

# World Citizenship

**Developing intercultural competence in international and multicultural Dutch classrooms**



The effectivity of the PREFLEX@Home Programme:  
a pilot study at The Hague University of Applied Sciences

*Jantien Belt*

*Anita Ham*

*Femke Kaulingfreks*

*Baukje Prins*

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**THE HAGUE**  
UNIVERSITY OF  
APPLIED SCIENCES



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# INTRODUCTION

In an ever globalizing society, the labour market has gone global as well. Ritzen & Marconi (2011) acknowledged the necessity of internationalizing the workforce, emphasizing the potential and increasing innovation and the capacity for creativity in today's knowledge-based economy. Also, new waves of migration will continue to result in a multicultural and multi-ethnic composition of almost any setting of students' social and working life. This leads universities to the challenge of internationalizing education so that students can successfully enter into this international labour market. As follows, their internationalization efforts are to be directed towards producing graduates who possess international competences and will *i.a.* behave and communicate appropriately and effectively in an international and multicultural environment.

Accordingly, the *The Hague University of Applied Sciences* (THUAS) has initiated its development plan with the explicit aim to educate students to be professionals who practice their profession within an international and multicultural perspective, and who are world citizens with a strong interest in global issues and the ability to work constructively with diversity (HogeschoolOntwikkelingsPlan HOP 7, 2009- 2013, HOP 8, 2014-2017). To achieve this, students are to be provided with the opportunity to develop their international and particularly intercultural competences, (*cf.* Hoven & Walenkamp, 2013). This can be done by, for example, internationalizing course curricula, stating the goals and desired learning outcomes, and using such means as promoting faculty mobility and cross-border university cooperation, attracting foreign and culturally diverse students, creating international and multicultural classrooms, and encouraging students to study and do an internship abroad (*cf.* Funk et al., 2014).

Within this context, THUAS has expressed its ambition to prepare all students for an international future and for that purpose initiated an Internationalization Policy, which provides the framework for the internationalization strategies of individual faculties and programs. This general policy plan is to be incorporated in the multi-annual plans of all faculties and programs.

The acquisition of intercultural competences can be achieved in various ways: mobility of staff and students, courses taught in other languages and with non-national course material, and participation in an international or intercultural classroom.

The research group International Cooperation aims to generate the knowledge and innovation that will help the academics of THUAS in their efforts to effectively internationalize their courses. Potential areas of research are, for example, competence requirements for international teaching and learning, employability requirements for the international business environment and effective ways of facilitating the development of international competence.

The present study was conducted in cooperation with the research group Citizenship and Diversity, which aims to contribute to the livability of ‘super diverse’ urban settings in such a way that all citizens, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality, have the opportunity to individual self-fulfillment, while simultaneously being able and willing to actively engage in forms of social interaction and cooperation. Its research programme focuses on the everyday world of metropolitan and ‘super diverse’ (semi-) public places like the street, the school, the workplace, the shop or the pub. By using ethnographic research methods of participatory observation, formal and informal interviews, and focus group meetings, the research group aims at acquiring in-depth insights into the dynamics of everyday encounters between individuals from different ethnic, national and religious backgrounds (*cf.* Prins, 2013).

## **The study**

The pilot study presented in this report focuses on the effective facilitation of students’ intercultural competence development in international and multicultural classrooms. It specifically aims to explore the added value of prior student preparation and subsequent guidance, as previous research has shown that intercultural competence development does not simply happen (Deardorff, 2011; Teekens, 2000; Root & Ngampornchai, 2013). A choice was made to focus on intercultural competences, and to leave other international competences, such as languages and professional and academic competences, out of the equation (*cf.* Hoven & Walenkamp, 2013).

Currently, THUAS does not only have a sizeable proportion of foreign students (over 2000), but also boasts a significant amount of Dutch students with an immigrant background from a variety of cultures. With its increasing mixture of culturally diverse students, most classrooms at THUAS have a built-in international or intercultural perspective.

The potential benefits of such mixed classrooms are many, such as increased revenue and the opportunity for intercultural learning and sharing cross-cultural knowledge. Until now, however, research has found little evidence that cultural diversity on campus in itself contributes toward the development of intercultural or international perspectives in home-campus students (Brewer & Leask, 2012). In Harrison & Peacock's (2007) research of international interactions, for instance, domestic UK students reported limited interactions in seminars and had a tendency to regard difference as a barrier to interaction. Similarly, Teekens (2000) reported that interaction between culturally diverse students "has not been occurring as anticipated" (p. 30). An international classroom, by itself, hardly leads to the development of intercultural competences (*cf.* Deardorff, 2009).

Similar findings were noted in studies on the learning effects of studying abroad. Simply studying in another country does not automatically lead to intercultural learning and knowledge transfer. After all, as Brewer & Leask (2012) reported, most learning occurs outside the classroom and so appears largely associated with personal, social and intercultural development. In a four-year research of the intercultural and second language learning in the study abroad of US undergraduates, Vande Berg and Paige (2009) argued that studying abroad indeed led to increased intercultural competence. They, however, also found that mere cross-cultural exposure seems not to advance intercultural learning. Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton & Hubbard's (2008) study showed that studying abroad positively impacts on students' intercultural development, but raised questions regarding its long-term effects as many students held on to ethnocentric orientations. In addition, both studies revealed the need for interventions, emphasizing the importance of providing cultural mentoring during study abroad (Vande Berg and Paige, 2009) and of post-study abroad interventions for developing and retaining intercultural competence (Rexeisen et al., 2008).

Therefore, in order to reap the benefits of the international and intercultural classroom, a preparatory training and subsequent guidance aimed at goal-oriented and goal-conscious acquisition of intercultural competences is widely considered to be a necessary condition (Brewer & Leask, 2012).

From the above it becomes clear that internationalization both at home and abroad does not automatically lead to the improvement of students' intercultural competence. Much research has indeed recognized the necessity of an intentional and integrated approach to stimulate intercultural learning, regardless of experiences at home or abroad. Such an approach combines the setting of learning goals and assessing their outcomes, with faculty development as well as student preparation, guidance and follow-up (see, for example, Brewer & Leask, 2012; Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Deardorff & Van Gaalen, 2012). With the present research we particularly focus on student preparation, aiming to establish the effectiveness of prior intercultural training of international and culturally diverse students in developing intercultural competence.

For the purpose of prior intercultural training of the student participants, the Research Group International Cooperation developed a training module, PREFLEX (Preparation for Foreign Learning Experience) (Hernández & Walenkamp, 2013), with a Student Guide and a Teacher's Manual aimed at the goal-conscious and target-oriented acquisition of international and particularly intercultural competences. The module has been tested on Dutch students going abroad for study or work placements, and, in an adapted version, on students in an international classroom. The aim of this programme is to help students from both intercultural and international classes to gain self- and multicultural awareness and to acquire and develop their intercultural competence.

## **Definition of intercultural competence**

For our definition we link up with a panel of internationally known and renowned scholars in the field, who conceive *intercultural competence* as 'the ability to communicate effectively and behave appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes' (Deardorff 2006: 247-248). Effectiveness here refers to 'the achievement of valued objectives', while appropriateness refers to 'the avoidance of violating

valued rules' (Deardorff 2006: 255-256). To specify this further, by *culture* we refer to a meaningful and complex whole of customs, rituals, discourses, practices, values, norms, and artefacts shared by a particular group, where individual members are able to both enact and disrupt, to represent and deviate from, their 'own' culture. With this definition, we adhere to a semiotic and processual account that perceives cultures as 'webs of significance' (Geertz, 1973) functioning as 'a precondition and a context as well as a product of human choices, a source of constraint which is also a medium of creativity' (Parekh 2000: 153). The term *intercultural situation* refers to each occurrence in which two or more individual members of different cultures, in particular from different national and/or ethnic groups, interact with one another.

## Central research question

The present study aims to investigate if – and if so, how – the intercultural training programme 'Preparation for Foreign Learning Experience' (PREFLEX) (Appendix 9) has a positive effect on the development of the intercultural competence of students at THUAS in international groups (*i.e.* school for International Business and Management Studies, IBMS) and students in intercultural groups (*i.e.* school for Commercial Economy, CE). In addition, the study aims to advance the design of the programme further.

Accordingly, the study addresses the following central research question:

*In what way do the intercultural classroom and the international classroom contribute to the development of intercultural competences in first-year students at THUAS, and to what extent does preparation and guidance, by means of the PREFLEX training module, effectively enhance this development?*



# 1. RESEARCH METHOD

## 1.1 Data collection

The measurement or assessment of the degree in which students possess and have acquired intercultural competences is not an easy undertaking. Online surveys with large questionnaires, such as the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire or the Intercultural Readiness Check, do not render satisfactory results. Less hard, but more telling data may be acquired by a mixture of other, more qualitative approaches. Deardorff found that it is best to use multiple assessment methods of qualitative nature (2006: 258), a finding in line with the idea that an analysis of culture, and cross-cultural interaction, cannot proceed like an ‘an experimental science in search of law but [like] an interpretive one in search of meaning’ (Geertz, 1973). In this project we therefore used a combination of methods, *i.e.* observations of classroom interaction, semi-structured interviews with a random sample of students from each class, portfolio’s, self-reflection reports and 360 degrees feedback.

The study started at the beginning of the academic year 2013-2014, and involved first year students in their first semester at THUAS: two multicultural classes (Commercial Economy/International Management), composed of Dutch students from various ethnic/cultural backgrounds, and two multinational classes (International Business and Management Studies) with a mixture of Dutch and foreign students. At the beginning of the first semester, one of the CE classes (1C) and one of the IBMS classes (1A) received the PREFLEX training (see Appendix 9 for Student Guide), the other ones (CE 1D and IBMS 1B) did not. At the start of the second semester, CE 1D and IBMS 1B received the PREFLEX training as well. In principle, each group could develop intercultural competences, but the hypothesis was that during the course of the first semester the two classes (the test groups) who received the PREFLEX training would do so to a larger degree than the control groups.

All students received some intercultural training provided by their own academy during their introduction week. And at the end of the first semester, all students participated for a full week in the Intercultural Communication

Project which was part of their regular teaching programme and where students from CE and IBMS worked in mixed groups. The decision was taken not to have a ‘zero’ measurement of intercultural competences at the beginning of the academic year, not only because this would frame the minds of the students but also because, due to parts of the regular curriculum, they could not be assumed to be entirely ignorant concerning the topic of intercultural competences.

## 1.2 Observations

During the observations of classroom behaviour, which we conducted throughout the academic year, we focused in particular on group dynamics, *i.e.* the amount and character of inter-ethnic and international interactions on the one hand, and on ‘monocultural’ interactions, *i.e.* interactions between members of the same national or ethnic group on the other hand. Regarding the test groups, we also used observations to assess students’ response to the PREFLEX training. From each class we made a random selection of 10 students whose behaviour was to be observed in more detail. To guarantee that our observations would have a somewhat similar focus, a guideline was developed, which was to be used more as a checklist rather than a strict protocol during the elaboration of the field note reports afterward (appendix 1).

During the first semester, the two groups that were taught the PREFLEX training by their own lecturers (Brigitta Schultze, IBMS 1A, and Liv Kaur, CE 1C)<sup>1</sup>, were to be observed during the four training sessions and during subsequent classes of these lecturers. The two other classes were also to be observed during lessons of two other lecturers of CE 1D (Isabel de Rooy) and of IBMS 1B (Andreea Gheorghiu). In practice, the observations were hampered in various ways: not all lessons that should have been observed were actually observed; the observers changed during the semester; and in many lessons interactions between students were so minimal that little could be said about students’ behaviour.

For that reason, we adopted a slightly different approach during the second semester. Again, we wanted to observe the four PREFLEX training sessions

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1 Names of classes have been changed, the names of all respondents are pseudonyms.

(Andreea Gheorghiu, IBMS 1B, and Liv Kaur, CE 1D), but for the other observations, we decided to observe one lesson or group work session per week for each class, and thus be able to select sessions where we might expect sufficient interaction going on. Unfortunately, this plan appeared in some cases even more difficult to pursue. Not all teachers who were asked for permission to be present in their class, wished to cooperate, often the work schedules of researchers and classes could not be combined, and sometimes classes that we planned to observe were unexpectedly moved to another room or time, or even cancelled.

In the course of the first semester, IBMS class 1A (the test group) was observed 4 times – of which 3 observations were conducted during the PREFLEX training. IBMS class 1B (the control group) was observed 5 times, during lessons of Developing Study Skills. CE class 1C (test group) was observed 7 times – including 4 PREFLEX sessions (but one ending prematurely due to a fire alarm exercise). CE class 1D was observed 8 times, during lessons in International Marketing. During the second semester, students of IBMS 1A were observed 9 times, mostly during group work sessions, while IBMS 1B was observed 5 times, four of which were observations of the PREFLEX training. Students of CE 1C were observed in five lessons given by various teachers, while in CE 1D all four PREFLEX sessions were observed.

### **1.3 Interviews**

Of the initial group of twenty randomly selected sample students in the IBMS and CE test classes, eight dropped out in the first semester (four from CE 1C, four from IBMS 1E). In November and December 2013, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the remaining thirteen (seven from CE 1C, six from IBMS 1A) students about their own experiences with and views of communicating with people from different cultural background, as well as on what they learned from the PREFLEX training (for topic list, see appendix 2). The main goal of these interviews was to enforce the effect of the PREFLEX training, *i.e.* to further heighten students' awareness of the importance of intercultural competences by inviting them to reflect once more on their own developments. But because the interviews appeared to be a rich source of information for our research, we decided to use the transcripts of these

interviews as data too. Most interviews were recorded with a digital device and fully transcribed. We planned to invite these same students for a second interview after the termination of the first semester at the end of January, this time primarily as a means to assess the development of intercultural competences and the effect of the PREFLEX training and guidance on that development. For reasons of comparison, in this period we also wanted to conduct interviews with the sample students from the control classes CE 1D and IBMS 1B. It appeared quite difficult to engage students for these interviews: apart from the fact that some students in the meantime had dropped out, the students of the test groups (especially the CE class) showed reluctance to give yet another interview, while due to organizational complications it was difficult to get in touch with the students of the control groups.

In February and March 2014, we conducted ten interviews: no students from CE 1C, three from IBMS 1A, five students from CE 1D and two students from IBMS 1B.

At the end of the year, we wished to interview the remaining sample students of all four classes. By that time, the drop-out rate had risen further. Combined with the reluctance of some students to participate, in May and June 2014 this resulted in interviews with three students of CE 1C, two from CE 1D, three from IBMS 1A and one from IBMS 1B. Unfortunately this number of (nine) interviews was insufficient to be able to assess the intercultural development of the group in a reliable way. Nevertheless, some of these interviews proved to be extremely informative, especially concerning the intricacies of the relationship between native Dutch and Chinese students in the IBMS classes.

## 1.4 Self-reflection reports

Thirdly, the students of the test groups were requested to hand in a portfolio (including a critical self-reflection) at the end the first semester, end of January 2014. The students of the control groups were requested to hand in a critical self-reflection report (Appendix 3).<sup>2</sup> This too was not clear to

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2 The test group students wrote their critical self-reflection by means of an essay according to the rules of the Action Research Model (Experience, Describe, Interpret, Apply, Reflect, Plan). The control group students worked according to the STARR-method (Situation, Task, Action, Result, Reflection).

all concerned, and particularly in the control groups the response was very limited. In consultation with the teachers, the decision was made to ask the students of these two classes to hand in the feedback forms and self-reflection reports at the beginning of the second semester. It could then be presented as a natural 'kick-off' for their own PREFLEX training, as early on in the project it was decided to repeat the exercise in the second semester: the former control groups (CE 1D and IBMS 1B) would now receive the PREFLEX training, while we would keep following students of the other two classes to assess to longer term effects of the PREFLEX training on the development of their intercultural competences.

The students handed in:

- CE-test group: twenty-one portfolios;
- CE-control group: twenty-three critical self-reflection reports;
- IBMS-test group: nineteen portfolios;
- IBMS-control group: eleven critical self-reflection reports.

In May 2014 the students CE-test group (second semester) were requested to hand in a portfolio (including a critical self-reflection). They handed in twenty-five portfolios. The students of the IBMS-test group (second semester) haven't been requested to hand in a portfolio, due to ignorance of the teacher who replaced the original teacher because of illness. The students of the control groups (second semester) were requested by e-mail to hand in a critical self-reflection report (Appendix 3), but nobody responded. A following reminder e-mail didn't have any effect either.

## **1.5 360-degrees feedback**

Finally, at the end of December, students of all four classes were asked to distribute and collect 360-degrees feedback forms to six to eight persons in their inner circle such as teachers, relatives, friends and acquaintances (Appendix 4). Due to very confusing circumstances just before the Christmas break and insufficient communication with the four lecturers, the circulation and reception of the 360 degrees feedback did not occur without flaw.

Nevertheless, students of the test groups delivered 145 360-degree feedback forms: 114 from CE 1C and thirty-one from IBMS 1A. Students of the control groups delivered 187 forms: 141 from CE 1D and forty-six from IBMS 1B.

In May 2014, the students of all four classes were asked again to distribute and collect 360-degree feedback forms. The CE-test group students were requested by their teacher (Liv Kaur) to do this; the students of the other classes got the request by e-mail from the researchers. The first group delivered 156 forms; the second group didn't respond to the e-mail, neither to the following reminder e-mail.

## 1.6 Data analysis

The field note reports and transcriptions of the interviews were analyzed by using a list of codes based on the Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff 2009: 254), distinguishing between intercultural attitudes, skills and knowledge, and desired internal and external outcome (behaviour). In the process, the code list was refined. More in particular, for the analysis of the field note reports, codes were added to assess students' attitude during and toward the PREFLEX training, and to capture processes of cross- and intra-cultural group dynamics (Appendix 5). For the analysis of the interviews, the code list was extended to account for utterances focusing on similarities rather than differences between people from different cultures, to give room for students' experiences and views of group dynamics in their class, their plans and expectations regarding their future work placement abroad, and their evaluation of the PREFLEX training (Appendix 6).

The portfolios and self-reflection reports were analysed by two researchers, apart from each other. They scored the content of the documents at a ten-point scale on seven dimensions: academic, attitude, knowledge, skills, behaviour, self-reflection and languages. Afterwards, the results of the two researchers were compared to each other, after which the final results were determined. The students received per dimension one score for the portfolio and the self-reflection report together. The original idea was to report the results of both the portfolios and the critical self-reflection reports in this report, but unfortunately just a few students handed them in.

The students in this study who handed in their 360 degrees feedback forms were each rated on four different competences by six-eight people from their inner circle such as teachers, relatives, friends and acquaintances (Appendix 4).

The competences are:

1. Personal/social competences
2. Intercultural competences
3. Academic and professional competences
4. Languages.

All four competences were been measured on different levels and/or dimensions. The area 'personal/social competences' consists of eight different dimensions, which are not further classified into different levels. 'Intercultural competences' were measured on four levels: 'attitude' (divided into four dimensions), 'knowledge' (divided into two dimensions), 'skills' (divided into four dimensions) and 'critical cultural awareness' (divided into two dimensions). 'Academic/professional competences' were measured on two levels: 'academic competences' (divided into three dimensions) and 'professional competences' (divided into eight dimensions). Finally, the competence 'languages' was measured using only one dimension. The dimensions were assessed using a five-point scale, where 1 stood for a 'strong decrease' and 5 for 'strong increase'.

The scores at the several competences (personal/social competences, intercultural competences, academic and professional competences and languages) have been fed into Excel by hand. Averages have been calculated with regard to all variables, split up to the four research groups. Significances between the scores of the test group and the control group of respectively CE and IBMS have been calculated by means of the data processing programme SPSS (appendix 8).

The reliability of the scores of the anonymous forms can be doubted. For example, it occurred several times that all variables of one form got the same score. It also happened regularly that a variable got the score 'strong decrease' or 'slight decrease', while in fact this is impossible (for instance with 'knowledge of other cultures' or 'specific disciplinary knowledge).



