period might be mild and brief
- For many people culture shock can be characterized by depression, serious physical reactions (such as headaches or body pains), anger, or aggression towards the new culture



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=228#h5p-64>

TASK 3: WHAT IS CULTURE SHOCK?

Watch the two videos below. Whose story is the most interesting? And why? While watching them, make notes in your notebook. Using your notes, **summarise** his/her/their story in 100 words and **explain** why you think that is the most interesting.



Watch

The following videos introduce the various stages of culture shock.

Experiencing culture shock usually involves going through four different stages. Although every individual's experience of these stages is different, and the order and impact of each stage can differ greatly, they provide guidelines for how we can adapt and cope with new cultures.

Video 1: Studying Abroad: Culture Shock [4:00 mins]



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Video 2: Experiencing Culture Shock while Studying Abroad in Rome, Italy [1:04 mins]



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Reflect and Record

Have you ever been in a situation so different from what you were used to that it surprised you? What was your biggest culture shock? How did you feel? Share your story in **a short audio recording** (1 or 2 minutes long). You can provide both overseas and/or local experiences.



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=232#h5p-25>

TASK 4: FOUR-STAGE CULTURE SHOCK

Watch the two videos below, explaining the four stages of culture shock.



Watch

Video 1: Four Stages of Culture Shock [3:43 mins]



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Video 2: Culture Shock and the Cultural Adaptation Cycle [4:41 mins]



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TASK 5: CULTURE SHOCK QUIZ



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Optional: Watch Videos



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TASK 6: WHICH OF THE FOUR STAGES OF CULTURE SHOCK ARE YOU IN?



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=241#h5p-29>

TASK 7: STRATEGIES FOR CULTURE SHOCK

1. Read this [article](#), particularly the section with strategies for overcoming culture shock.
2. Which strategies would work for you? **Write** about your experience with the strategies you have read about.
3. Do you have any other strategies? Using the strategies you have just read about, **write** one sentence as an instruction to use this strategy, using the imperative

Note: Read about [language point Imperatives](#) to help with this task.



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TASK 8: LEARNING JOURNAL



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=246#h5p-30>

MODULE 3: INTERCULTURAL CHALLENGES – RECOGNISING AND DEALING WITH DIFFERENCE



Aims

- Be aware of the dangers of ethnocentrism and try to develop open-minded attitudes towards other cultures.
- Understand the importance of accepting and even welcoming cultural diversity in a global community
- Demonstrate a willingness to learn and practice critical thinking skills that will develop the competencies required to live in a global community.

TASK 1: WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED?



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=253#h5p-31>

TASK 2: DEFINITION– ETHNOCENTRISM

To better understand the concept of ethnocentrism, **watch** the video. **Take notes** on the meaning of the word ethnocentrism and examples of ethnocentric behaviours while watching it.



Watch



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=256#h5p-32>



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=256#h5p-72>



Optional: Read, Watch and Record

The concepts of ethnocentrism vs cultural relativism

Take notes while watching to ensure you understand the definitions of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. Here are the basic definitions:

Ethnocentrism: The belief that one's own culture is superior to others and judging other cultures based on the standards of one's own.

Cultural Relativism: The perspective that all cultures are equally valid and should be understood and judged within the context of their own values and beliefs, without imposing the standards of one's own culture.



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TASK 3: PREDICTION

A video titled “What Would You Do: customers discriminate against Latino/Hispanic waiter?”. From the title, what do you think will happen in the video?

- **Work alone:** Write down the words and/or phrases you expect to hear. You can use a dictionary.
- **Work with a small group:** Share your predicted story (around 100 words) in a small group discussion or [using Hypothe.sis](#).



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TASK 4: WHAT IS HAPPENING?



Watch

This is a hidden camera show and a made up situation.

Listen carefully to what the couple says and observe some reactions from people at other tables in the restaurant.

1. Watch the [video](#) until 0:39 with the sound muted in order to get a general idea of what is happening from the clues the gestures provide.
2. Then minimise the screen and listen to it with the sound only, without watching it.
3. Write down five words from the video you remember or unknown words and phrases you heard. Find their meaning and provide a definition of each word.
4. Watch it with the sound. Work in pairs. Using your notes and keywords, describe what happened from 0:00 to 0:39 of the video. Work with your partner to come up with a single description.
5. Then, compare the description you have agreed on with that produced by another pair.
6. Watch the video with captions turned on. Review your notes (i.e., correct wrong words or phrases) and complete your notes about the story by adding any important information you missed.

Reflection and Discussion

- What might be the main issue in this video?
- How did you feel after watching it?
- If you were a waiter, how would you feel?
- Do you understand this situation and the customers' views?
- If you agree with the customers' views, explain why.
- If you disagree with the customers' views, explain why not.



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TASK 5: MAKE YOUR OWN STORY WITH SOLUTIONS

Please record your own response showing how to manage this situation in the [video](#), using the questions in the Reflection/Discussion section in Task 4.

Reflection and Discussion

- What might be the main issue in this video?
- How did you feel after watching it?
- If you were a waiter, how would you feel?
- Do you understand this situation and the customers' views?
- If you agree with the customers' views, explain why.
- If you disagree with the customers' views, explain why not.



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TASK 6: CULTURAL CONFLICT (OPTIONAL)

Choose at least one of the readings below or do some research and find your own information about conflict (situations) or how to resolve cultural conflict.

- [Cultural Conflict](#)
- [Conflict](#)
- [How to Resolve Cultural Conflict: Overcoming Cultural Barriers at the Negotiation Table](#)
- [The Best Way to Resolve or Handle Cultural Conflicts is by Learning About Other Cultures](#)
- [What are Some Culture Clashes in the Workplace?](#)



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TASK 7: LEARNING JOURNAL



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<https://usq.pressbooks.pub/interculturalcommunication/?p=271#h5p-38>

COMPREHENSION CHECK AND SELF-ASSESSMENT: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

Now you have finished the modules. You will find it useful to:

- complete a [comprehension check](#) to assess your understanding and skills acquired from the modules in the book. It consists of 7 statements describing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours when interacting with people from diverse cultures. Use a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to answer each statement and mark your response.
- complete the following [\[End\] Self-assessment questionnaire](#) consisting of ten statements describing your thoughts, feelings, and behaviour when interacting with people from diverse cultures. Use a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) to answer each statement and mark your response. Once you have submitted your answers you will be able to compare them with the answers you gave at the start of the book to see whether any of your answers have changed.