## 2. RESULTS IBMS CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS – CLASS 1A

### 2.1 Composition of the class

At the beginning of the academic year, class 1A (PREFELX training in first semester) counted thirty-three students: fourteen female and nineteen male. Seven students were native Dutch, the other eight Dutch student had an immigrant background: Nardo (Angolan), Mathieu (Filippino), Walid (Moroccan), Gyorgy (Hungarian), Rishwen, Layla (Curaçao), Cindy (Chinese) and Gerald (Chinese), others were foreign students from the US (Alex), Korea (Yung), China (Allison, Lee, Jack), Germany (Carl), Italy (Sofia), Bulgaria (Violeta), Japan (Akira), Russia (Igor), India (Asha). In the first semester, observations were conducted in three PREFLEX training sessions, and in one regular class (*i.e.* a lecture on Management, Becoming World Class) all taught by Brigitta Schultze, and six interviews were held, with Violeta (Bulgaria), Charlotte (native Dutch), Walid (Moroccan-Dutch), Sofia (Italy), Jack (China) and Allison (China). During the second semester, Jack and Sofia dropped out, and it proved impossible to make an appointment with Walid; as a result, only three students, Violeta, Charlotte and Allison, were interviewed for a second time. During the second semester, nine observations were conducted, most of them during project lessons and group work sessions. At the end of the semester, three final interviews were conducted: with Walid (second interview), Violeta and Charlotte (third interview).

### 2.2 Intercultural competence

#### 2.2.1 Attitude

Especially Sofia, Charlotte and Violeta emphasized that they chose to study IBMS because they wanted to improve their English, learn more about other cultures, and work in an international environment. Violeta from Bulgaria was most outspoken in her appreciation and curiosity of cultural differences:

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*I feel comfortable with the international people and I want the international people to feel comfortable with me as well. I want to know how to communicate with all kinds of people, without defending them, but actually understanding them, no matter their nationality, or their religion [...] I love my country, but I feel myself like a citizen of the world.*

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Moroccan-Dutch Walid's attitude was not so much focused on appreciating differences as on the importance of respecting the other. Although he was inclined to accept the existence of negative stereotypes about Moroccan- and Turkish-Dutch as facts of nature:

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*'I think that is quite normal, things like: all Moroccans steal or all Turks are lazy, that's not bad'*

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Looking back through the lenses of PREFLEX, however, he realized that some of his own experiences as a member of a minority group had been painful:

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*'when I was eleven years old, I was searched by the police. I was just playing football. That cop was surprised that I only had Pokemon cards in my pocket. From his face I could see him thinking: what am I doing now? Back then I did not see it as prejudiced, but I started thinking after these lessons, and now I do think it was prejudice. There were Dutch boys, Turkish and Surinamese, but I was the only one who was searched'*

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But respect also implies that you try and adapt to other people's culture:

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*'as Muslims, we don't shake hands with a woman. But if you don't know that, then I will give you a hand anyway, just as I did right now, out of respect. When I can later explain this to you, like with my general practitioner [huisarts], then she understood and accepted. She now does not shake hands with me anymore. One does that out of respect.'*

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To Walid, respect is also required by Islam:

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*My father says: if they don't know, just do it [i.e. shake hands] out of respect [...] He also just does it, we live in the Netherlands after all.'*

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Later in the academic year Walid indicated that his attitude had positively changed over the year. Because he cooperated so much with students from other cultures, he became more open-minded to other cultures. He learned to value others as a person, without immediately looking at someone's cultural background. He also learned to be more open-minded to people with a different opinion on societal issues, for example on the legalization of soft drugs.

During her first interview, in November 2013, native Dutch Charlotte assured that she had no difficulty with other ways of thinking:

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*It's fine with me when for instance someone is a Muslim. Even though I am not religious myself, I think it's really interesting to learn about other religions.*

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However, there was a limit to her open and non-judgmental attitude when it came to Dutch immigrants. Thus, during the PREFLEX training at the beginning of the year, Charlotte expressed quite a strong opinion on Turkish-Dutch people, opening with a familiar trope: *'I have nothing against Turks, but you cannot give your opinion, they cannot stand it that you have a different opinion.'* She illustrated her claim with an experience with a Turkish-Dutch colleague who had felt *'immediately insulted and outraged'* about something she had said. She concluded that *'they have different values than we, I don't hang around with them anymore.'*

During the first interview, Charlotte also indicated that she learned that her preconceived (positive) ideas about the Chinese had been mistaken:

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*'I really was prejudiced, like these Chinese people are good at everything.'*

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Based on her recent experiences with international students from China, she now finds that Chinese students are not good in English, very shy, don't take initiative, constantly seek each other's company, and avoid contact with other students. After having summed this up, she concluded: 'they are good at only one thing and that's math.'

Charlotte had an explanation though for their behaviour. Chinese students had told her that in China students always have to stand up and look down when a teacher enters the room or when they address the teacher. Still, she could hardly conceal her feelings of irritation and powerlessness when faced with their 'deviant' behaviour:

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*It's just really difficult to respond to that. I would not know how I could change that.*

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When she had to work together with two Chinese students during the second half of the academic year Charlotte's irritation increased even more, as will be discussed in the section on Group dynamics.

Charlotte herself felt during the first semester she had become more open-minded towards people of another culture, and learned not to expect complete assimilation from them. She had learned and now understood better that it is difficult to manage in a strange country, and she felt that she now was able to show more respect towards people with another cultural background.

### **2.2.2 Skills**

When doing PREFLEX assignments in small groups, the majority of IBMS students showed the ability to actively listen to each other, sometimes asking further questions. Cultural differences were explored and addressed in a reasonably open and non-judgmental manner.

From the outset, however, as was already pointed out in the previous section, the communication between Chinese and native Dutch students was less fluent. When during the PREFLEX training at the beginning of the year, for instance, two Chinese students and native Dutch Rogier had to do an

assignment together they were done talking very soon. After that, each of them resumed his/her former seating position and sat and stared aimlessly, while around them, although also finished with the assignment, students kept on chattering.

In their first interview, Chinese Jack and Allison (the latter had two years of university training in English and Spanish) both confirmed that their English was very poor. They understood less than 50% of what the teacher said, but in most cases they did not raise their hand when they did not understand. Allison chose to go to the teachers afterward to ask questions. They both worked extremely hard, Jack studied more than 10 hours a day.

During the group work in the second half of the academic year, students made little effort to communicate with each other in English. Many sat together in separate sub-groups with peers who spoke their own language. Some students appeared to be a bit isolated from the others, like Russian Edgar, who was usually observed sitting alone, closing himself off from the rest of the class with his earphones in. The teacher supervising the group work indicated that he did not know how to motivate the students to cooperate and mix more.

### 2.2.3 Knowledge

In the IBMS 1A class there was quite some exchange of knowledge about differences in culture of the kind: ‘this is how it works with us, how is that with you?’ This obviously happened in the context of PREFLEX assignments. Thus Charlotte learned that ‘thumbs up’ is a positive signal in Dutch culture, but a very negative one in Afghanistan:

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*‘It makes you think, that something that in your own culture is entirely normal [heel gewoon] to another culture is completely different. When I told my father about it, he said: if our soldiers in Afghanistan had done that, they would probably have been shot!’*

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But exchange of knowledge about different customs and habits also took place spontaneously, as Violeta explained:

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*We do talk about: oh, do you do that in Bulgaria? We talk about it like 'Oh really? Do you do that?' We also have differences when it comes to religion. One girl has an Indian religion, but we never discuss it as a problem. We talk about how we eat, you know, everything.*

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We found no cases of exchange of knowledge about political, social or economic differences between countries.

### **2.2.4 Group dynamics**

According to Italian Sofia, everybody in class 1A mingled with everybody. She herself was friends with two native Dutch girls, an English guy (her neighbor, they often walked to school together) and Mathieu, a Dutch Filipino guy, because they could get along with each other well, on a personal level. Like Charlotte, Sofia noted that the Chinese girls were very shy. But, she added, once you speak with them, they change. Then they show who they really are.

Dutch-Moroccan Walid mingled with everyone, but especially with Gerald, 'a Chinese guy [...] he was born here, but his parents are Chinese'. But to Walid, there was a huge difference between his friend Gerald and international classmates who 'are really from China'. He could become friends with them too ('I see no threshold'), were it not for their poor English: 'If you don't speak the language, it is really difficult to communicate.' Walid was part of a project group with Lena (nationality unknown), Bulgarian Violeta and American Kevin. Despite the fact that Lena and Kevin were often not present during classes, Walid had experienced the cooperation as very positive and learned to appreciate a shared work ethos with his group partners, even if they had different cultural backgrounds.

During a lecture (*hoorcollege*) in December, native Dutch Charlotte was in constant conversation with Nardo, a Dutch-Angolan guy who grew up in the Netherlands and in the first PREFLEX class had made it clear that he perceived himself as entirely Dutch. Charlotte and he were laughing together, from time to time making joking remarks to one another. During this same class, the Chinese students mostly made contact among one another, or sometimes just sat next to one another silently. Only once was this pattern

disrupted, when one of the Chinese boys asked something to his native Dutch neighbour who wrote his answer on a piece of paper. When he showed it, they smiled at each other. Then both of them turned to listen to the teacher again.

In an interview held in November, Chinese Jack indicated that he very much liked the atmosphere in class and was especially fond of Mrs Schultze: “She likes Chinese people”. He thought this was the case because she often referred to the great accomplishments of the Chinese. He also remembered a class assignment on Tata and how Mrs. Schultze made compliments about that company before the group. Jack’s own role in class was very quiet, he acknowledged, partly due to his limited command of English. He got along with almost all fellow students, but said to be particularly close to Gyorgy (Hungarian-Dutch), Huub (native Dutch), Mathieu (Filipino-Dutch), Allison and Lee (both Chinese). He however disliked (native Dutch) Eline, because of a very painful experience. She had once rejected his contribution to group work, because she considered it ‘without value’. In the interview, Jack was almost in tears when he talked about it, and he confirmed that the incident had made him very sad. He thought Eline probably thought the group would get a better grade without his contribution. There was an email exchange between him and Eline, which he showed to one of the researchers who concluded it read ‘like two deaf people talking to each other’.

In an interview also held at the beginning of the year, Allison also said that she liked her class and her classmates. But she had met with a similar problem as Jack. When working on a group assignment, a native Dutch class mate had berated her publicly in an e-mail about her use of internet sources to the whole group and to the teacher (Mrs. Schultze). Allison felt very much offended, but did not speak up about it. In the interview she named as her friends in class: Jack, Gyorgy, Sofia, Mathieu, Nardo and Asha. She also realized that she was shy and quiet in class.

During the second half of the academic year, when students were working in project groups, considerable difficulties arose in the cooperation between Chinese and (native) Dutch students. This showed especially in one group consisting of Chinese Allison and Jack, native Dutch Daphne and Charlotte and Angolian-Dutch Nardo. In our observations, we noted that the Chinese students

were very quiet and often worked together without communicating with the other group members, while especially Daphne and Charlotte visibly got more and more frustrated about what they perceived as the passivity of the Chinese students, and their lack of English language proficiency. When the typically Dutch style of cooperation by deliberation and consensus had failed, they tried to get the Chinese students to cooperate by giving them strict commands. When that, in their perception, had not worked either, they no longer made an effort to interact with them at all. This led to some painful scenes of bullying and exclusion, as shown in the field notes made during one of the project sessions:

**11.30** *Allison and Jack enter the classroom. They find a place next to each other near the window and sit down behind a computer. Next to them are (Dutch-Moroccan) Walid, (Bulgarian) Violeta and Asha (from India). Native Dutch Charlotte is sitting opposite of Violeta, behind a computer as well. Then there is a hard knock on the door, Nardo enters, who gets a seat next to Charlotte.*

**10.35** *Teacher Michel starts with an introduction.*

**10.44** *Students slide with chairs, join those with whom they are in a subgroup. Jack and Allison walk to Charlotte and Nardo, and then remain standing a little bit behind them. Teacher Michel joins the group. He sits on the table and bends toward Nardo and Charlotte.*

**10.55** *Daphne enters. 'Hello', she says softly and sighs deeply. No one responds and she sits next to Charlotte. Jack and Allison are still standing next to each other near the table. They are listening to Nardo. It is about the research project they are working on together. Allison nods a couple of times, both she and Jack are still in their winter coats. Charlotte and Daphne rise and ask teacher Michel to come with them for a moment. Now they are talking with the three of them outside the classroom, in the corridor.*

*Meanwhile, Nardo is addressing Jack: 'If you can't attend and if you can't do anything, you need to let us know. And you are always together, but we don't always know where you are and what you are doing! And what you have done is not correct!' Nardo talks aloud, he sounds irritated: 'We have sent you an email', and now Nardo looks at Allison. Allison whispers something I can't hear. Nardo now calls loudly across the room: 'What?! Did you not get this email!?' Allison shakes 'no', her head down. She is still*

*standing next to the chair on which Nardo is sitting. There are two empty chairs near Nardo, but both Allison and Jack remain standing. Jack pulls his lip and stares, his head down. Allison now gets seated on the table, at the same spot where Michel first sat. 'I think', Nardo says, turning to Allison, 'that it is better that you are not working together. Maybe you can work with the girls, and you', and now he looks at Jack, 'you are going to work with me.' It sounds more like an order than a request. Jack and Allison don't respond. Nardo now proceeds by talking about the content of the task. I hear talk about interviews and observations. Allison nods several times: yes, yes. She does not say anything.*

**11.06** *Charlotte and Daphne return to the classroom, together with teacher Michel. The girls speak in Dutch and seat themselves next to Nardo, behind a computer. 'So, guys', Nardo calls loudly, and he turns again to Jack and Allison: 'Do you know now what you have to do??', with the emphasis on 'now'. Allison sits down on a chair, her hand under her chin, her head resting in the palm of her hand. Jack is standing with his arms crossed and watches how Nardo switches on his laptop. Allison and Jack have their computer on the other side of the table. Charlotte picks up her mobile phone and types something on the phone. Nardo asks something from Jack, Jack bends over across Nardo and types something on Nardo's laptop, Allison says something to him, it is too soft for the observer to hear what she's saying. Nardo shows something on his laptop, and Jack and Allison return together to the place where they initially were seated, next to each other.*

*Nardo, Charlotte and Daphne are sitting next to each other. Nardo bends towards the girls, whispering in Dutch: 'Yes, so I told them, you just don't work together anymore'. Charlotte nods, and in a soft voice Nardo then gives an extensive report to the girls of what he discussed with the Chinese students. Charlotte and Daphne nod and smile at him. Nardo then gets his school bag and from it he retrieves a big bag of biscuits and shares these with Charlotte and Daphne.*

*Jack walks to Nardo and asks him something. Nardo answers the question. Jack is not offered a cookie, and he returns to Allison. He speaks softly to her, then gets up and leaves the room. Shortly afterwards, Allison*

*follows him. Charlotte asks Nardo what Jack proposed to do for the project. Neither of them looks up when Jack and Allison leave the room. They get themselves another biscuit.*

*Nardo gets up and goes to teacher Michel, who is standing some two meters away from Allison. Allison notices Nardo and walks in his direction. 'No!' Nardo again calls loudly, 'we do not change the content and these are our objectives!' He points at his laptop: 'Do you understand?' Allison sits down again.*

*Nardo walks back and forth behind the teacher, seeking his attention, but Michel is busy with another student. Daphne and Charlotte smile at Nardo. In the end he manages to ask his question and then joins Charlotte and Daphne again.*

**11.35** *Charlotte, Daphne and Nardo are now laughing together really loudly, it's unclear what it is about, but they get the giggles. Charlotte has tears in her eyes, Nardo holds his hand before his mouth, and Daphne is bent double from laughter.*

**11.48** *Michel has the attendance list circulated. The group of Daphne, Nardo and Charlotte is again very noisy, they are laughing out loud, it's about the cookies. The bag is empty now, Daphne again is bent double from laughter. They can't stop laughing. At the end of the lesson the three of them walk out together.*

*Allison and Jack talk Chinese amongst each other, then Jack walks toward teacher Michel, but Michel is still immersed in a conversation with another group of students. Jack sits down on a table, waiting for the teacher.*

**12.10** *Students from the next class are starting to come in. The remaining students of class 1A pack their things, Jack included.*

In a conversation afterwards, teacher Michel indicated that he did not know how to improve the cooperation in intercultural groups. He thought that a conversation about complications within the groups should be led by the mentor of the class. This was confirmed by his behaviour during the feedback sessions, where he mostly asked students questions about the content of the assignments, but did not inquire how the process of cooperation was developing. Michel thought it would be good if intercultural communication would be addressed in the curriculum, but he did not perceive this as his task,

nor did he know whether this topic was addressed in other classes. He felt it was not his responsibility to discuss experiences with discrimination in the class. During her second interview, held in February, Charlotte said that she felt the Chinese students did not understand what needed to be done. She had first tried to give them specific orders what to do, but when that did not work she eventually decided to ignore them completely. Her friend Daphne expressed a similar attitude towards the Chinese students. She blamed them for not taking initiative to inform the rest of the group about their work and whereabouts. During the last few weeks of their group work, the Chinese students were no longer present in class, and Charlotte, Daphne and Nardo said they did not care about their absence.

Daphne: *We have not seen the Chinese for three weeks. They are probably in China. We are completely fed up with it, they no longer take part in our group. It is ridiculous, they just left without informing us. They could have told us they stopped.*

Charlotte agreed with her: *Indeed, they can fuck off, I have had it completely with them. And it really makes no difference if they are here or not, because they do not do shit anyway.*

Daphne: *Yes, they do not make any contribution anyway.*

Near the end of the academic year, in a third interview, Charlotte concluded that Dutch students were more serious about their studies than international students, who appeared to be in it more for the fun than for serious study. To her, this was the main reason why many international students dropped out. Looking back, she felt that she should have been even more strict and directive towards the Chinese in order to solve the problems with the group work. She indicated that she would like to learn more on how to take the lead, and be open-minded, in cooperation within a group. Simultaneously, she felt very bad about the fact, reported to the class by their mentor (Mrs. Schultze) that the Chinese students had told her that they had felt discriminated against by their Dutch fellow students.

A second interview held with Allison in March confirmed how she and the other Chinese students (*i.e.* Lee, who had dropped out at the end of the first semester, and Jack) had gradually felt more excluded. In January,

she had missed several weeks in school because she went back to China to be treated for an allergy that had reared its head. She did have Dutch friends, but not in class. The atmosphere in class, she felt was very negative regarding foreigners. In her opinion all of them considered quitting because of that. Edgar (from Russia) for instance was ignored when he came into the classroom and said 'good morning'. And when he spoke English with an accent, he was made fun of. Dutch students were reputed to be very open and direct, Allison noted, but she had learned that they could also be 'mean' and 'sneaky'. A couple of times, for instance, the Dutch members of their project group had let her and Jack do the photocopying, and had them pay for it as well. When they wanted them to do that for the third time, Allison had said that the burden should be carried more evenly, to which they had complied only grudgingly. The Dutch students, according to Allison, also did not value the input or opinion of the Chinese, even if it proved to be right. She clearly remembered the project hour described above, and recalled how the Dutch students had asked to speak with the teacher alone, and had talked with him outside the classroom, in the hallway. Allison and Jack did not get to hear what was discussed, and they had felt sad and excluded because of it. Before the end of the year, both Jack and Allison had dropped out of school.

## **2.2 Intercultural/international experiences outside school**

The Dutch-speaking students who were interviewed both attended a high school with predominantly native Dutch students. For Charlotte this entailed that she met very few 'foreign people', as she formulated it, while Walid, being 'the only Moroccan' at high school, had mixed with everyone, and appreciated how his native Dutch friend showed him respect, for instance by sharing with him a cheese sandwich but never offering him one with pork.

The two Chinese students hardly spoke about intercultural encounters, with the exception of Allison who mentioned having Dutch friends outside school. But there were misunderstandings there too, ironically sometimes precisely because she had tried to adapt to the Dutch way of doing this. For instance, she once went out with a Dutchman, and had wanted to pay half, as she understood that was the Dutch custom. But he had insisted on paying for her, and was quite insulted by her saying 'going Dutch'.

The two other foreign students, Italian Sofia and Bulgarian Violeta, related how they already were familiar with being in a culturally differently environment: Sofia attended high school in the US for one year, while Violeta worked in the summer breaks as an animator and a waitress at the seaside of Bulgaria, where she spoke with a lot of tourists. She liked this international environment and this made her decide to go and study abroad.

## 2.3 Attitude during/toward Preflex training

During the plenary parts of PREFLEX sessions, we observed many expressions of scepticism regarding the training, especially among a subgroup of four native Dutch students (Charlotte, Eline, Rogier, Huub), but also with Layla from Curaçao, and Rishwen. This was partly confirmed by the outspoken negative responses during the ‘talking ball’ game at the end of the first meeting by three native Dutch and one American student: ‘boring’, ‘we already did this before’, ‘very repetitive’, ‘there should be some new stuff’. In contrast, three foreign students and one immigrant Dutch student were positive, and associated the training with ‘progress’, found it ‘amazing’ or ‘interesting’, while a Chinese girl appreciated the opportunity to practice her English. The comments of the other six students (both foreign, native and immigrant Dutch) were also appreciative, but they referred not so much to the content as to the general atmosphere during this class, as ‘friendly’, ‘relaxed’, ‘cool’ or ‘casual’. It is debatable whether this is the kind of praise that one would like the training to elicit.

Observations of the second and third session again showed that the majority of students remained quite passive. When asked to discuss certain questions in small groups, they did as they are told, and addressed the assignment head on, the subgroup dynamics was very lively and easy-going, students showed interest towards each other, no conflicts arose. But the topic was dealt with quite swiftly, and in the plenary round afterwards, the teacher had to work very hard (*trekken en sleuren*, as the observant noted) to get an answer or a response. However, when put to work on subgroup assignments, interactions between students were quite lively, many gave evidence of an open and curious attitude toward each other’s different backgrounds.

The sceptical attitude we observed in class 1A during the training was only partly confirmed by the interviews. Four of the six students indicated that

they recognized the relevance of intercultural training, but they found the meetings too monotonous or repetitive: ‘each time you had to interview people about their culture’; ‘especially in the beginning it was often the same: talk with him, talk with her. But that’s what we also do in other lessons.’ Two students claimed that the majority of the class had a dislike of the lessons. While Charlotte suggested that native Dutch students were reluctant because they are ‘only interested in their own culture, like: we are living here in the Netherlands, so they’d better adapt’, Violeta on the other hand thought that to some students (like Kevin from the US) the training was ‘boring’ because they are already used to dealing with people from all nationalities. However, between the lines, she could also be heard saying that she found the majority of her fellow students spoiled, that they did not realize how lucky they were with the quality of education they got [*We Bulgarians, we appreciate things like this, you’re taking care of us*], and were lacking in self-knowledge by being overconfident [*I think a lot of people of my class did change, they are more open minded now, they are more out of their comfort zone*].

On the one hand, students all appreciated assignments that were directly linked to future professional activities, and/or to their upcoming study abroad such as the assignment where they had to list the skills [SMART] they would like to improve in order to be better prepared for their stay abroad.

Several of them reported how certain assignments had contributed to knowing fellow students better, or had forced them to cross a barrier that they otherwise would not have crossed, an experience from which they learned they had been prejudiced for no good reason. Sofia for instance said that at home, in Italy, it was ingrained in her not to mingle with black people. So she avoided them. But the PREFLEX training forced her to cross that threshold. She interviewed a black person, and she liked it very much. Charlotte likewise told us that initially she was inclined to seek contact only with other native Dutch students:

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*That’s what I had in the beginning too: I don’t want to talk with you because you are not Dutch. But now I also associate with a girl from Korea and a girl from Bulgaria [...] you share the same interests. In our class we are very close to each other, perhaps it is also because we had these lessons, that you know you have to open up more.’*

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Bulgarian Violeta related a similar experience:

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*There was one Dutch guy that I couldn't get in touch with. He was only with the Dutch guys, and I wanted to know: is he really that arrogant, that mad? Then we had this assignment that we had to speak to someone we hadn't spoken to before, and I chose to interview that guy. And I can tell you that I didn't know anyone better than him in the class at the end of the lessons. He was the opposite of what I thought of him. That's an example of how PREFLEX helped me.*

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Other eye-opening experiences were not presented as an effect of PREFLEX, but of being a student in an international classroom:

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*In China, [Allison] she had learned to dislike Africans and Muslims. But in class she found out that black persons can be very nice, and she has a friend from Iraq, and she respects his not eating pork.*

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According to Walid the aim of the training was to show that when you are less prejudiced and more open minded, you will learn that people have more in common than you tend to think:

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*So that we do not immediately say: he is a Jew, so he will wear a yarmulke, and think in a certain way. We should focus more on similarities than differences.*

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Walid said that he had become more open-minded, not because of the PREFLEX training, but because of the everyday interactions in his international classroom and his living environment in the Netherlands. German Carl agreed with Walid on the importance of focusing on similarities rather than differences:

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*If you make friends with foreign people, then you discover that you are not that different.*

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Others, however, thought the PREFLEX training was primarily meant to make them aware of and teach them how to deal with differences between people. Violeta was very happy about this, since every person who is different from her is someone whom she can learn from:

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*I am even more interested in a person who is different from me, because I will learn much more from him.*

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Charlotte likewise emphasized that she found it interesting to learn about other faiths. To her, differences were primarily sources of amazement. The response, for instance, of Chinese students to hearing her and her native Dutch friends talk about sex struck her as ‘funny’, ‘really weird’, even childish [*net als wij op de basisschool*], while she could not help but find the way in which she and her Dutch friends talked about sex normal: ‘we just talk about it very openly’ [*Wij praten er gewoon heel open over*]; ‘I was like: that is just very normal’ [*ik had van ‘dat is gewoon heel erg normaal’*].

Dutch culture being the norm to Charlotte also came to the fore in her perception of the exploration of the meaning of students’ names during the first session of the PREFLEX training. Several Chinese students had given an elaborate explanation of the meaning of their first and surname, for which Charlotte envied them (‘they can tell entire stories about their name ‘[...] that’s so nice!’). But then the teacher had turned to her and her Dutch friend:

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*And we were like: our names just mean entirely nothing. We said: we are boring people with boring names, and also the meaning is boring. Everyone laughed really loud, but we said: but it’s true, it’s just boring!*

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The assignment that was remembered best by most students was the assignment to design an advertisement for an affordable medicine for children in the Middle East. They remembered it so well because the mistakes they had unwittingly made (drawings in order from right to left, sign of a red cross) would send all the wrong messages to the public. The element of

surprise worked really well [Charlotte again: ‘that was so weird! That was so funny!’] because it forced them to think further [‘Everyone was baffled, like: why is this the case?’]. Apart from the element of surprise, it was also the fun of drawing a cartoon together which made this a memorable assignment. Another assignment that was ‘funny’ [Walid] was to impersonate something (*iets uitbeelden*), for instance how to get someone’s attention Both Walid and Charlotte said that they found the PREFLEX training quite boring

## 2.4 Suggestions for improving the PREFLEX training

Several students indicated they wanted more variation, and other assignments than having to talk together in small groups all the time. In general the tenor was: less talk, more applying stuff, actually doing something, like role play, acting ‘as if’, rather than speaking for yourself, doing more interesting games: *better do less, really short, so that it is inspiring, and motivational*. Walid for instance would like to learn how you actually do that, being open minded. And learn how to cope in a situation when you are on your own, without family or friends to help you out. Quite a few students indicated that they would like to have more information about how things are done in other countries. Violeta: *For instance show a short movie about Japan or let students choose a country they know little about and let them do research about it*. Violeta also suggested that shared field trips with an intercultural group would be a good contribution to the training, so you could take more time to carry out the exercises. This could enhance the informal learning in social interactions. She also suggested a stronger focus on presentation skills. Charlotte noticed how the Chinese students opened up during the name game, she therefore suggested that the programme should be organised in such a way that also the less outspoken students were invited to get more involved, to speak up more often. She would also like to do more practical exercises. For example, practice with the SWOT analysis rather than merely write things down.



# 3. RESULTS IBMS CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS – CLASS 1B

## 3.1 Composition of the class

Class 1B (PREFLEX training in 2<sup>nd</sup> semester) started the year with twenty-seven students: eleven female, sixteen male. Eight students had a native Dutch background (Martijn, Sven, Daniel, Hugo, Stefan, Ben, Sander, Stephany), six a Dutch immigrant background (Dieter, Aisha, Dilek, Gaetano, Rubin, Fareed), two students from the Antilles (Owen from Aruba, David from Curaçao). Others came from Ghana (Jacqueline), Spain (Carlos), Bulgaria (Emiliya), Ilse (German-Bulgarian), China (Roxy, Michelle, Lesly, Susan, Eric), Egypt (Kharim), and Zambia (class president Leticia). During the first semester, observations of five classes on Developing Learning Skills were conducted by Andrea Gheorghiu. At the start of the second semester, six sample students had dropped out. Of the remaining five, three refused to give an interview (main reason: lack of time) while two students, *i.e.* Martijn and Owen, agreed. The interviews were conducted just before the start of the PREFLEX training. During the second semester, students of 1B were observed five times, once during a regular class, and during all four PREFLEX sessions. At the end of the year, Martijn and Owen did not respond to (several) requests for a second interview. Because of our findings about the problematic position of Chinese students, it was decided to hold an additional interview with Destiny, a Chinese student who was placed in 1B in February, and who was one of the few Chinese students who seemed to be doing well at THUAS.

## 3.2 Intercultural competence

### 3.2.1 Attitude

During classes, we observed several examples of cross-cultural interaction, testifying to an open attitude, students being interested in other than their own backgrounds, and able and willing to support fellow students with a different background. The only exceptions were the Chinese (four female and one male students), and one Bulgarian (female) student, who hardly ever initiated crosscultural contact.

In the interviews, both Martijn (native Dutch) and Owen (from Aruba) showed an open attitude towards differences in culture, and they tried to learn about other cultures by actively asking questions to their classmates: How is that with you? Why do women wear these veils that only show their eyes? Martijn appreciated the ICP week because he liked being in a new group with new people with different cultures, it was '*gezellig*' while at the same time '*serieus*' because you learned things from it. He chose IBMS because of the international character, including different nationalities in class. Owen followed three of his cousins in choosing IBMS, but soon discovered how much he could learn: 'It's not because you are stupid, but because you were raised in such a small environment, and people here are raised in a big environment, so they have all that knowledge.' So, he has now become eager to broaden his horizon: '*I just want to go international, global.*'

### 3.2.2 Skills

When interviewed, Martijn, Owen and Destiny all emphasized that during the last year they had grown 'as a person'. Martijn improved his social skills: *Before I was with a small group of friend, now I have more contacts with different people.* He had become better in just approaching people, was not nervous about that anymore. Martijn and Owen had also worked on improving their English. Apart from these things, Martijn did not think that his behaviour towards other people had changed. Owen had learned to become more disciplined, and not to rely entirely on others (family), to plan better and take initiative. Destiny had gradually improved her English too, she had learned about customs in other cultures, like the Dutch, and had become 'more open to others': she listened to others and dared to ask questions.

### 3.2.3 Knowledge

Only rarely did we hear students talk among each other about sensitive political and economic issues. One exceptional situation was when during a break (native Dutch) Daniel sat down on a desk in front of Gaetano from Curaçao. Referring to the colonial past, he said to Gaetano: 'I can see that they want to be independent, but then nothing changes, except they get less money'. Daniel once stayed there for ten weeks, and found out how hard it was to make appointments with people. Gaetano replied that he himself got "sick" of the "laid-back" attitude in his own country. Daniel agreed: 'You get sick of that'. And went on to shower him with questions: 'How about your parents? Were they born there? Do you miss Curaçao? Do you go there, every now and then?'

Martijn indicated that he became more knowledgeable about other customs, norms and values, but could give only one example, *i.e.* like how a person in a different culture would hand over something. But actually, when talking with fellow students, *it is easier to find similarities than differences, because explaining something is more difficult than saying: "yes, that is what we have too"*. They never talked about politics in class. Owen's knowledge on differences in culture on the other hand, had increased considerably, *i.e.* between what is custom in Aruba and what is expected of you in the Netherlands, and he gave a range of examples. The biggest culture shock involved gender relationships: with girls in Aruba you could do some flirting (*dat jij een beetje leuke dingen aan ze zegt*), but in the Netherlands, girls immediately got angry with you. Here girls expect a boy to talk about serious topics, to seek friendship before they are willing to open up to you: *was a good motivation for me to want to learn things*. But Owen also appreciated that girls had more knowledge and were not that 'easy to get': *dat je gewoon niet (knipt met zijn vingers) zo van een, twee, drie, van, jij als meisje...*

### 3.2.4 Group dynamics

In IBMS 1B we observed several instances of spontaneous cross-cultural chats, some between native Dutch (Sven, Daniel) and immigrant Dutch students (Aisha, Gaetano, Dieter). Daniel went out of his way to explain and help (Bulgarian-German) Ilse after she had missed a couple of lessons; native Dutch Sven and Egyptian Kharim loudly expressed their mutual support, and

Moroccan-Dutch Aisha started a spontaneous chat with Ghanaese Jacqueline on the other side of the aisle, rather than with her immediate neighbor, Chinese Michelle. Also Spanish Carlos seemed to be quite popular, judging by the enthusiastic response to his presentation from various students, girls and boys. Ilse and Emiliya seemed mostly focused on each other; there were few observations of contacts between them and the black girls. However, in November Ilse and (Bulgarian) Emiliya were observed after class to gather with Ghanaian Jacqueline, giving the impression that they had become friends.

The four Chinese girls were hardly ever addressed by non-Chinese students, nor did they themselves take initiative to engage in cross-cultural talk. There were some exceptions however. For instance, at the beginning of the year, Chinese Michelle, after being encouraged by Aisha and the teacher, did a pitch for being chosen as class representative (and got 2 votes). And during a lesson break in November she remained seated on her own while the other three Chinese girls chatted with each other. At the beginning of the second semester, the Chinese girls Roxy and Destiny had to work together with native Dutch Sven and Daniel to develop a business plan. Though the girls and guys mostly worked in pairs, and the boys clearly took the lead, the girls sometimes turned to the guys to ask them for input. Furthermore, during the first PREFLEX session, albeit in a very soft spoken manner, Roxy accepted the invitation made by her Bulgarian subgroup members Ilse and Emiliya to share a story she had told them with the entire class. There was one Chinese student (Eric) in 1B who was mostly on his own. He was seen once make an effort to interact with the Chinese girls, but only for a short while. When the Chinese girls did talk, it was among one another in Chinese, but overall they were more silent than the rest of the students. There were some instances where Michelle and Eric were asked a question (by teacher or classmate) and failed to provide the (right) answer, which visibly embarrassed them. In the final session of the PREFLEX training, of the (merely) six students who were there to give a presentation, Susan was the only Chinese student. She had found that Europeans and Asians had entirely different social skills - she herself for instance had great difficulty expressing herself in English -, and that due to completely different ways of thinking Europeans and Asians mostly talked at cross purposes in her view.

According to Martijn, interviewed in February, everybody in class mingled with everybody, which was also encouraged by the way the work groups were composed of different nationalities. And because the study was very demanding, they also helped one another. He himself was befriended Fareed (Hindustani Dutch), with whom he also did homework together. Martijn thought there were not really subgroups in the class. They just did things with the entire group (class outing). But when he got more specific, he did discern several subgroups. The first divide was between boys and girls. Like ‘all the boys’ went out together. And the foreign boys did more things together outside school (like eating together) than the girls. Owen was friends with Kharim (from Egypt), Sander (native Dutch), Rubin (Portugese-Dutch) and David (from Curaçao). He confirmed Martijn’s account that the girls did not mix a lot with the boys. The guys did things together outside school, like snowboarding. They invited the girls (he mentioned Leticia, Emiliya and Ilse) through their chat group on What’s app to come with them, but they did not come. Owen’s explanation: the boys are into making fun, are a bit ‘*spelig*’, while the girls are more serious and don’t trust you that easily. The Chinese students also remained distant from the rest. To Owen’s knowledge, they, as well as Bulgarian Emiliya (*ze is een beetje apart*), were not even member of the chat group. Nevertheless, when interviewed at the end of the academic year, Chinese Destiny, who at the start of the 2<sup>nd</sup> semester was transferred to 1B, was quite positive about the atmosphere in class. She appreciated very much being invited for the birthday party of one of the Dutch classmates, and she especially appreciated being encouraged to express her opinion:

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*For example, in my group there are two Dutch guys. Chinese people are always very quiet. But they said to me: “Speak out!” And when we do something, they also ask me and my partner [i.e. Chinese Roxy]: “What do you think? Do you think it is good or bad?”*

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### **3.3 Intercultural/international experiences outside school**

When we spoke with him before the start of the PREFLEX training, (native Dutch) Martijn did not talk about intercultural experiences outside school. Looking ahead, he did not yet have very specific ideas about the country

that he would like to go to. Because of his contacts with a Dutch marketing agency, it could be the US. Being a student from Aruba, by February Owen had many stories about intercultural experiences outside school, for instance when going out and approaching girls (see above). Asked what his favourite destinations were, he mentioned London and Madrid – because those were the places his cousins went. Destiny, who came from China to Europe two years ago to first follow English language courses, also experienced a severe culture shock: *Asian and Western people have totally different thoughts*. She thought that Chinese were more punctual about appointments, and they were quiet: *We don't want to be that, but it is a habit*. But she appreciated opportunities to get acquainted with different customs, like the invitation to a Dutch birthday party - where to her surprise she seemed the only guest who brought a gift - and to make trips to Paris and Italy. At the same time, outside school Destiny predominantly associated with other Chinese students.

### **3.4 Attitude during/toward Preflex training**

During the first session, the class (thirteen students) responded willingly, although not overly enthusiastic. During the second and third session only eight students were present. For most of the time they were actively involved, for instance in sharing intercultural experiences with their fellow students. During the Red Cross advertisement task, students exchanged knowledge, for example by asking others how to say “bless you” in their language. Students also openly spoke about stereotypes and gave several examples of previous intercultural experiences, many related to their experience with the business game. The Chinese students Susan and Roxy were a bit more silent and withdrawn than the others, but they did participate. During the fourth and final session, where students were asked to do an individual presentation, only six students attended: Susan (CH), Dilek (Turkish-Dutch) Fareed (Hindustani-Dutch), Carlos from Spain, Owen from Aruba and David from Curaçao. They showed little interest for each other's presentations. Because we did not manage to interview any of the students of class 1B after the PREFLEX training was finished, we don't know what caused this lack of interest.





# 4. RESULTS 360-DEGREES FEEDBACK FORMS - IBMS

## 4.1 First semester

### 4.1.1 General

The results show that students of both the IBMS-test group and the IBMS-control group improved themselves according to their inner circle on all four competences since the start of the university year. The improvement in both the test group and the control group was most strongly with regard to 'languages' (4.39 versus 4.34). The second, third and fourth position were also occupied by the same competences in both groups. These were respectively 'academic/professional competences' (3.95 versus 4.18), 'personal/social competences' (3.93 versus 4.04) and 'intercultural competences' (3.89 versus 3.97).

There were no significant differences at competence level between the two groups.

	<i>IBMS-test group</i>	<i>IBMS-control group</i>
Personal/social competences	3.93	4.04
Intercultural competences	3.89	3.97
Academic/professional competences	3.95	4.18
Languages	4.39	4.34

### 4.1.2 Personal/social competences

Regarding 'personal/social competences' the test group most strongly improved itself on the dimension 'worldview' (4.12), followed by 'open mindedness' (4.08) and 'flexibility, adaptability' (4.04). In the control group the strongest improvements were respectively 'social commitment' (4.31), 'independence, self-reliance' (also 4.31) and 'shows initiative' (4.09).

Compared to the test group the control group improved more strongly - with almost one point - at the dimension 'social commitment' (4.31 versus 3.48).

1. Personal/social competences		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Independence, self-reliance	3.92	4.31
Confidence, positive about self	3.96	3.96
Flexibility, adaptability	4.04	4.02
Open mindedness	4.08	3.89
Knows own possibilities and limitations	3.88	3.70
Shows initiative	4.00	4.09
Worldview	4.12	4.05
Social commitment	3.48	4.31*
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>4.04</b>

#### 4.1.3 Intercultural competences

With regard to 'attitude' within 'intercultural competences' both the test group and the control group most strongly improved themselves at 'respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity' (4.00 en 4.09). The test group and the control group did not improve themselves more strongly compared to each other (this went for both dimension level and total level).

2.1 Intercultural competences: Attitude		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity	4.00	4.09
Open, unprejudiced	3.76	3.93
Willing to question own opinions	3.71	3.73
Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity	3.71	3.74
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.79</b>	<b>3.87</b>

Regarding 'knowledge', both the test group and the control group improved themselves most strongly on the dimension 'knowledge of other cultures'

(4.21 en 4.24). Here, too, there was no significant difference between the test group and the control group (dimension level and the total level).

<b>2.2 Intercultural competences: Knowledge</b>		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Knowledge of other cultures	4.21	4.24
Knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on behaviour and forms of communication	3.91	3.98
<b>Total average</b>	<b>4.06</b>	<b>4.11</b>

With regard to ‘skills’ both the test group and the control group improved themselves most strongly on the dimension of ‘social and communication skills’ (4.00 en 4.13).

Once again there was no significant difference between the test group and the control group (both dimension level and total level).

<b>2.3 Intercultural competences: Skills</b>		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Social and communication skills	4.00	4.13
Being able to judge situations	3.83	4.02
Being aware of own feelings and capable of handling them	3.88	4.02
Self-reflection	3.92	3.88
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.91</b>	<b>4.02</b>

With regard to ‘critical cultural awareness’ the test group most strongly improved itself at ‘being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture’ (3.92). The control group did that at ‘being able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others’ (3.91). Both groups did not show any visible differences towards each other at both dimension level and total level.

<b>2.4 Intercultural competences: Critical cultural awareness</b>		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Being able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others	3.72	3.91
Being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture	3.92	3.89
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>3.90</b>

With respect to ‘academic competences’ the control group had a higher score at ‘critical research attitude’ than the test group (4.21 versus 3.84). At a total level no differences could be discovered. The test group improved itself most strongly at ‘being able to conceptualize and analyse’ (4.12); the control group did that at ‘critical research attitude’ (4.21).

<b>3.1 Academic competences</b>		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Specific disciplinary knowledge	3.84	4.10
Being able to conceptualize and analyse	4.12	3.98
Critical research attitude	3.84	4.21*
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>4.09</b>

With regard to ‘professional competences’ both the test group and the control group improved themselves most at ‘interested in an international career’ (4.64 versus 4.13). Compared to the test group the control group scored higher at ‘clear perspective of own career’ (4.29 versus 3.80) and at ‘interested in international career’ (4.64 versus 4.13). Conversely, there were no differences. At the total level, both groups did not differ from each other.

<b>3.2 Professional competences</b>		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Being able to apply knowledge and skills in special and unusual situations	3.88	4.21
Capacity to solve problems, being innovative	4.08	4.20
Thinking out-of-the-box	3.92	4.25
Clear view on profession	4.00	4.14
Clear perspective of own career	3.80	4.29*
Possibilities on the labour market	3.83	4.00
Motivation for study and profession	4.04	4.42
Interested in international career	4.13	4.64*
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.96</b>	<b>4.27</b>

The score at ‘languages’ was almost the same in both groups. De test group scored 4.39 and the control group 4.34.

<b>4. Languages</b>		
	<i>Average score IBMS-test group</i>	<i>Average score IBMS-control group</i>
Foreign language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing	4.39	4.34



# 5. RESULTS CE/IM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS – CLASS 1C

## 5.1 Composition of the class

At the beginning of the academic year class CE 1C (PREFLEX training in semester 1) consisted of thirty-four students: twenty-two male, twelve female. Half of them had a native Dutch background, the other half were children from immigrants mostly from Morocco and Turkey, but also from Surinam, the Dutch Antilles, Congo, Moluccas and Spain. All students finished an mbo (middle vocational) training before enrolling at THUAS. Three students dropped out in the first month, making the class consist of thirty-one students for the most part of the first semester. During the first semester, observations were conducted in all four PREFLEX training sessions, and in three regular classes, all taught by Liv Kaur. Seven students were interviewed: Daan, Sophie, Laurens, Dylan (all native Dutch), Constanza (Spanish-Dutch), and Ahmet and Baris (Turkish-Dutch). At the beginning of the second semester Daan, Dylan and Ahmet had dropped out, the other four sample students did either not respond to our repeated requests for a second interview, or indicated that they did not feel like doing another interview. During the second semester, students of class CE 1C were observed five times during different lessons. Final interviews were conducted in May and June with four students, *i.e.* Constanza, Sophie, Baris were interviewed for a second time, native Dutch Johan for the first time.

## 5.2 Intercultural Competences

### 5.2.1 Attitude

The majority of students from CE 1C we interviewed explained that they chose to specialize in International Management (IM), because they were curious about other countries and cultures and wanted to see more of the world. Most of them seemed to associate notions of interculturality exclusively with international relationships rather than with relationships between people from different ethnic backgrounds within the Netherlands. Thus, when in one of the PREFLEX sessions, teacher Liv asked to tell about recent intercultural experiences, the class initially fell silent. Only when she insisted, one student recounted a visit of her Norwegian family members, another about a business meeting with Belgium people for his company.

Several conversations about cultural similarities, differences and characteristics were observed in class, but because the vast majority of students were born and raised in the Netherlands they did not regard such conversations as intercultural. Many students showed an open, interested and curious attitude towards each other on many occasions. Many of the PREFLEX exercises invited them to ask questions about the experiences of classmates, but also outside of the training they expressed interest in each other.

Simultaneously, in these interactions we noticed that conversations about cultural differences often departed from an initial observation regarding certain similarities which the students shared, before differences were discussed. This focus on commonalities was especially emphasized by male students. In the interviews, several of them claimed that they did not perceive any cultural differences between native Dutch and immigrant students, because they were all born and raised in the Netherlands. Laurens clarified this by comparing their attitude with that of a student from Korea who appeared shocked when she saw people kissing each other in public: *These people grew up so differently than we*. Daan likewise did not see how his friends from Turkish and Chech descent were any different from him: *They are just well adapted to us, they behave like we behave*. Ahmet confirmed this perception when he claimed that he considered himself as *a real Dutch guy*.

The only exception here was Dylan, who simultaneously denied and highlighted some differences: he noted that the *foreign boys* [...] *shout a bit more in class, they are a tiny bit quicker or a bit more fierce (feller) than the rest*. He remembered Baris lashing out against Julia one time because she did not agree with his criticism about a test:

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*He got really angry [onwijs boos] [...] and was very determined, even though he was the only one in class who held this opinion. I don't really understand where this comes from. He is from a Turkish family and I know more Turkish guys from Leiden, and you do see this more often with Turkish than with Dutch or Moroccan guys.*

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In a sense, Baris himself confirmed this difference, be it that he did not make a distinction between different ethnic groups, but between 'Dutch' people and 'allochthones' in general. When in the second semester Ahmet had dropped out of school, their subgroup consisting of Yasir, Asmae and Baris himself asked Paul to take his place. Baris explained:

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*He is a Dutchman, but his way of thinking is very allochthonous, we just have a click.*

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Asked what caused this click, Baris explained:

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*He just says what he wants to say, he's not afraid of anyone. So, if I say something stupid, he just yells: "Hey, moron [sukkel]!" The rest of the class would never do that, they would think: if I say that, it might be offensive [kwetsbaar]. They are direct among one another, but not to me or to Asmae. But Paul does not have that barrier, he comes loose entirely with us [hij gaat ook helemaal los bij ons].*

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In other words, according to Baris, native Dutch students hold themselves back in relation to immigrant students (*they are bit more cold, a bit more formal*), because they are afraid to insult them, to be accused of

discrimination. Simultaneously, when describing their style of cooperation, Baris confirmed Dylan's impression of the 'foreign' boys being more fierce:

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*Obviously we quarrel from time to time, we get angry with one another. But in the end we're always o.k..*

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The two girls (native and Spanish-Dutch) we spoke to, even if they said not to notice any cultural differences in class, did link the term cultural differences not only to international relationships but also to students with an immigrant background. Sophie mentioned fellow students going to the mosque or having a bit of an accent (although she immediately corrected herself on this latter account, for 'Leienaars have an accent too'). The girls' focus on difference also showed in the fact that while the guys emphasized that immigrant students were born and raised in the Netherlands, Sophie had learned not to assume automatically that all immigrant students were from Turkey and Morocco, but could also originate from India or Afghanistan. And she happily embraced cultural differences in her classroom:

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*I like having something exotic in our class, I know the Dutch by now, so I like to mix a bit.*

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Looking back at the talking ball game at the end of the first PREFLEX session, we also observed that the (native Dutch) girls responded in a positive way: (*I know now things I did not know about others; Nice to see differences between the people*), while the guys gave no comment other than slamming the ball at each other really hard.

How come that the girls were more focused on, or more aware of cultural differences? There may be a spark of an explanation in an observation by Ahmet that while (native and immigrant) boys dress more or less the same, the difference between girls is more visible, especially because of the way they dress, for instance, Turkish girls may wear a headscarf and will 'not show too much skin'. Although Ahmet's remark may appear to address only superficial differences in clothing style, it in fact stands for more significant

gender differences within many immigrant (*i.e.* Muslim) communities, where women more than men are expected to be the carriers/representatives of the religious and cultural values of that community. In this respect it is no coincidence that in the interviews, both Constanza and Sophie recalled that they learned from conversations with immigrant girls that their situation at home was quite different from their own: *We have far more freedom to do as we like.*

It seems that native Dutch students tend to appeal more often to their own cultural frame of reference when discussing cultural differences than students with an immigrant background. Native Dutch students seemed more keen to compare characteristics of other cultures to what they were already familiar with in their own Dutch context.

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*Dylan knows how to solve the communication issues between the Mexican and Dutch businessmen: “They should just sit with each other and drink a beer together in order to overcome their differences. That is what I always do with my friends.”*

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Again, it seems that the girls were more interested in differences while the guys focused on what is similar, as shows in the following conversation during a group assignment:

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*Constanza asks Beyonce what language she speaks at home. Beyonce explains that in Congo people speak many languages, but that at home she speaks Dutch a lot. Constanza asks Beyonce to remind her (for her presentation?) what Congolese language her parents speak. “But we also have this just here, in the Netherlands”, Edgar responds, “in the Westland we speak Westlands and that’s very different from standard Dutch.” Beyonce does not entirely agree, because other Dutch people can generally understand Westlanders, whereas the languages spoken in Congo are completely different from each other.*

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## 5.2.2 Skills

When discussing intercultural competences, students considered it important to show respect for others with a different cultural background, and to be able to put themselves in the position of the other. The ability to adapt to others in an intercultural setting was also mentioned as an important competence.

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*When discussing the business case of the Mexican and Dutch businessmen several, students mention that both should adjust a bit to each other's culture in order to understand one another better.*

*Sophie: 'They should learn from each other how they live and work.'*

*Ahmet says that the Dutch man should behave a bit more socially and the Mexican man should be a bit more active in his work. Julia:*

*'They should accept each other to find a middle ground.'*

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Students often showed a supportive attitude towards each other in class, especially regarding skills that students felt insecure about, such as their ability to speak English.

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*Liv asks Zahira to read a part of the article aloud in front of the class.*

*Zahira initially protests. "My English is really not good enough."*

*Yasir encourages her to try it nevertheless. "Just go for it, continue."*

*Zahira continues to read the text.*

---

Various students named a lack of English language skills as something which hindered intercultural communication. Many students named knowledge of foreign languages as an intercultural competence they would like to work on. English language proficiency was actually quite limited in this class. Students often had to search for words when speaking English, and regularly switched to Dutch halfway in a sentence. When they were asked to speak English in front of the class, they often expressed insecurity. Some students had already acquired some proficiency in another foreign language (German, Italian, Spanish) because of a work placement abroad for their previous (mbo) education.

In discussion about cultural differences and diversity, students often started the conversation by mentioning certain stereotypes. This did not seem to be used to insult or embarrass the other, but rather as a playful way to check what one already knew and to elicit more accurate knowledge about a particular culture. When confronted with stereotypes, students with an immigrant background seemed to make more effort to clarify that these stereotypes did not apply to them than did native Dutch students.

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*The students draw a commercial for children's medication which should be used in an Arabic country. David asks Zahira how they should draw an Arabic child. "You know, because you come from an Arabic country, right? Oh, no, you are actually just normally Dutch, so you do not know that at all." Everyone is laughing, Zahira too. She says she is indeed just Dutch. They proceed to draw a girl in the advertisement. "Should she not wear a veil", asks David, "girls wear that in those countries, right?" "I don't", Zahira says, "sometimes they wear a veil and sometimes they don't. There are also modern women there." Zahira and Beyonce both emphasize that not all women in Arabic countries wear a veil. Beyonce adds that children do not wear a veil in any case. They draw a girl in the advertisement without a veil.*

*When Liv asks who has experienced prejudices, Ahmet reacts: "When we go back to our country people look at us like we are rich Europeans. Like we come to Turkey to show off everything we have and to celebrate the holidays. But this is not the case, we actually just come there to visit family."*

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Dylan once experienced that he was prejudiced when he first met a friend of a friend 'who came somewhere from Africa'. He found his fidgety behaviour quite irritating [*hij was echt aan het stuiten*]. But when they started talking, he appeared awfully nice [*hartstikke aardig*] and they became real friends for a while. Dylan emphasized that his prejudice had been based on the guy's behavior, not on his skin colour.

While the skills mentioned thus far improved thanks to students' own experiences (inside or outside school) rather than the PREFLEX training, several students nevertheless indicated that they had learned to be more self-reflexive, *i.e.* to look at themselves from the perspective of another, thanks to the PREFLEX training:

Constanza exemplified such self-reflexivity nicely when exploring the differences between her and a Dutch-Moroccan fellow student:

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*To me the life I lead is very normal, and to her her life is of course very normal. And both of us think the other's way kind of weird [best wel raar.]'*

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Ahmet likewise came to realize that

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*What you think is obvious [normaal], the other might not find that obvious [normaal] at all.*

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### **5.2.3 Knowledge**

Knowledge about other cultures was often expressed in general terms, coming close to stereotyping. Thus several students mentioned what they knew about Spain by saying that Spanish people are always late, and that the people have a very relaxed work attitude in Spain because the weather is always nice. National cultures seemed to be understood in quite a homogenic way, without considering possible internal differences within a country.

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*Liv asks the subgroups to talk about unethical marketing. Laurens thinks of alcohol commercials. "Here we are used to such commercials, but when people from Turkey for example see them, they will think what the fuck... Because they see people drinking and that is not ok in their country."*

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More detailed knowledge was acquired through experiences outside school and informal talks with students from a different background. Constanza for instance learned from her regular visits to relatives in Spain that small differences in etiquette can lead to ‘weird’ situations from the perspective of the other: *‘For Spanish people it is really weird when on a birthday party, you start congratulating everybody, because isn’t it obvious that you only congratulate the person whose birthday it is?’* Via internet, Laurens already worked across boundaries, especially with people from the US and China. He enjoyed a previous visit to NewYork and learned a lot from the stories of his father and brother, who both work for international companies. About the US he knows: ‘It’s tough, so I will fail twenty times at least. Their being so really nice is more acting as if, but I love to play along with that game.’

Knowledge about the social, political or economic background of other countries was hardly ever expressed.

#### **5.2.4 Group dynamics**

There were several subgroups in class 1C. There was a group of girls who remained a close group of friends throughout the year, consisting of Julia, Sophie, Constanza, and Marthe. Three of them had a native Dutch background, while Constanza’s father had grown up in Spain. The boys often observed to sit together were Laurens, Jochem and Rolf, all from a native Dutch background. In the interview, native Dutch Laurens, who claimed that he was not really interested in making friends in class, mentioned that recently he had been added to a group consisting of at least Floris, Fons and Edgar, all native Dutch, who were called (or called themselves?) ‘the leeches’ [*bloedzuigers*] – Laurens did not explain this awkward name further, but hinted that it was not without reason. Native Dutch Dylan did not consider himself part of a particular subgroup either, but mentioned Quinten (native Dutch), Jermias (Moluccan background) and Quincy (Antillean background) as the guys he was ‘o.k.’ with. Another ethnically diverse group of boys consisted of Ahmet, Baris (both Turkish), Asmae (Iraqi) and Yasir (who had fled with his family from Afghanistan via Bangkok and Russia to the Netherlands). When Ahmet dropped out in the second semester, he was replaced with (native Dutch) Paul.

Especially the last group was perceived by others as more separate from the rest. Dylan typified them as the students who were a bit older (20 +), one of them already owning his own driving school. Especially Baris was perceived as a serious student who did not drink and smoke, went to mosque each Friday, and was not really interested in the native Dutch guys. This impression was confirmed by Baris himself; he was really serious about this study, considered school as work, hence:

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*There are many pupils whose name I don't even know, because it does not interest me [omdat het me niet echt boeit], sorry to say so.*

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Notably, Laurens, who likewise already had a serious job, had failed at a previous school and was determined to succeed for this study, used exactly the same words to describe his position in class:

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*I go to school, and after school I mostly go straight to work [...] I'll be honest with you: I don't even know all the names. It does not interest me that much [het boeit me allemaal niet zo veel].*

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Ahmet related how at the beginning of the year he was put into one group with Baris, Asmae, Yasir, Hanan and Faiza. The two girls (Moroccan Dutch sisters) left THUAS at an early stage, so they remained with the four of them and became really good friends. They worked together very well, went out together, shared their style of clothing, and as 'allochtone' students, they spoke the same language, in his words: *street language*. Baris filled in the details during his interview; he never watched Dutch football, so he could not talk with his Dutch classmates about that. But he was 'fanatical' about Turkish football and another Turkish guy would also know a lot about that. Another important commonality was faith:

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*I go to mosque each Friday, and Yasir happens to do that too. So, every so now and then we go together.*

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However, there were also various intercultural friendly associations to be observed in class across the borders of the aforementioned subgroups, such as between Julia and Yasir, who often chatted and laughed with each other, and between Quinten and Zahira. At the end of the year, Constanza also confirmed that she was good friends with Yasir, and that with other students, they regularly had a drink together after school. Students who appeared to be a bit more solitary were Joeri, native Dutch, and Beyonce from Congo and Delano from Curaçao, notably the only black students in class. In the first months, it seems that gossips were going around in class about Joeri (rumour had it that he was stoned, for instance) but after Yasir had lectured the class about this (without mentioning names), Joeri gradually got accepted as actually a good student according to Laurens. Beyonce, with family roots in Congo but raised in the Netherlands, could often be found sitting next to Zahira, a Turkish Dutch girl, who often was chatting merrily with the male students around her. Zahira was the only girl in class who seemed to hang out more regularly with boys like Quinten, Floris and Jermias, also after school (but not with the Turkish guys!). Delano was born and raised on the Antilles, his Dutch was not completely fluent. During the PREFLEX exercise in which the students had to draw a commercial for an Arabic country, Delano was in a subgroup with Laurens, Jochem and Rolf. There was hardly any interaction between him and the three others. The commercial they eventually presented even consisted of only three instead of the required four picture frames. Delano left school at the beginning of the second semester to prepare for the conservatory.

While according to Constanza, Sophie and Laurens, everybody in class got along fine with each other, Dylan found the overall atmosphere in class 'hard and direct'. People felt offended quite easily, he claimed, and others were very quickly attacked. Perhaps because everyone was new, they had to prove themselves to each other. And students originated from various places: *Delft, Voorschoten, Hillegom... Everyone is really from everywhere*. Dylan especially mentioned Julia, Sophie and Yasir as the ones 'with the biggest mouth'. His unpleasant memory of Baris lashing out at Julia fits in with his unfavourable impression of the atmosphere in class. Notably, in the interviews, both Sophie and Constanza referred to a confrontation they had with a (male, native Dutch) fellow student, due to their quite straightforward way of phrasing their

critical feedback. Constanza saw herself as a perfectionist who meant well, but she was aware that the other party might find it hard to hear her criticism.

### **5.2.5 Intercultural/international experiences outside of school**

All but two of the seven students of class CE 1C who were interviewed had experience with working in an international environment, the majority because of a three- or four-month work placement abroad (Italy, Spain, Austria) they did for their previous training (mbo), and at least two students combined their CE study with work. Thus, through Internet, mail and skype, Laurens worked with people from for instance the US to make websites, and the previous year he had commissioned someone in China to build the IOS app for the THUAS school calendar for the Iphone. Dylan worked for a company that makes watches which they wanted to sell in the Scandinavian countries. When they were at a trade fair, they discovered that their watches were priced too cheap for the market of these rich countries. Dylan learned that in order to market a product in another country you should be informed about that country and also look at the marketing strategies of other successful companies. He also learned from his boss that in China business negotiations are done differently than in the Netherlands: *'First you have to socialize, have dinner and some drinks together, and only after that there's talk about the deal. And then things go smoothly'*. He also learned that you must know about what currently is going on in the country: *'A director of another company went to China for business, just at the time of that typhoon – and nobody was at work. He sat in his hotel room for two weeks and then returned (without having accomplished anything)'*. Constanza mentioned frequent visits to her father's family in Spain, as well as family holidays to places like Brasil, Cuba (*'they have so little over there'*) and Dubai (*'they don't like it there if women haven't covered their shoulders and knees, so we didn't do that'*), Ahmet referred to family visits to Turkey. Notably, only the two Turkish-Dutch students did not report any international work experiences.

Several (male) students reported friendships with guys from different ethnic backgrounds, but all of them emphasized that these did not feel like cross-cultural friendships. Laurens worked with Moroccan and Turkish employees in a supermarket but was likewise adamant that the problems he sometimes

had with his personnel (theft, being late for work) had nothing to do with their culture.

### **5.2.6 Attitude during/towards PREFLEX training**

During the first PREFLEX class, the majority of the students showed an interested attitude, but in the following classes many lost interest during the plenary parts: they played with their phone, yawned, talked amongst each other and did not respond to questions asked by the teacher. However, when the class split up in subgroups, students became more active, engaging vividly with each other and often laughing together. At the same time, the topic at hand was only briefly addressed, after which personal conversations were picked up again.

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*Zahira asks David what they are supposed to do for this assignment. She clearly did not pay attention when Liv explained it to the class. “Oh we should just chat a bit [beetje slap ouwehoeren] about that”, David replies while pointing at the questions on the smartboard. They laugh together about his remark.*

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The native Dutch subgroup consisting of Laurens, Jochem and Rolf did not show much interest in the PREFLEX training either. In a conversation during one of the classes, Laurens and Rolf told the researcher that they considered the training to be useless, because it contained much talking about each other's experiences and identity, which to them should not be part of the curriculum: *We are already getting to know each other personally in our free time outside of class.*

The observer got the impression that most students had not done their homework assignments. And when they did get to work, they did not critically engage with the material in order to form their own thoughts and opinions. Some of the tasks were considered more as a cloze exercise than as an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the use and relevance of intercultural competences in their own environment. For example, when asked to discuss which intercultural competences played a role in a particular business case, several students would just copy the list of intercultural

competences as mentioned in the training syllabus, without forming their own ideas about the situation.

During the interviews, the majority of the respondents confirmed that they were sceptical about the usefulness of the PREFLEX training. Although on second thoughts, Sophie acknowledged that it was obvious they were offered the PREFLEX training because they chose International Management - you needed to have knowledge about different cultures. She learned to be more aware that not every one is like you, and to look for a balance between adapting to the other and remaining true to yourself [*je moet je eigen karakter nog laten zien*]. Her friend Constanza especially appreciated the parts that conveyed knowledge about specific cultures that could be linked with experiences in business.

Most of the boys were less positive, they did not learn much from the training; they thought it was vague and obvious [*open deuren intrappen*]. Intercultural competences, some claimed, could not really be learned at school: *It's more something you have to feel; You learn that automatically when you have friends from various cultures*. An exception was Laurens; although he did not find all assignments useful, he did find the training interesting, in particular when it provided him with more insights into mistakes made in international marketing. And he really liked working on his portfolio.

The only concrete assignment students remembered was the drawing of the advertisement. However, especially the guys remembered it not because they learned so much from it, but because of the fun part: they laughed at each other because of their silly drawings [*elkaar een beetje uitlachen om elkaars tekening*], while Baris thought that drawing pictures was beneath him: *This is not what I came at school for today, this hassle with drawing*.

Nevertheless, all students learned that if you want to market a product in another country, or when you work abroad, you have to be mindful about culture, that people may have different norms and values than your own. Baris had even brought this insight into practice, as he mentioned in the

interview at the end of the year. He worked at the The Hague market, a ‘*very allochthonous*’ market:

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*I learned that there are many differences, and that you should try and trace these differences. Let me give you an example. I noticed that Somalians always want a discount. So now, when I have a Somalian customer, when it costs 5 euro I tell them it's 6 euro. Then I give them the discount they ask for, and then they are happy and buy it for 5 euro. It really works!*

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### **5.2.7 Suggestions for improving the PREFLEX training**

All students from class 1C would have liked the training to be more focused on examples from marketing, and providing them with more country specific information, for instance on China or Spain. Many students also expressed the wish to enhance their knowledge of specific foreign cultures, because they see this as useful for their education, their future career and their internship abroad. Various students expressed the wish to learn more about specific cultures in the PREFLEX training or in other classes. Some mentioned the course International Marketing as a course which already provided them with knowledge on this topic.



# 6. RESULTS CE/IM CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS – CLASS 1D

## 6.1 Composition of the class

Class CE 1D (PREFLEX training in second semester) consisted of thirty-two students at the beginning of this academic year: nine female and twenty-three male students. Twenty-three students had a native Dutch background; nine students had immigrant roots, with family from Morocco, Surinam, the Dutch Antilles, Moluccas and Indonesia. Their previous training was senior secondary school (havo). During the first semester, observations were conducted in classes of International Marketing, taught by Isabel de Rooy, and in classes of English, taught by Liv Kaur. The majority of these classes contained very little to no interactions, because of the teacher-centred instruction. In March 2014, at the beginning of the PREFLEX training, five students from this class were interviewed: Radha, Koen, Kenneth, Jeffrey and Anne-Sofie. At that time, two of the eight selected students had dropped out. For the second semester, teacher Liv Kaur had decided for the PREFLEX training to split the class in two in order to be able to work with smaller groups. We observed the first two sessions of subgroup A, the third session of subgroup B and the final session, which was meant for the entire class. Final interviews were conducted with three students: Kenneth, Jeffrey and Anne-Sofie, while Koen and Radha had dropped out.

## 6.2 Intercultural Competences

### 6.2.1 Attitude

During the observations, students in this class often expressed an open and supportive attitude to each other, but showed a lack of interest and concentration in relation to the class content. Several of the male students with a native Dutch background showed an uninterested and sometimes disrespectful attitude towards the teacher and/or fellow students, judging by

their inactive body posture, occasional rude remarks, and the fact that they were often laughing and talking amongst each other during instructions by the teacher. These students displayed a somewhat rude sense of humor on several occasions, making jokes that could be perceived as insulting.

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*I join the group of Dirk, Sem and Rik for the short group assignment. After having made the mind map of English words, they soon start to talk about other things. I ask them how things are going in class, noting that hardly any students have dropped out thus far. Dirk and Sem say that they think Ganesh and Martin will drop out soon, because they are often absent from class. They are both not present in this class. "That says it all", comments Sem, "I think Martin has issues with women in his private life. He is a weirdo, you know. He also told me he has mental problems. He told me this because we are friends." Sem pronounces the word "friends" in a way that sounds rather sarcastic to me. He smiles to Dirk while he is telling me this. Dirk laughs. I remember there are two students called Martijn in the class, and I ask Sem who the other one is. Sem points him out to me, adding: "He is the evil one".*

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Johan likewise talked about how within his circle of native Dutch friends they regularly make 'the usual jokes' [*standaard geintjes*] about Turks or foreigners who do not work. Although on the one hand, he emphasized that this was merely innocent fun [*echt meer grapjes, niet een serieus vooroordeel*], he suggested on the other hand that this happened also due to how 'foreigners sometimes behave themselves in the Netherlands': one of his friends was once beaten up by a group of Moroccan guys, another had been threatened with a gun.

Simultaneously, like in class CE 1C, students like Kenneth, Koen and Johan thought that cultural differences did not play a role in their class. To Johan, immigrant fellow students like Kenneth and Jeffrey were

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*not (like) annoying foreigners. They are better educated than guys you meet on the street.*

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According to Koen

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*There really is a Dutch culture in our class, because most students were born in the Netherlands.*

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And Kenneth observed:

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*Maybe four or five students have a background abroad. But they were raised here, so how can we learn from them [about other cultures]? I have my doubts about that.*

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The only male student who experienced cultural differences in the classroom was Antillean-Dutch Jeffrey. Being himself from Rotterdam, he identified the students whom he felt most close to as:

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*more of the culture of Rotterdam [...] Lucas [Moluccan-Dutch] studied in Rotterdam, so he has the Rotterdam culture a bit. And Martin [Serbian-Dutch] is from The Hague but he also has the culture of Rotterdam. In Rotterdam, people are more spontaneous, more nonchalant and they use more street language.*

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When, however, Jeffrey came to talk about the difference between his former high school and his class at THUAS, ethnicity appeared to play a role after all:

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*In Rotterdam I was in a class full of allochthones, it was quite unusual to have a lot of Dutchmen in your class. Now it's the other way around [...] It was a bit difficult in the beginning. I was able to speak ABN, but I was more inclined to speak street language, with Moroccan influence, like wajjah or something, and to act very nonchalant. But now I've dropped that and I can mix better with the others.*

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On some occasions, the native Dutch male students' rude sense of humor and lack of intercultural sensitivity was compensated for by the open attitude of other students.

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*I ask if everybody took part in the Intro camp. Anne-Sofie says that not everyone was there, she missed it for example. Feodor and Kenneth count four people who were not there at the camp. Feodor adds: "This Moroccan guy was not there, Shwann or something." He emphasizes the name like something weird or dirty and shows a funny face while saying it. "But we have welcomed them afterwards", says Kenneth with a big smile, "we made sure they were taken in in the right way." Anne-Sofie: "Yes, they are accepted."*

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When interviewed, Kenneth told us that he had always been open to other cultures, that this is how he was raised:

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*I don't immediately give my opinion or judge someone.*

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### **6.2.2 Skills**

For many students, language skills were most important, they wished to improve their English, or were considering learning languages like Spanish or French. In class, students often encouraged each other when certain assignments appeared to be difficult, especially when it came to English skills.

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*Lieke to Fleur during the group assignment: "You are really good for our group, because you know the meaning of so many difficult words."*

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The level of English in this (havo) class seemed to be a bit more advanced than in the 1C (mbo) group, with students less often having to search for the right words. Still, also in this class several students preferred to speak Dutch and avoided answering in English.

During one of the IM classes, an interesting discussion took place about the difference between judgments and prejudices about cultures. Several students expressed a nuanced, but critical attitude in relation to cultural relativism, by stating that one should be able to form a judgment in relation to culture. The possibility of positive judgments was discussed, as well as the possibility to condemn certain practices related to culture which went against one's own moral principles or were a violation of human rights. It was also mentioned that understanding a certain culture on the one hand, and forming a critical opinion or negative judgment about certain practices within that culture on the other hand, were not necessarily contradictory positions. Understanding another culture, did not automatically imply that one never judged that culture. Kenneth was quite confident about his ability to put people at ease. In the rare occasions that he did express his opinion,

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*I do it in a light-hearted way, so that the other will not feel like being attacked, but will feel comfortable.*

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This ability to make connections across differences is confirmed by Anne-Sofie:

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*Kenneth is someone who is friendly to everyone; he acts as a link in class [een schakel in de klas].*

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### **6.2.3 Knowledge**

During the IM lessons in the first semester, several students emphasized the importance of knowledge and understanding of other cultures in order to do business abroad successfully. Ganesh, Anna and Kenneth, all students from immigrant families, emphasized the importance of this first during the class discussion. When interviewed later, Kenneth indicated that he had learned most about cultural diversity from the IM lessons.

In the group presentations about various international brands, the students shared information about different national cultures. The assignment asked students to compare two cultures, but in the presentations there was only one student who really made a comparison between cultures. Others rather

listed facts and figures about different countries, speaking a bit about cultural customs, but without in-depth analysis. The image of the discussed cultures therefore remained somewhat general and superficial. In addition, the information they provided referred more to country-specific than to cultural characteristics.

In one of the classes, knowledge about socio-economic conditions in Western and non-Western countries was discussed. Students spoke about bad labour conditions in Brazil, Qatar, India and China. Also, discrimination on the labour market in the Netherlands was discussed.

When looking back at the Intercultural Project Week and the PREFLEX training in the second semester, three of the five students we interviewed told us that they had learned most from conversations with other, especially international, students:

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*I spoke with someone who had lived in Japan for a couple of years, and she told me for instance about the different forms of greeting.*

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#### **6.2.4 Group dynamics**

At the beginning of the academic year, class 1D seemed to be made up by several homogeneous groups in terms of gender and ethnicity. The boys with an immigrant background sat together, there was a larger group of native-Dutch boys clustering in another corner, four girls with an interest in fashion sat together, and four more quiet girls sought each other's company. However, from October onwards more intercultural groups and conversations were observed and the groups appeared to mix more. The interviews confirmed this impression: rather than ethnic or cultural similarities, the reasons for preferring to associate and work with other students had to do with clothing style (especially the girls), learning style (criteria such as 'serious' and 'clever' were used by especially students with a vwo diploma), gender (Kenneth distinguishing between boys who remain among boys, and boys like himself who mixed more with girls) and age (Johan: *we are the younger ones in class, the older ones also tend to seek each other's company*). Still, culture or ethnicity sometimes came up as sensitive issues. Native Dutch Anne-Sofie for

example had not dared to ask her fellow (Hindustani-Dutch) student Manisha why she had invited the entire class on her birthday party – something Anne-Sofie would never have done herself, and struck her as ‘a bit weird’. She was apprehensive about asking Manisha, because, as she explained, such a question might be experienced as offensive because it might have something to do with Manisha’s cultural background. Marie-Lotte sensed a similarly sensitive issue being touched upon when she heard Manisha saying to Radha (also Hindustani-Dutch): ‘I don’t want to be friends with you, because I don’t mix with Hindustani.’

### **6.2.5 Intercultural/international experiences outside of school**

Of the five students we interviewed on previous educational experience, only Jeffrey and Koen considered their high school as a really mixed environment. Jeffrey talked about *a class full of allochthones*, and Koen attended an international school. They agreed with the other three students that their class at THUAS could hardly be named culturally diverse, because nearly all students were born and raised in the Netherlands. While Jeffrey was still very close to his ‘allochthone’ friends from high school, Johan, who had only native Dutch friends, heard about several bad experiences with especially Moroccan guys, but *I never experienced it myself, only that they act tough or shout something at you...*

### **6.2.6 Attitude during/toward PREFLEX training (in second semester)**

We observed the first and second session of group A, where thirteen students were present. During the first session most students were cooperative and willingly participated in the various tasks. When asked, three students considered themselves already interculturally competent: Erik, Barbara (both native Dutch) and Martin (Serbian-Dutch). Indonesian-Dutch Kenneth, however, showed boredom in his body language, and at the end he commented: ‘We just had ICP week, so we already know all of this.’ When for the second session, students discussed in small groups an intercultural experience of the previous week, several students referred to what they had done during the Intercultural Project Week. Some said they had learned something, though hardly any example was provided, others were quite disappointed. One of the rare outside-school experiences was brought to the fore by Sietse, who related that when he went out with some Moroccan

colleagues, they were sometimes denied entrance to a club, which to him were a proof of discrimination.

For the third PREFLEX session the other half of class 1D was observed. This group B consisted of twelve native Dutch, two immigrant Dutch male students and three female students (two native and one Hindustani-Dutch). The main assignment during this session was the drawing of an advertisement for an inexpensive medicine for the Middle East. Most of the time, the guys were quite noisy, joking a lot with one another, for instance about how to draw pictures of 'Arabic people', not giving the impression that they were taking this very seriously. The girls were sitting dispersed in the circle of students, their posture mostly withdrawn. The majority of students had not done their homework assignments. Kenneth and Koen stood out: Kenneth because he had really made an effort to do the homework (listing of his own (in) competences), participated actively and showed uneasiness when a joke on Arabs and beards was made, while Koen silently paid attention and did not join in with the jokes made by his native Dutch friends.

The final PREFLEX session was attended by all students of 1D together, and consisted of an explanation by the teacher about the various assignments they had to do in the months to come. Students showed considerable lack of interest and boredom, and the lesson took no more than half an hour. In a personal conversation, Erik told the teacher that he already had intercultural training in high school from which he learned a lot more than from the PREFLEX training. He criticized the usefulness of the Hofstede model, and found the Red Cross assignment a waste of time for students in Higher Professional Training.

When interviewed a couple of months later, Radha and Kenneth appreciated the training insofar as they learned somewhat more about the background of some of their fellow students. But Kenneth doubted whether it was possible for students to really learn from one another, because they all were actually born and raised in the Netherlands. Johan was downright negative:

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*I only attended the first lesson [...] I skip the useless classes. The idea was to get to know each others' culture, but we don't have that many different cultures in our class.*

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# 7. RESULTS 360-DEGREES FEEDBACK FORMS – CE/IM

## 7.1 First semester

### 7.1.1 General

The results show that students from both the CE-test group and the CE-control group improved on all four skills in the eyes of their inner circle, since the beginning of the academic year. The test group had the highest score at ‘personal/social competences’ (3.76) and the control group at ‘languages’ (3.85). In the test group, the second and third position were occupied by ‘intercultural competences’ (3.74) and respectively, ‘languages’ (3.66). In the control group those positions were occupied by ‘personal/social competences’ (3.63) and ‘intercultural competences’ (3.54). Both groups had the lowest score at ‘academic/professional competences’ (respectively 3.53 and 3.25).

The test group improved to a greater extent than the control group at the competences ‘intercultural competences’ and ‘academic/professional competences’ (3.74 versus 3.54 and 3.89 versus 3.61). With regard to the competence ‘languages’ the reverse applied (3.85 versus 3.66).

	<i>CE-test group</i>	<i>CE-control group</i>
Personal/social competences	3.76	3.63
Intercultural competences	3.74* <sup>1</sup>	3.54
Academic/professional competences	3.89*	3.61
Languages	3.66	3.85*

### 7.1.2 Personal/social competences

With regard to ‘personal/social competences’, both the test group and the control group improved most strongly on the dimension ‘shows initiative’ (3.95 and 3.73), followed by ‘independence, self-reliance’ (3.84 and 3.72) and ‘world view’ (3.79 and 3.72). Compared to the control group, the test group improved more strongly on two of the eight dimensions: ‘knows own possibilities and limitations’ (3.75 versus 3.47) and ‘shows initiative’ (3.95 versus 3.73).

1. Personal/social competences		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Independence, self-reliance	3.84	3.72
Confidence, positive about self	3.72	3.61
Flexibility, adaptability	3.75	3.61
Open mindedness	3.57	3.62
Knows own possibilities and limitations	3.75*	3.47
Shows initiative	3.95*	3.73
Worldview	3.79	3.72
Social commitment	3.72	3.56
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>3.63</b>

### 7.1.3 Intercultural competences

With respect to the level ‘attitude’ within ‘intercultural competences’, both the test group and the control group most strongly improved themselves on the dimension ‘respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity’ (3.81 and 3.54). The test group improved itself more strongly than the control group on all attitude dimensions (total average 3.76 versus 3.46).

2.1 Intercultural competences: Attitude		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity	3.81*	3.54
Open, unprejudiced	3.74*	3.48
Willing to question own opinions	3.82*	3.38
Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity	3.65*	3.44
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.76*</b>	<b>3.46</b>

At the ‘knowledge’ level, the test group improved itself more strongly in total than the control group (3.89 versus 3.69). At the dimension level, the test group scored higher on ‘knowledge of other cultures’ (4.01 versus 3.7).

2.2 Intercultural competences: Knowledge		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Knowledge of other cultures	4.01*	3.70
Knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on behaviour and forms of communication	3.78	3.68
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.89*</b>	<b>3.69</b>

With regard to ‘skills’, differences were only visible at dimension level, not in total. Compared with the control group, the test group scored higher at ‘being aware of own feelings and capable of handling them’ (3.67 versus 3.43) and ‘self-reflection’ (3.69 versus 3.46).

2.3 Intercultural competences: Skills		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Social and communication skills	3.73	3.80
Being able to judge situations	3.70	3.55
Being aware of own feelings and capable of handling them	3.67*	3.43
Self-reflection	3.69*	3.46
Total average	3.70	3.56

It went for ‘critical cultural awareness’ too that differences between the test group and the control group were only visible at the dimension level. The test group scored higher at ‘being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture’ (3.63 versus 3.43).

2.4 Intercultural competences: Critical cultural awareness		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Being able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others	3.66	3.59
Being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture	3.63*	3.43
Total average	3.65	3.51

With regard to ‘academic competences’ the CE-test group scored higher on all dimensions and in total too.

<b>3.1 Academic competences</b>		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Specific disciplinary knowledge	3.95*	3.66
Being able to conceptualize and analyse	3.84*	3.62
Critical research attitude	3.79*	3.54
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.86*</b>	<b>3.61</b>

The same applied to the ‘professional competences’, with the exception of the ‘thinking out-of-the-box’ and ‘interested in an international career’ dimensions.

<b>3.2 Professional competences</b>		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Being able to apply knowledge and skills in special and unusual situations	3.78*	3.53
Capacity to solve problems, being innovative	3.83*	3.59
Thinking out-of-the-box	3.82	3.72
Clear view on profession	3.90*	3.46
Clear perspective of own career	3.98*	3.56
Possibilities on the labour market	3.86*	3.46
Motivation for study and profession	4.12*	3.65
Interested in international career	4.08	3.99
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.92*</b>	<b>3.62</b>

### 7.1.4 Languages

'Languages' was the only level at which the CE-control group scored higher than the CE-test group (3.85 versus 3.66).

4. Languages		
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>	<i>Average score CE-control group</i>
Foreign language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing	3.66	3.85*

## 7.2 Second semester

### 7.2.1 General

The students in the CE-test group improved on all four skills in the eyes of their inner circle, since the beginning of the second semester. The test group had the highest score for 'languages' (4.00). The second and third position were occupied by respectively 'academic/professional competences' (3.72) and 'personal/social competences' (3.65). 'Intercultural competences' had the lowest score (3.60).

	<i>CE-test group</i>
Personal/social competences	3,65
Intercultural competences	3,60
Academic/professional competences	3,72
Languages	4,00

### 7.2.2 Personal/social competences

With regard to 'personal/social competences', the test group improved most strongly on the dimension 'shows initiative' (3.85), followed by 'independence, self-reliance' (3.74) and 'confidence, positive about self' (3.74 and 3.69).

1. Personal/social competences	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Independence, self-reliance	3.74
Confidence, positive about self	3.69
Flexibility, adaptability	3.65
Open mindedness	3.59
Knows own possibilities and limitations	3.54
Shows initiative	3.85
Worldview	3.64
Social commitment	3.47
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.65</b>

### 7.2.3 Intercultural competences

With respect to the level 'attitude' within 'intercultural competences', the test group most strongly improved itself on the dimension 'open, unprejudiced' (3.63).

2.1 Intercultural competences: Attitude	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity	3.59
Open, unprejudiced	3.63
Willing to question own opinions	3.47
Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity	3.59
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.57</b>

At the ‘knowledge’ level, the test group improved itself most strongly on the dimension ‘knowledge of other cultures’ (3.70).

2.2 Intercultural competences: Knowledge	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Knowledge of other cultures	3.70
Knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on behaviour and forms of communication	3.64
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.67</b>

With regard to ‘skills’ the strongest improvement was shown regarding ‘social and communication skills’ (3.76).

2.3 Intercultural competences: Skills	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Social and communication skills	3.76
Being able to judge situations	3.66
Being aware of own feelings and capable of handling them	3.51
Self-reflection	3.55
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.62</b>

The average scores on both dimensions of ‘critical cultural awareness’ were equal (3.55).

2.4 Intercultural competences: Critical cultural awareness	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Being able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others	3.55
Being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture	3.55
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.55</b>

With regard to ‘academic competences’ the CE-test group had the highest score for ‘specific disciplinary knowledge’ (3.77).

3.1 Academic competences	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Specific disciplinary knowledge	3.77
Being able to conceptualize and analyse	3.72
Critical research attitude	3.74
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.74</b>

‘Interested in international career’ had the highest score (3.95) at the ‘professional competences’ level.

3.2 Professional competences	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Being able to apply knowledge and skills in special and unusual situations	3.58
Capacity to solve problems, being innovative	3.72
Thinking out-of-the-box	3.62
Clear view on profession	3.68
Clear perspective of own career	3.75
Possibilities on the labour market	3.69
Motivation for study and profession	3.65
Interested in international career	3.95
<b>Total average</b>	<b>3.70</b>

### 7.2.4 Languages

At ‘languages’ level the test group scored an average of 4.00.

4. Languages	
	<i>Average score CE-test group</i>
Foreign language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing	4.00



# 8. CONCLUSIONS

## 8.1 IBMS (international classrooms)

### 8.1.1 Personal and social competences

Personal and social competences were only researched by means of the 360 degrees feedback forms (in the first semester). In the eyes of their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved on all dimensions of the personal and social competences measured in this study (Appendix 4). The test group most strongly improved on the dimension 'worldview'; the control group on the dimension 'independence, self-reliance' and 'social commitment'. Compared to the test group, the control group improved significantly more in terms of 'social commitment'.

### 8.1.2 Intercultural competences

#### *Attitude*

In both classes we observed that many, both native and immigrant Dutch as well as foreign students, showed an open attitude to others, chatting with one another, showing curiosity about and respect for other cultural backgrounds. However, some students were more ambivalent. For instance, one (native Dutch) girl indicated during the interview that she was really interested in people who think differently from herself, but was also heard saying (in class) that she avoided contact with Turkish-Dutch people because of their different norms and values. While on the one hand she had become aware, given their entirely different upbringing, how difficult it was for students from China to adapt to the assertivity required from them at a Dutch university, in the course of the year she grew increasingly frustrated and angry with their perceived passivity, accusing them (but also foreign students in general) of being free riders who took advantage of the native Dutch as the only 'serious' students. Except for the Chinese, all students we interviewed indicated that they chose IBMS because they wished to acquire the skills that gave them the opportunity to work in an international environment. The Chinese students, on the other hand, were focused more on succeeding for exams and improving their (English) language skills than on learning from experiences in an international and intercultural setting.

The 360 degrees feedback forms asked relatives, friends and knowledgeable acquaintances to indicate developments in international competences (Appendix 4). Generally there was a marked increase in these competences, but no discernible difference between the test group and the control group. The same went for the self-reflection reports. This fits the observations and interviews data, and may be explained by the flaws in the set-up of the research or by the fact that IBMS, by its very nature, pays considerable attention to international competences in all classes.

### ***Skills (including languages)***

The observations showed that many students were quite good at social skills: they were able and willing to make contact with students outside their own ethnic group; some actively stimulated fellow students when they showed insecurity or did not dare speak up. They might sometimes be surprised about customs that were strange to them, but most of the time they refrained from judgment. During the PREFLEX training, several students explicitly stated that they found it important to place themselves in the position of the other in intercultural interactions and show respect. Our observations confirmed the gap in English language skills between the students from China and the rest of the class, which hampered them considerably in understanding what was taught in classes and in communicating with teachers and non-Chinese students. However, whether students gradually improved other intercultural skills, the observations could not really tell us. For that we had to rely on what students told us in the interviews, the self-reflection reports and the 360-degree feedback. From the foreign students, only Owen (fresh from Aruba) from class 1B, was able to provide an extensive overview of how much he had learned from the culture shock during his first half year in the Netherlands.

We noticed that several international students had difficulties to find their way around in the university and start their new life as a student in the Netherlands. This was especially the case for the Chinese and Antillean students we interviewed. They indicated that they lacked information on what to expect and how to prepare for their stay in the Netherlands, for example regarding housing, finances, study attitude and cultural differences. They would have liked to receive more feedback once they arrived in The Hague. They were often confused regarding the functioning of the school and their

study programme; often they wondered where to find information on the class schedule, the study books and the deadlines for assignments. And they were not sure whom they could turn to for questions. According to the students we interviewed, these uncertainties and this lack of information combined with feelings of being discriminated against by native Dutch students (to be discussed further in the section on **Group dynamics** below) contributed to the high dropout rate of international students.

According to their inner circle, the students of both the test group and the control group improved during the first semester on all skills dimensions of the intercultural competences that were measured by means of 360 degrees feedback forms (Appendix 4). Both groups most strongly improved in terms of 'foreign language skills'. No significant differences were noted between these groups at both dimension level and total level.

### **Knowledge**

In both classes, students were sometimes observed to ask about how things were done in one another's country (*i.e.* about certain habits): 'this is how it works with us, how is that with you?' Knowledge concerning social, economic or political circumstances was rarely exchanged, nor was there much talk about experiences with different educational systems.

In the eyes of their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved themselves during the first semester on all knowledge dimensions that were measured by means of 360 degrees feedback forms (Appendix 4). Both groups showed a strong improvement in terms of 'knowledge of other cultures'. They did not show any significant differences towards each other at both dimension level and total level.

### **Critical intercultural consciousness**

Critical intercultural consciousness was only researched by means of 360 degrees feedback forms. In the eyes of their inner circle, the students of both the test group and the control group improved themselves during the first semester on all dimensions (Appendix 4). The test group most strongly improved on the dimension of 'being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture'. The control group showed improvement in terms of 'being

able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others'. Both groups did not show any significant differences towards each other at both dimension level and total level.

### **8.1.3 Academic and professional competences**

Academic and professional competences were also only researched by means of the 360 degrees feedback forms. The inner circle of the students found that they improved during the first semester on all dimensions (Appendix 4). With regard to academic competences, the test group showed improvement most strongly with regard to 'being able to conceptualize and analyse'; the control group's improvement was noted in their 'critical research attitude'. With regard to professional competences, both the test group and the control group improved most in terms of being 'interested in an international career'. Compared to the test group, the control group scored significantly higher regarding 'clear perspective of own career' and 'interest in international career'. Conversely, at the total level the test group and control group did not differ from each other.

Compared to all measured competences the improvement of intercultural competences was the lowest for both the test group and the control group, with the exception of 'languages'; the average score at this competence was the highest.

All in all the conclusion is that the IBMS students gained a lot in personal and particularly intercultural competences during their first semester, straight after the PREFLEX training and subsequent guidance, but according to the 360 degrees feedback, the control group did slightly better than the test group. The improvement in both the testgroup and the controlgroup was strongest with regard to 'languages' (4.39 and 4.34 on a scale of 1-5). It should be noted that the 360 degrees feedback was only successfully obtained after the first semester.

### **8.1.4 Group dynamics**

When interviewed, students from both classes started by saying that in their class everyone interacted well with everyone. When exploring this a bit further, they realized that subgroup formation was actually going on in both classes, which was in line with our observations.

In class 1A, which received the PREFLEX training at the beginning of the year, the boys and girls seemed to mix quite well, except for the students from China. In the interviews, the two Chinese respondents mentioned several non-Chinese students as people they were close to in class. However, this was not confirmed by our observations, that is: we did not observe them interacting in class with any of the non-Chinese students they mentioned as their friends. Instead, during the first semester, both Chinese students had a negative experience when their contribution to the group project was rejected by their fellow students. In both cases, a native Dutch student had berated them publicly (*i.e.* by writing a mail to the entire project group, in one case including the teacher) for delivering unsatisfactory work. During the second semester, the cooperation in the project group consisting of these same Chinese students and three Dutch students failed entirely. We observed how a negative spiral of misunderstandings and mutual disappointments led the Chinese students to seek each other's company, adopt a wait and see attitude and finally give up and drop out of school. The Dutch students first sought refuge to an authoritarian mode of communication in order to get the Chinese students to make a useful contribution to the project. When this strategy did not work, they gave up as well, and finished the project themselves. In the end, both parties felt extremely angry and resentful toward each other, the Dutch accusing the Chinese of being uncommunicative and passive, the Chinese accusing the Dutch of being mean, insulting and discriminating against foreigners.

In class 1B, where the PREFLEX training was given in the second semester, the situation of the Chinese students seemed a bit less precarious, as far as we could see. There were more positive remarks made by Chinese students, especially about being invited and stimulated by fellow students or the teacher to come forward and speak up. Nevertheless, the Chinese students were perceived as keeping themselves apart from the rest. All five Chinese students who started, had dropped out before the end of the academic year. Furthermore a divide was noted between the boys who went out together outside school and the girls who did not, and at times the foreign and the Dutch boys went their separate ways, because the latter lived with their parents, often outside The Hague. But for the rest, the male students of several cultural groups seemed to meet a lot outside school. Unfortunately,

we could not gather information about their own perceptions of their position in class, as no interviews with them were conducted. Apart from the Bulgarian and Bulgarian-German girl communicating frequently, we did not get a clear picture of the interaction between the girls in this class.

## 8.2 CE/IM (Dutch classrooms)

### 8.2.1 Personal and social competences

Personal and social competences were only researched by means of the 360 degrees feedback forms (first semester: both test group and control group; second semester: only the test group). In the eyes of their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved during the first semester on all dimensions of the personal and social competences that were measured (Appendix 4). Both groups improved most strongly on the dimension 'shows initiative'. Compared to the control group the test group improved significantly more strongly on the dimensions 'knows own possibilities and limitations' and 'shows initiative'. During the second semester the test group improved on all dimensions; the highest score was registered in terms 'shows initiative'.

### 8.2.2 Intercultural competences

#### **Attitude**

In both classes students showed curiosity, interest and respect towards people with a different culture.

The majority of CE students associated notions of interculturality exclusively with international relationships rather than with relationships between people from different ethnic backgrounds within the Netherlands. This focus on commonalities was especially emphasized by male students, who did not recognize any cultural differences between native Dutch and immigrant students because, so they explained, they were all born and raised in the Netherlands. One (native Dutch) boy distinguished between *annoying foreigners you meet on the street* and his fellow immigrant students who were *better educated*, which was confirmed by an Antillean-Dutch student when he compared his former high school class as *full of allochthones* who were used to speaking street language and acting *very nonchalant*, and his class

at THUAS where he had to get used to speaking ABN (official civilized Dutch) and change his attitude of nonchalance. To native Dutch female students, on the other hand, it was far more obvious to link the notion of cultural differences to fellow students with an immigrant background, *i.e.* to fellow female students. This may be explained by the fact that women much more than men are expected to be the carriers of the (religious) values of their community, both in the way they dress and the way they behave. One striking difference for the native Dutch girls was that they had far more freedom of movement than female immigrant students.

According to their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved during the first semester on all attitude dimensions of the intercultural competences that were measured by means of 360 degrees feedback forms (Appendix 4). The test group most strongly improved at 'willing to question own opinions' and the control group at 'respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity'. On all dimensions the test group improved significantly more strongly than the control group. During the second semester the test group improved on all dimensions; the highest score was for an 'open, unprejudiced' attitude. The test group did slightly better, but it is difficult to gauge how this is related to the PREFLEX training as little of that came up in the interviews and – very scant – self reflection reports.

### ***Skills (including languages)***

In both classes, several students were quite insecure about their English language skills, often preferring to speak in Dutch, also when answering a question phrased in English by the teacher. They showed considerable skill in being supportive of and encouraging fellow students who were hesitant to express themselves in English.

During our observations we witnessed several spontaneous conversations about cultural differences, initiated by mentioning a stereotypical image of that particular culture in a questioning mode. In the cases that we overheard students using this strategy, the person addressed always responded in a positive way: by affirming or correcting the image and then providing further knowledge - thereby indicating that this quite unconventional way to open up an intercultural conversation strategy was actually quite effective.

In both classes, there were students who stood out, and were also recognized by their fellow students, as smooth intercultural communicators; by being very skilled in crossing cultural and ethnic borders, they functioned as important links that prevented conflicts running out of hand and held the group together.

According to their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved themselves during the first semester at all skills dimensions of the intercultural competences that were measured by means of 360 degrees feedback forms (Appendix 4). The test group most strongly improved itself at 'social and communication skills'; the control group did that at 'language skills'. Compared to the control group the test group had a higher score at 'being aware of own feelings and capable of handling them' and 'self-reflection'. The control group had a significantly higher score at 'foreign language skills'. During the second semester the test group improved itself at all dimensions; the highest score was at 'foreign language skills'.

### ***Knowledge***

Knowledge of other cultures was often expressed in general terms, coming close to stereotypical images, of the negative or the positive kind, such as: in the Caribbean people are lazy or relaxed, in Spain people are always late but the weather is nice, and people in Turkey will be shocked by commercials promoting alcohol. More detailed knowledge about other cultures was acquired through (sometimes work related) experiences outside school or through informal talks with students, either Dutch students with an immigrant background or international students they had met during the Intercultural Project Week.

But for the lessons in International Marketing, where students had to give presentations, knowledge about the social, political or economic circumstances in other countries was hardly ever expressed.

In the eyes of their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved themselves during the first semester at all knowledge dimensions which were measured by means of 360 degrees feedback forms (Appendix 4). Both groups most strongly improved themselves at 'knowledge

of other cultures'. The test group scored significantly higher at 'knowledge of other cultures' than the control group. During the second semester the test group improved at all dimensions; the highest score was at 'knowledge of other cultures'.

### ***Critical intercultural consciousness***

Critical intercultural consciousness was only researched by means of 360 degrees feedback forms. In the eyes of their inner circle the students of both the test group and the control group improved themselves during the first semester at all dimensions (Appendix 4). Both groups most strongly improved themselves at the dimension 'being able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others'. The test group scored significantly higher at 'being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture'. During the second semester the test group improved at all dimensions (same scores).

### **8.2.3 Academic and professional competences**

It also applies to academic and professional competences that they were only researched by means of the 360 degrees feedback forms. The inner circle of the students found that they improved themselves during the first semester at all dimensions (Appendix 4). With regard to academic competences both groups improved themselves most strongly at 'specific disciplinary knowledge'. With regard to professional competences the test group improved itself most strongly at 'motivation for study and profession'; the control group did that at 'interested in international career'. Compared to the control group the test group scored significantly higher at all academic dimensions. The same went for the professional dimensions, except 'thinking out-of-the-box' and 'interested in international career'. During the second semester the test group improved itself at all dimensions. The highest score at the academic dimensions was 'specific disciplinary knowledge'; at the professional dimensions this was 'interested in international career'.

Compared to all measured competences the improvement at 'academic/professional competences' in the first semester was the highest for the test group. In the control group the competence 'languages' most strongly improved.

### 8.2.4 Group dynamics

In class 1C, which received the PREFLEX training at the beginning of the year, the initial subgroup formation was based on ethnic and gender boundaries and seemed not to develop much: a group of four native Dutch girls stayed closely together, as well as the two (remaining) immigrant girls (with a Turkish and a Congolese background). Four native Dutch guys nicknamed themselves ‘the leeches’, while another group of four guys was more ethnically mixed. Of the ethnically mixed, but religiously homogenous group of initially six immigrant (Muslim) students, two Moroccan-Dutch girls dropped out of school in the first month, the four remaining guys (from Turkish, Afghani and Iraqi background) formed a close group. When one of them dropped out in the course of the second semester he was replaced by a native Dutch guy who was appreciated for his ‘allochtonous’ way of thinking. On the other hand, cross-cultural (male/female) sympathies between individuals also seemed to develop. Yet, while some students thought that, in the end, everybody in class got along fine with one another, others were a bit more critical. One native Dutch student found the atmosphere in class ‘harsh and direct’. He referred to some native Dutch girls but also to some of the ‘foreign boys’, who stood out for being more fierce (*feller*). One of these ‘foreign boys’, on the other hand, noticed that ‘Dutch’ students could be quite direct amongst one another (which was confirmed by the groups of native Dutch guys we observed in making disrespectful jokes about ‘Arabic’ people, ‘foreigners’ or other (also native Dutch) fellow students who somehow did not fit their standard), but that they held themselves back when addressing immigrant students. Their fear of being accused of being offensive, according to this Turkish-Dutch student, created a distance between the ‘Dutch’ and the ‘allochtones’, and he very much appreciated the one native Dutch student who was not afraid to address him in the same direct way as his ‘allochtone’ friends amongst each other. When we combine these perspectives, we might conclude that whereas (some) male immigrant student perceived native Dutch students as *more cold*, *more formal*, (some) male native Dutch experienced them as *more fierce*.

In class 1D, which received the PREFLEX training only in the second semester, students also initially organized on the basis of ethnic and gender boundaries. But after a couple of months the subgroups became more mixed, where new dividing lines were made, notably according to learning style (more ‘serious’

or ‘clever’), clothing style (important for the girls), and age (the ‘younger’ and the ‘older’ ones).

### 8.3 Comparing international and Dutch classrooms

Students from both CE and IBMS did not perceive the relations between Dutch students with different ethnic backgrounds as ‘intercultural relationships’.

In trying to understand cultural differences, some native Dutch students, from both IBMS and CE classes, took their own way of doing as their frame of reference, if not the norm, while international and immigrant students observed such differences without immediately comparing this with what was familiar to them. This also showed in the vocabulary used by these native Dutch students to express their surprise. They did not vent any moral judgements, but used words like strange, funny, weird [*gek, grappig, raar*] to characterize the difference with what they (until now) had considered to be normal [*gewoon, normaal*].

In the CE classes, some native Dutch male students were inclined to make jokes that were insulting for women or people from another ethnic or religious group, a lack of (cultural) sensitivity which we did not observe in the IBMS classes. On the other hand, many (native and immigrant Dutch) CE students showed considerable sensitivity to issues of ethnicity, religion and culture. While this sensitivity often helped to sustain or improve inter-ethnic relationships, it sometimes could also turn into, or be experienced as, oversensitivity, which hampered rather than facilitated further communication.

To many IBMS students, PREFLEX was a useful training, especially because it meant to prepare them for their future international work environment, but also because it sometimes ‘nudged’ them into making contact with students with another ethnic, racial or religious background, making them cross a boundary that they would otherwise not have crossed. To most CE students, on the other hand, tasks where they were asked to explore the relationships with fellow students were seen as useless at worst, and at best as nice reminders of the relevance of what they, in their own views, were doing already spontaneously, in their own free time.

## 8.4 Effectivity of the PREFLEX training

In the first semester, students from IBMS 1A could provide more concrete examples of differences in custom and habits than students from class 1B, and they clearly gained this knowledge during the PREFLEX training. Several students from this class also related that they were actively stimulated (presumably during the PREFLEX training, although students did not always refer to this) to seek contact with people from backgrounds (e.g. African, black, or Muslim) that they had been prejudiced about, and now felt that they would no longer avoid people from this group. None of these experiences were reported by students from the 1B class, not even in the second semester, when they too had attended the PREFLEX training. Some students assumed that the PREFLEX training was aimed at making them more aware of cultural differences, while others said it had taught them to focus more on similarities. The results of the 360 degrees feedback forms show that attending the PREFLEX course did not seem to have had an increasing effect on the IBMS-test group. There were no visible differences between the two groups at the competence level. At the dimension level however, the IBMS-control group scored several times higher than the test group.

From class CE 1 C, several respondents stated that they were encouraged to engage more in conversations about cultural differences with class mates during the PREFLEX assignments. Some of them said they became more aware of cultural differences as a consequence, while others said that they were already open to intercultural contact and were knowledgeable about cultural characteristics before taking part in the training. The results of the 360 degrees feedback forms show that there was no significant difference between the two CE-groups with regard to 'personal'-social competences'. Regarding the competences 'intercultural competences' and 'academic/professional competences' the test group improved to a greater extent than the control group did. Regarding the competence 'languages', however, the reverse was true (3.85 versus 3.66).

Overall, our observations and interviews during the first semester provided insufficient evidence of significant differences in the (development of) intercultural competences between the respective test and control classes of IBMS and CE/IM.

## **8.5 Students' suggestions for improving the PREFLEX training**

Respondents from both IBMS and CE/IM expressed the wish to learn more about country-specific cultural characteristics, in particular knowledge that would be useful for their future career in international business and marketing. Especially CE students found assignments that focused on personal experiences and contacts less relevant, also because the majority did not perceive the relationships between Dutch students from different ethnic and religious backgrounds as 'intercultural'.

Several students indicated they wanted more variation, and other assignments than having to talk together in small groups all the time. In general the tenor was: less talk, more application activities, doing something rather than merely speaking for or about yourself.



# 9. DISCUSSION AND TOPICS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

## 9.1 The precarious position of students from China

The PREFLEX training was developed in order to equip students at THUAS with competences that help them to adapt to and perform well in an entirely different environment, an environment where other ways of doing things and interacting with people (cultures) are dominant. Obviously, the international students in IBMS are already in that situation: to perform well they must adapt to the way of doing things at a Dutch university. The question is: how, if in any way, are they prepared for this by their home university or other institution that organizes their study abroad, or by the host institution, in this case THUAS? And (how) does THUAS prepare host students and teachers to show sufficient hospitality to these ‘guests’?

It was especially the precarious situation of the international students from China that gives rise to these questions. In class IBMS 1A the dropout rate of Chinese students rose to a dramatic 100% in the course of the second semester. Assuming that this is not an unusual pattern, this deserves further investigation.

On the one hand, questions need to be answered regarding the academic track record of international, especially Chinese students in their home country as well as in the access requirements of THUAS: what motivates students from China to register at THUAS, and what are their expectations? Do they have a realistic idea about what it means to study abroad, and do they have a positive wish to broaden their cultural horizon (THUAS as a pull factor). Or is the study at THUAS a second best choice after having failed in gaining access to a Chinese or other international university (China as a push factor)?

On the other hand, considering the lack of English language proficiency of the Chinese students we observed, what are the requirements for being allowed access at THUAS for foreign students? Shouldn't for instance the

requirements for the minimum score for the TOEFL test be raised? And what are the requirements for teachers at THUAS who monitor the group work of students? It seems that this task does not only ask for professional skills to guide students at the level of content, but also at the level of the complicated process of learning how to work together in an international team. Do we, furthermore, have an idea about what happens to Chinese students in the course of their study, how they cope with the severe culture shock they experience, and what happens to them after they drop out? (How) do we monitor these students, (how) do we provide care for those who are on the verge of giving up?

## **9.2 Models of intercultural competences and the everyday reality of hybrid identities**

The text of the PREFLEX study guide is inspired by Geert Hofstede's definition of culture as 'the collective mental programming of the human mind which distinguishes one group of people from another'. Hofstede regularly reminds us that 'this does not imply that everyone in a given society is programmed in the same way [...]. It may well be that the differences among individuals in one country culture are bigger than the differences among all country cultures' (Hofstede et al. 2010). However, when used to make young people conscious of the importance of differences in culture, this approach has two drawbacks. The first is that there is a serious risk that students, however they are cautioned not to essentialize, start perceiving cultures as static entities that determine the way individual members think and act, rather than make them alert to other differences (or crosscultural similarities) related to for instance class, religion, gender, sexual identity, age, profession, political affiliation, etc. The second drawback is that Hofstede's model, in its exclusive focus on national cultures, cannot account for the culturally hybrid identities of young people, including native Dutch youngsters, who grow up in super diverse cities such as The Hague, with class mates, neighbours and/or friends from various ethnic, national, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Neither does it give much room to the perspectives of children of immigrants who grew up learning to navigate between, and mix elements from, two 'home' cultures, *i.e.* the culture of their parents's country on the one hand, and the societal culture of their country where they were born and raised on the other

hand. Nor can it account for the increasing number of children from mixed marriages.

### **9.3 About the normativity and contextuality of assessing competences.**

During the process of analysis of our data, especially of the interviews and observations, we were regularly confronted with the implicit normativity, and hence ‘essentially contested’ nature (following the philosopher W.B. Gallie, 1956) of the notion of competences. A competence is an attitude, skill or piece of knowledge that is perceived as valuable, as something that needs to be developed because it is good. When in the process of attaching codes to fragments of the interview transcriptions and observation reports, based on Deardorff’s pyramid model (see appendixes 5 and 6), we realized that this process of coding was not a value-free undertaking, and that our interpretation of a particular phrase in an interview or interactive event in class involved a normative evaluation as well. For instance, if a native Dutch student suggests that people from Curaçao are really relaxed and do not mind much about arriving on time, is this then proof of (*i.e.* should we code it as) his ‘knowledge’ of Caribbean culture (hence a sign of intercultural competence), or proof that he holds a stereotypical image of Caribbean culture (hence a sign of lack of competence)? Suppose then, as happened in the dialogue we are referring to, that his classmate from Curaçao wholeheartedly agrees with this image? Does this response make his initial claim more true, hence more likely to be a piece of valid knowledge, because someone who himself is from Curaçao must be perceived as knowledgeable about his own culture? Or could it also be possible that this student has been raised in an upper class, Dutchified milieu, and is actually being judgmental of the (supposed) habits of lower-class people from Curaçao? In other words, who is the authority when it comes to coding a claim to knowledge by a respondent as (truly, really) ‘knowledge’ or as a stereotype or prejudice, *i.e.* as a lack of knowledge? By interpreting (*i.e.* coding) certain utterances as signs of intercultural knowledge rather than stereotypical or prejudiced thinking, as researchers we are deciding which claims of our respondents are more or less true. The same goes of course for interpreting an utterance, interaction or action as a sign of a particular intercultural attitude or skill. This problem

actually reminds us that the extent to which a person is interculturally competent (*i.e.* is able ‘to communicate effectively and behave appropriately in intercultural situations’) can in the end only be assessed by his or her behaviour in such situations. In other words, whether a particular joke is insensitive, bringing to the fore a stereotype or not shaking hands insulting, (also) depends on the relational context, on how this act is perceived by one’s partner in interaction.

One especially relevant normative issue that came to the fore in the processes of analyzing our data was: how do we appreciate the outcome that some students are convinced, or claim that they have learned that it is better to emphasize similarities rather than differences? Being able to see similarities across national or ethnic boundaries is not accounted for as an intercultural competence in the pyramid model of Deardorff, nor in the PREFLEX student guide. Are these students then showing that they have not understood what the training was about, are they to be assessed as lacking in intercultural sensitivity? Or should we acknowledge that in some situations, interaction and cooperation may be improved rather than hampered by not focusing on differences (by not perceiving it/experiencing it as ‘intercultural’) but by looking for similarities, affinities, common ground?

## **9.4 Improvements and lessons for the research approach**

Based on the experiences of this pilot study, the research set-up for the following year will be adjusted on several points:

- The research project will be improved logistically, such that during one semester two rather than four classes will be studied.
- The project will make a more systematic distinction between two research questions. The first question will be about the effectivity of the PREFLEX training in improving the intercultural competences of first year students in CE and IBMS. To answer this question, the assessment methods of 360-degrees feedback, students’ self-reflection reports, portfolios will be used. The second question will be about the group dynamics in the intercultural and international classrooms, for which the methods of participatory observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group meetings will be used.

- The first interviews were meant to function as a stimulus, such that talking about intercultural competences would more firmly anchor the effects of the PREFLEX training. However, the students who contributed to the interviews were getting oversupplied, which meant they often did not want to cooperate with a second or third interview. In addition, the researchers found that the second interviews in general did not yield a lot of new information compared to the first ones. For the next year, we will conduct only one interview per student (function: delivering research data), and we will schedule this interview immediately after the PREFLEX training, as students can still remember almost every detail of the training.
- The sample students who were interviewed were chosen at random from the list of names of each class. It appeared, however, that not every sample student was equally interesting or that his/her account offered an essentially different perspective. For the next year it seems better to choose interviewees on the basis of the observations of their different positions and behaviours in class: outsiders and key figures, male and female, immigrant and native, successful and struggling, etc.
- Timely communication with teachers is pivotal as they play a crucial role in getting the quantitative information (portfolios, 360 degrees feedback forms, critical selfreflection forms).
- The STARR method should be used for the critical selfreflection in the portfolio instead of the Action Research Model (same method, same instruction for both test groups and control groups).

## 9.5 Improvements and lessons for the PREFLEX training

Based on the experiences in the first semester, the following improvements and learnings can be mentioned for the PREFLEX training:

- Less repetition
- More cases
- More explicit learning objectives: general and individual
- Which intercultural skills and knowledge are needed in the IBMS study programmes?
- How does globalization affect IBMS?
- Which global learnings should be required of graduates?

- How to devise an assessment so that it covers all aspects of an intercultural competence?
- Which attitudes, skills and knowledge do students need for the 21st century?

Intercultural learning is transformational learning, it requires experiences and interaction à teamwork.

In connection with this, the Deardorff model of intercultural competences does not account for the impact of (symbolic) power differences in international and interethnic settings. How could the PREFLEX training be altered in such a way that it invites students to reflect upon and deal with some of these differences in power and positioning? For instance, being socialized within the Dutch school, academic and societal culture, (native and immigrant) Dutch students at THUAS have the advantage of ‘playing a home game’; contrary to students socialized in for instance the Chinese school system, they know the kind of behaviour that is expected of them in the classroom, how to communicate with the teachers and their fellow students. Would it be possible to adjust the PREFLEX training in such a way that students become more aware of and consequently more sensitive to these differences, and give them some strategies of dealing with such differences when they have to work on group assignments? This is not an easy task, as the setup of the training itself already needs to be sensitive to the fact that, especially in international classrooms, the starting position of students is different: how can for instance Chinese students be invited and encouraged to participate more in classroom discussions, not only by the teacher, but how can the training give other (for instance native Dutch) students incentives to do this too? And how can students who are socialized within the Dutch societal culture of directness, of ‘saying what you think’, be invited and encouraged to develop their international and academic skills and learn to express themselves in a more tactful manner towards their fellow students and maybe their teachers as well?





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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 – Focus points observations

### Aandachtspunten voor lesobservaties

(6 november 2013)

#### Noteren vooraf en aan begin van de les:

Klas/opleiding/docent/onderzoeker	
Aantal en kenmerken studenten, (seks, kleur, etniciteit, nationaliteit, subcultuur) (in begin, later zijn namen voldoende) (actoren)	
Les (bv. 2 <sup>e</sup> deel PREFLEX, of International Marketing, etc.) (gebeurtenis)	
Datum/tijdstip (tijd)	
Lokaal/indeling/wie bevindt zich waar/ (ruimte)	
<b>Noteren tijdens de les</b>	
ALGEMEEN: Onderdeel van de les (onderwerp en werkvorm) (activiteiten)	
Tijdstip (noteer elke 5 minuten) (tijd)	
FOCUS: op <i>sample</i> studenten, op wat zij doen en zeggen mbt interculturele/internationale relaties	
<i>Wat</i> doet X, <i>hoe</i> en <i>met wie</i> doet hij dat? (handelingen)	Beschrijf zo concreet mogelijk, en zonder waarde oordeel. Niet: 'X let goed op', maar 'X kijkt naar de docent, en schrijft daarna iets in schrift; niet: 'X toont sympathie', maar: X knikt, glimlacht, fronst wenkbrauwen, buigt zich naar Y toe.

<p>Wat zegt X, hoe en tegen wie zegt hij dat? (betekenissen)</p> <p>Wat verder opviel (indruk van sfeer in de groep; eigen reflecties; opmerkelijke gebeurtenissen en uitspraken van andere studenten)</p>	<p>Probeer letterlijk te citeren, beschrijf de manier waarop iets gezegd wordt zo concreet en waardevrij mogelijk.</p>
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Nb. Dit schema niet in de klas als een invulformulier gebruiken, maar als een checklist die je in je hoofd hebt wanneer je notities maakt tijdens de les, en die je na de les als structuur kunt gebruiken bij het uitwerken van je veldwerkaantekeningen.

## **Appendix 2 – Checklist interviews (october 2013)**

### **Opzet interview studenten naar aanleiding van PREFLEX training, (versie 23 okt '13)**

#### **Opening gesprek:**

Uitleg doel van het onderzoek: We bekijken de groepsdynamiek onder studenten in het eerste jaar en zijn benieuwd wat voor invloed lessen zoals de Interculturele Competentie lessen hierop hebben.

Student op z'n gemak stellen: We hebben van de namenlijst willekeurig een aantal studenten uitgekozen en daar ben jij een van. Het gaat puur om het geven van je mening, er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden, je krijgt hier geen cijfer voor.

Opwarm vraag: Hoe bevalt het je tot nu toe om aan de Haagse Hogeschool te studeren? Wat is er leuk/minder leuk aan?

#### **Vragen interview:**

Mevrouw Kaur/mevrouw Schultze gaf de afgelopen weken het vak “Interculturele Communicatie”, wat vond je daarvan?

Welke opdrachten zijn je bijgebleven? Wat vond je daaraan nuttig/leuk/stom?

Hebben de lessen je aan het denken gezet over dingen waar je hiervoor niet zo mee bezig was? Zo ja, waarover ben je dan verder gaan denken? Heb je er ook wel eens over nagepraat met klasgenoten? Zo nee, hoe denk je dat dat komt?

Wat zou het doel zijn van dit vak denk je?

Heb je iets gemist in die lessen wat toegevoegd zou moeten worden?

In de lessen hebben jullie gesproken over communiceren en samenwerken met mensen uit een andere cultuur. Wat is daarbij belangrijk volgens jou?

In de lessen hebben jullie ook gesproken over stereotypen en vooroordelen. Heb je daar wel eens mee te maken gehad?

Ga je op school om met studenten die een andere culturele achtergrond hebben dan jezelf? Hoe gaat dat?

Heb je bepaalde cultuurverschillen opgemerkt binnen je klas? Hoe ga jij om met die cultuurverschillen?

Met wie ben je bevriend in de klas? Hoe is dat zo gekomen?  
(gemeenschappelijke interesses, aardig iemand, je kende elkaar al eerder)

Zitten er studenten in je klas die je niet mag? (Zo ja) Waaraan ligt dat volgens jou?

Je gaat later in je studie voor een periode naar het buitenland. Wat lijkt je leuk/moeilijk aan studeren in het buitenland? Wat zou je willen leren om je op zo'n periode in het buitenland voor te bereiden?

Heb je het gevoel dat de lessen Interculturele Communicatie helpen bij het voorbereiden op zo'n periode in het buitenland?

## Appendix 3 – Assignment Critical Self Reflection

### Assignment Critical Self Reflection

**Name:** .....

The first semester of your first year here at The Hague University of Applied Sciences you spent in an International Classroom. That has brought you, consciously or unwittingly, in a valuable learning environment. Please try to think about that, to reflect on it and to report on your reflection.

This format may help you with that. It is a tool; do not let it affect your creativity. Feel free to write outside this framework.

#### Events

Please take two events, two striking encounters in the past semester with fellow students or other people from a different national or cultural background in the two sheets attached. Think of:

**S = situation:** Why do you think the event/encounter came about. What happened. Please describe that as objectively as possible, leaving out your own emotions and perceptions. What was the context of the encounter?

**T = task:** What was your perception; and what was the perception of the other. What did you want to accomplish; and the other?

**A = action:** What did you do or say? And the other? Can you describe the successive steps?

**R = result:** How did it end? Did you, or the other, get what was intended; was a compromise reached? What was the result?

**R = reflection:** This is the most important part. Please try to give an indication of the point of view of the other, his/her attitude, conscious or unconscious assumptions; and what about your own point of view, attitude and assumptions?

What did you like, or dislike, about your encounters; what did you consider to be interesting, important? Please try to explain how you felt about it, and why. Do you have some idea about the thoughts or feelings of the other in the encounter? Did you learn from these intercultural encounters? Do you think that what you have learned may help you in a next encounter or, e.g. when applying for a job? What would that be?

**Encounter 1.**

Name: .....

S	
T	
A	
R	
R	

**Encounter 2.**

**Name:** .....

S	
T	
A	
R	
R	

## Appendix 4 - 360 degrees feedback form

### 360 degrees feedback form

Student nr:

You are:      lecturer / fellow student / parent / friend / other:

### 360 degrees feedback

#### Goal

The student asks feedback from lecturers/fellow students/parents/relatives/friends who may be expected to be able to say something about the development of the student in terms of personal, social, intercultural (attitude, knowledge, skills), academic, professional and language competences.

#### From whom?

2 fellow students

2 lecturers

2 relatives

2 friends outside The Hague University of Applied Sciences

These people are requested to indicate the changes they have observed in the students as compared with the situation at the beginning of the academic year, on **1 September 2013**. They do that by putting an X in the appropriate box.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

**Observed differences in competences as compared to the situation on  
1 September 2013**

<b>1. Personal and social competences</b>						
	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Independence, self-reliance						
Confidence, positive about self						
Flexibility, adaptability						
Open mindedness						
Knows own possibilities and limitations						
Shows initiative						
Worldview						
Social commitment						
<b>2. Intercultural competences</b>						
<i>2.1 Attitude</i>						
	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Respect and appreciation for cultural differences and diversity						
Open, unprejudiced						
Willing to question own opinions						
Dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity						

<i>2.2 Knowledge</i>						
	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Knowledge of other cultures						
Knowledge of the influence of cultural factors on behaviour and forms of communication						
<i>2.3 Skills</i>						
	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Social and communication skills						
Being able to judge situations						
Being aware of own feelings and capable of handling them						
Self-reflection						
<i>2.4 Critical intercultural consciousness</i>						
	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Being able to change perspective and to view the world through the eyes of others						
Being able to recognize the relative value of the own culture						

### 3. Academic and professional competences

#### 3.1 Academic competences

	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Specific disciplinary knowledge						
Being able to conceptualize and analyse						
Critical research attitude						

#### 3.2 Professional competences

	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Being able to apply knowledge and skills in special and unusual situations						
Capacity to solve problems, being innovative						
Thinking 'out-of-the-box'						
Clear view on profession						
Clear perspective of own career						
Possibilities on the labour market						
Motivation for study and profession						
Interested in international career						

#### 4. Languages

	Strong decrease	Slight decrease	No difference	Moderate increase	Strong increase	Don't know
Foreign language skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing						

#### Additional remarks and personal feedback:

Thank you very much for your cooperation

## Appendix 5 – Code list observations

### Code-lijst lesobservaties PREFLEX

(verkorte 2e versie, 7 jan 2014)

#### A. HOUDING

- a. Volledig gesloten → heel open
- b. Respectloos → vol respect
- c. Ongeïnteresseerd → nieuwsgierig
- d. Verlangt zekerheid → accepteert/verdraagt onzekerheid

#### B. VAARDIGHEDEN

- a. Luistert niet → luistert goed  
(blijkt uit: (ontbreken van) knikken, hummen, doorvragen, spiegelen)
- b. Vermijdt contact → initieert contact  
(blijkt uit: lichaamstaal (bv blik naar beneden, verschuilen achter notebook, uitsluitend contact met leden 'eigen' groep), taalhandelingen (direct aanspreken, een vraag stellen))
- c. Ontmoedigt, intimideert → stimuleert, komt op voor
- d. Oordeelt direct → Oordeelt na goede afweging (dimensie: evaluatie)
- e. Taalbeheersing (van m.n. Nederlandse of Engels taal)

#### C. KENNIS

- a. Over eigen cultuur (gebruiken, waarden, etc)
- b. Over een andere cultuur (gebruiken, waarden, etc.)
- c. Over sociale, politieke, economische achtergronden van eigen en andere landen

#### D. GROEPSDYNAMIEK

- a. Weinig → veel subgroepsvorming in de klas  
(wie zit bij wie, (indien zelf gekozen:) wie werkt met wie samen? Monoculturele of interculturele onderonsjes?)
- b. Weinig → veel samen lachen (dwz als klas)(humor als middel en teken van sfeer van sociale veiligheid, gezamenlijke *understanding*/ 'taal')

#### E. IC ERVARING buiten school

- a. benoemd (door student zelf als 'intercultureel' beschouwd)
- b. onbenoemd (bv contacten van autochtoon NL student X met vrienden/familie met migratie-achtergrond door X ervaren als 'gewoon' Nederlandse contacten)

#### F. HOUDING in/tav IC LES

- (= PREFLEX-training, plus evt. andere lesstof mbt ic competenties)
- a. Waardering
  - b. Geformuleerde leerdoelen

## Appendix 6 – Code list interviews

### Code-lijst interviews PREFLEX (31 jan 2014), korte versie)

#### A. HOUDING

- a. Volledig gesloten → heel open
- b. Respectloos → vol respect
- c. Ongeïnteresseerd → nieuwsgierig
- d. Verlangt zekerheid → accepteert/verdraagt onzekerheid
- e. Geen begrip → veel begrip (*voor* ander of ondervonden *door* ander)
- f. Focust op cross-culturele verschillen → focust op cross-culturele overeenkomsten
- g. Identificeert zich exclusief met 'eigen' etnisch-culturele groep → identificeert zich meer inclusief ('wij in Nederland', 'wij hier op school', en dergelijke)

#### G. VAARDIGHEDEN

- a. Luistert niet → luistert goed
- b. Vermijdt contact → initieert contact
- c. Ontmoedigt, intimideert → stimuleert, komt op voor
- d. Oordeelt direct → Oordeelt na goede afweging (dimensie: evaluatie)
- e. Taalbeheersing (van m.n. Nederlandse of Engels taal)

#### H. KENNIS

- a. Over eigen cultuur (gebruiken, waarden, etc)
- b. Over een andere cultuur (gebruiken, waarden, etc.)
- c. Over sociale, politieke, economische achtergronden van eigen en andere landen
- d. Over overeenkomsten tussen zich zelf en personen met andere etnische/culturele achtergrond (ogv bijvoorbeeld sekse, religie, (voor)opleiding, hobby, muziekvoorkeur, kledingstijl, ervaringen met discriminatie, )

#### I. GROEPSDYNAMIEK

- a. Weinig → veel subgroepsvorming in de klas (wie zit bij wie, (indien zelf gekozen:) wie werkt met wie samen?)
- b. Weinig → veel samen lachen (dwz als klas) (humor als middel en teken van sfeer van sociale veiligheid, gezamenlijke *understanding*/ 'taal')

#### J. IC ERVARINGEN en VERWACHTINGEN buiten school

- a. als 'intercultureel' beschouwde ervaringen:
  - 1. In Nederland
  - 2. In buitenland
- b. genoemde maar niet als 'intercultureel' beschouwde ervaringen (bv contacten van autochtoon NL student X met vrienden/familie met migratie-achtergrond door X ervaren als 'gewoon' Nederlandse contacten)
- c. verwachtingen over interculturele ervaringen (ic verblijf in het buitenland)

#### K. WAARDERING van PREFLEX-training (plus evt. andere lesstof mbt ic competenties)

- a. Doel: zinloos/onnodig → zinvol, nuttig
- b. Effect: nihil → welke competenties verbeterd
- c. Verbeterpunten van de training

## Appendix 7 – Total results portfolios & self reflection reports (semester 1)

### Total results portfolio's & selfreflection reports (semester 1)

	CE-test group		CE-control group	
	<i>Average score</i>	<i>Total (counts)</i>	<i>Average score</i>	<i>Total (counts)</i>
Academisch	-	0	-	0
Houding	7,3	18	7,1	7
Kennis	6,4	11	6,4	5
Vaardigheden	6,8	4	6,8	8
Gedrag	7,1	7	6,8	10
Zelfreflectie	6,6	10	8	1
Talen	6,5	10	6	2
	IBMS-test group		IBMS-control group	
	<i>Average score</i>	<i>Total (counts)</i>	<i>Average score</i>	<i>Total (counts)</i>
Academisch	6	1	-	0
Houding	7	17	6,6	5
Kennis	6,7	13	6,7	3
Vaardigheden	7	6	7	2
Gedrag	7	8	7	2
Zelfreflectie	6,4	11	6,5	2
Talen	6,7	7	-	0

## Appendix 8 – Calculation of significancies

### Calculation of significancies

In calculating the significancies in the 360-degrees data ‘confirmatory statistics’ and the ‘independent samples t-test’ have been used in order to compare the averages of two different groups at the same moment:

- Are the differences concerning ... (the competence) between the CE-test group and the CE-control group significant?
- Are the differences concerning ... (the competence) between the IBMS-test group and the IBMS-control group significant?

When comparing the scores of the two groups, it is important to examine the difference between their mean scores relative to the spread or variability of their scores. The t-test statistic does this. T-tests are most commonly used to examine whether the means of two groups of data are significantly different from one another. Hence with a t-test the independent variable is nominal or categorical and the dependent variable is measured at the interval or ratio scale of measurement. T-tests indicate the sample differences by using means and the distribution of sample scores around the mean.

With the ‘independent samples t-test’ there are two distinct categories for the independent variable (such as males and females, in this case the IBMS-test group and the IBMS-control group) and one dependent variable measured at the interval or ratio level (score in the 360-degrees feedback measurement for one of the international competencies). The ‘independent samples t-test’ will be testing whether the means of the dependent variable for each group defined by the independent variable are significantly different. It will test us the odds (or probability) that the difference we saw in the raw figures really is genuine. The ‘independent samples t-test’ establishes whether the means of two unrelated samples differ by comparing the difference between the two means with the standard error in the means of the different samples.

The ‘one sample t-test’ in SPSS has been used to compare the averages of the same group at two different moments:

- Are the differences concerning ... between the CE-test group in the 360-measurement and the 0-measurement significant?
- Are the differences concerning ... between the IBMS-test group in the 360-measurement and the 0-measurement significant?

There was no 0-measurement so we assumed that the score of all respondents was 3 on a logical basis. This was significant for all respondents and for all variables.

NB: The number of 360-measurements differs per respondent. There hasn’t been calculated an average score per respondent, but calculations are based on the raw data of the overall group of family members, friends, et cetera.

## Appendix 9 – PREFLEX student guide



# Preparation for your Intercultural Learning Experience

## PREFLEX student guide

By Manuela Hernández and Jos Walenkamp

For more information about the PREFLEX programme please contact:  
[m.j.hernandezsanchez@hhs.nl](mailto:m.j.hernandezsanchez@hhs.nl)

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## **Introduction: International competences, necessity and usefulness.**

As a result of the growing diversity in society and mobility across countries, students' learning experiences are increasingly characterized by intercultural relationships and interactions with people from other cultures. Learning about how to effectively interact with people from different backgrounds has become one of the key soft skills in multicultural professional scenarios.

Students find themselves in a globalized reality, where the internationalization of education seems an irreversible fact. It is no longer an exception but an necessity that universities invest in supporting their students in the development and acquisition of international and intercultural competences. These competences will enable them to respond adequately and creatively to the demands of the world they live today. Language fluency, intercultural readiness as well as professional, social and personal skills form the pillars for an internationally competent professional and are key requirements in today's labour market and entrepreneurial world.

Additionally, a great dose of flexibility, mindfulness and courage are essential attitude components for the acquisition, development and deployment of these international and intercultural competences. They are key to the overall success of a (pre) professional or academic experience. There are different ways through which you can learn and practice these competences: internationally oriented studies, the multicultural classroom, studying or doing internship in international/multicultural settings (locally or abroad) and living and/or working in multicultural communities.

But what is meant by a good preparation? And what are the expected results of such a preparation?

This course will enhance the awareness and purpose in the acquisition of attitude, knowledge and skills that will enable you to behave properly and communicate effectively when dealing with other cultures.

## Purpose

Effective behavior and communication

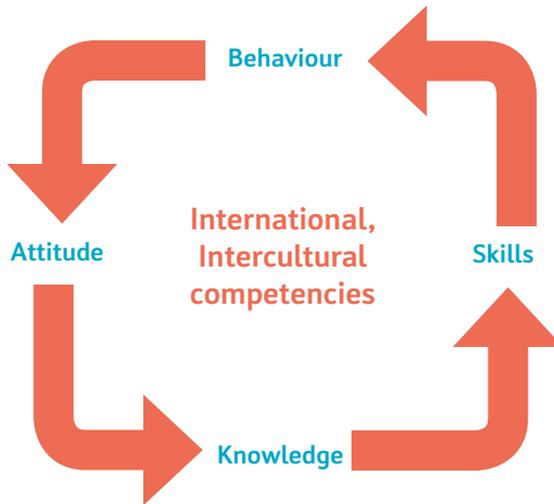


Figure 1: The international competences cycle (adapted from Deardorff, 2009)

<b>Attitude</b>	openness, mindfulness, curiosity, personal leadership, respect
<b>Knowledge:</b>	self-awareness, adaptation strategies and other knowledge of own and other cultures.
<b>Skills:</b>	language, self-reflection, observation (and the ability to analyse, relate and critically reflect) intercultural readiness, networking, professional and academic skills.
<b>Behaviour:</b>	proper behaviour (proper in the eyes of the other) and effective intercultural communication

The course seeks to support you in answering the question: *how can I best prepare myself during my studies, so that I can acquire, develop and practice the international and particularly, the intercultural competences that are needed for my future professional life?*

In answering this question, the course places special emphasis on international and intercultural competences during your study: what are the desired competences for my professional profile? What do you need to learn in order to acquire them? How can your classroom interactions support you in acquiring them? How to follow-up your learning process with you career supervisor? Additionally, the course will stimulate individual goal setting and planning, depending on your personal and academic motivations and learning objectives.

**Learning objective:** Maximum acquisition of and the capitalization on international and intercultural competences during your study:

- Stimulating goal setting in the personal, professional and academic sphere.
- Envisioning challenges in your future professionalization process.
- Activating awareness and knowledge of the key issues that might be pertinent in your profession (intercultural differences, social and political trends, etc.).
- Encouraging proactivity in the acquisition of international and intercultural competences as well as ownership of your overall learning process.

**Course Methodologies:** The course will combine lectures, interactive in-class exercises (mind mapping, dialogue, and case analysis), self-reflection and peer-to-peer interactions.

**Course Requirements:** You have to fulfill a series of assignments aimed at supporting your learning. These assignments are key ingredients for the dynamics of the training course, and you are strongly advised to complete these in a timely manner.

## 1. International competences: the story (by Jos Walenkamp).

Few graduates will work in a setting that is purely national, or monocultural. Production and trade networks span the globe. Your Ipad is designed in the USA, its components come from Africa and they are assembled in China. The solution of global problems, such as climate change, environmental degradation, lack of food and water and other natural resources, terrorism and gross inequalities both between and within nations lies in the hands of the professionals, scientists and politicians of the future. They must be able to communicate effectively over the borders that separate them. Teachers have students from many different cultural backgrounds; nurses have patients with widely varying origins. All graduates need intercultural and international competences to work and live in the world of today and tomorrow.

International competences can be defined in several ways:

- Professional: how are problems solved in international contexts?
- Academic: how is my discipline influenced by international trends?
- Personal/social: how to behave with personal effectiveness in a multicultural/international group.
- Linguistic: command of foreign languages and fluency.
- ***Intercultural: how to behave properly in the eyes of the other and how to communicate effectively over cultural divides?***

In this module we shall focus on the intercultural competences

Now, you do not acquire intercultural competences automatically by just being abroad or by just being surrounded by people with different cultural backgrounds. You have to be conscious and aware of your goals and ambitions in that direction, you have to make a strategy to attain these goals and monitor your progress. We shall give you a working tool to support you in your reflection and self-monitoring.

During this module we shall try to raise your awareness, give you knowledge and insights in international competences and teach you to observe, to register what you experience, what effect that experience has on you, how to reflect on that and how lay your plans to handle the next experience.

## 1.2 Intercultural Competence (by Manuela Hernández).

Working and studying in international/multicultural environments is usually a challenging and exciting experience. Not only does it open the doors to a new reality, but it also brings diverse opportunities to develop and learn new attitudes, skills, and knowledge (ASK) on an academic, professional and personal level.

Particularly with regard to intercultural competences Deardorff (2006) distinguishes

- Attitudes: openness, curiosity, respect, as basic necessity.
- Knowledge and comprehension: cultural self-awareness, knowledge and understanding of other cultures.
- Skills: ability to listen, observe and interpret and then to analyze, evaluate and relate those observations, and linguistic skills, as prerequisites for the acquisition of:
  - Desired internal outcome: informed frame of reference, adaptability, flexibility, empathy and ethno-relativity, leading to:
  - Desired external outcome: behaving properly in the eyes of the other and communicating effectively.

These different intercultural competences touch upon different types of knowledge, which are essential to effective intercultural communication, cultural adaptation and mutual understanding. These competences are interrelated, and you can achieve competence when you integrate them on a behavioural, cognitive and affective level.

***The cognitive level (internal)*** refers mainly to our cultural self-awareness and knowledge. How much do we understand about how our own culture shapes and influences our world-view or how we interpret the phenomena and interactions around us? In this sense, cultural (self) knowledge allows us to understand the similarities and differences between our ways of doing and the processes of assigning meaning to our experiences.

***The affective skills (internal)*** refer to our curiosity and to how open we are to include new categories of understanding in our mental frameworks. In some situations our cultural values and norms are challenged, as we discover that our assumptions of right vs. wrong, or of what is appropriate or inappropriate

can differ greatly from others. As a result, conflict or prejudice (among other things) can arise, forming a barrier in our interactions. Therefore, motivation and flexibility are also affective factors, which help us in being proactive and relaxed when encountering challenging intercultural situations.

***The behavioural level (external)*** shows us how we can adapt our behaviour to new cultural situations as they indicate how we can best achieve empathy or form positive relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. Our behaviour and the behaviour of others inform us on how to gather and decode information, as well as how to understand and co-participate in problem-solving strategies, which might differ from the ones we carry in our respective cultural baggage.

It is equally important to pay attention to how cultural factors influence our perception and that of others, and more specifically, to how they shape and give meaning to our interpersonal interactions. In this respect, intercultural communication (interpersonal interactions between people from different backgrounds) is essential as it provides the basis for cultural understanding both on a practical and theoretical level. Therefore, during this course we'll be looking at several aspects that influence –positively or negatively- the quality of our face-to-face encounters with people of different cultural backgrounds.

### **1.2.1 Cultural Intelligence**

An international learning experience offers you the unique opportunity to discover new cultures at the same time it challenges your cultural intelligence and sensitivity. Adaptation to a new environment or to new ways of interacting does not happen automatically, and it requires a higher level of awareness than we are normally used to.

The concept of cultural intelligence refers to:

*“... being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning more about it from your ongoing interactions with it, and gradually reshaping your thinking to be more sympathetic to the culture and developing your behaviour to be more skilled and appropriate when interacting with others from the culture. We must learn to be flexible enough to adapt to each new cultural situation that we face with knowledge and sensitivity” (Thomas, 2009).*

Cultural intelligence or intercultural competence implies that we are mindful, culturally knowledgeable and capable of adapting our behaviour effectively.

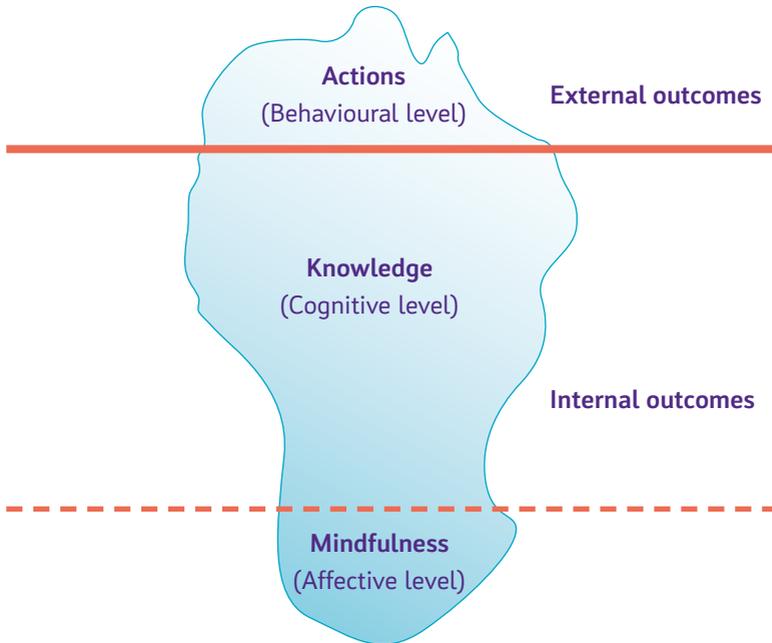


Figure 2: *The Iceberg of intercultural competence*

### 1.2.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is considered the foundation for developing an effective attitude to the development of international competences, and for intercultural learning. Mindfulness comprises three key qualities: 1) the ability to incorporate new categories into our cultural understanding, 2) the awareness that there is more than one way to do things and interpret reality and 3) being open to new information. Mindfulness also implies that we are cognitively aware of our communication (styles) and our frameworks of references when interpreting the communicative behaviour of others. Mindfulness is the key to letting go of barriers such as prejudice, stereotyping and ethnocentrism. It requires that we reflect on our actions and our own cultural filters, so that we can understand the place that informs our judgment and perception of others. Mindfulness makes us focus more on the process than on the outcome of the communication, and guides the flexibility and empathy require when adapting our behaviours when required.

### 1.2.3 Diversity and barriers to intercultural sensitivity.

Behaving professionally and practicing inclusiveness in diverse, multicultural environments also requires that we become aware of the barriers that can interfere with it. The most common barriers are stereotyping, ethnocentrism and prejudice.

**Stereotyping** is a mental descriptive process that helps us recognize and organize our immediate reality with the (insufficient) information we have at hand. Stereotyping also refers to mental images that we build in our mind about people who are different from us. These mental images are made of the superficial characteristics that are often recognized when observing what we consider to be 'typical' traits other cultures.

Stereotypes can be positive (i.e. Chinese are good at math) or negative (i.e. Greek people are corrupt). When inflexible, stereotyping can result in generalisation (i.e. all Chinese are great at math) and individualisation (i.e. Talos is Greek, so he must be corrupt). Just as with similar barriers, stereotyping can become a burden when we are inflexible and refuse to incorporate new information which can help us be more objective and better informed about the person or group being stereotyped.

**Ethnocentrism** is when we firmly believe that our cultural standards and practices are better than the standards and practices of other cultures. Being ethnocentric means that our culture takes a central, predominant place, while we look down at other cultures with an attitude of superiority and/or intolerance. Extreme forms of ethnocentrism can result in prejudice, racism, discrimination and even ethnic cleansing.

**Prejudice** is a positive or negative prejudgment based on incomplete information and subjective facts regarding people who are different than us. Negative prejudice is an irrational dislike, and even disgust for groups or individuals with contrasting characteristics and different (cultural) practices than the ones that are acceptable to us. This irrational dislike controls our attitude, and can lead to unfair rejection. When prejudices guide our actions, it can lead to the unequal treatment of other people and eventually, to discrimination.

## 2. Knowledge of the culture

Whereas it is nearly impossible to understand or define a culture in its entirety (Trompenaars, 1997) some concepts and dimensions can allow you to make a general prediction of how individuals of a particular cultural group might behave. These dimensions are not exhaustive and do not necessarily apply to all individuals. You should therefore be careful not to generalize as you run the risk of stereotyping or creating the false expectations about someone else's behaviour:

- Communication styles (high vs. low context).
- Relationship to groups and individual behaviour.
- Time management and notions of punctuality.
- Hierarchy and status
- Nonverbal communication and language use

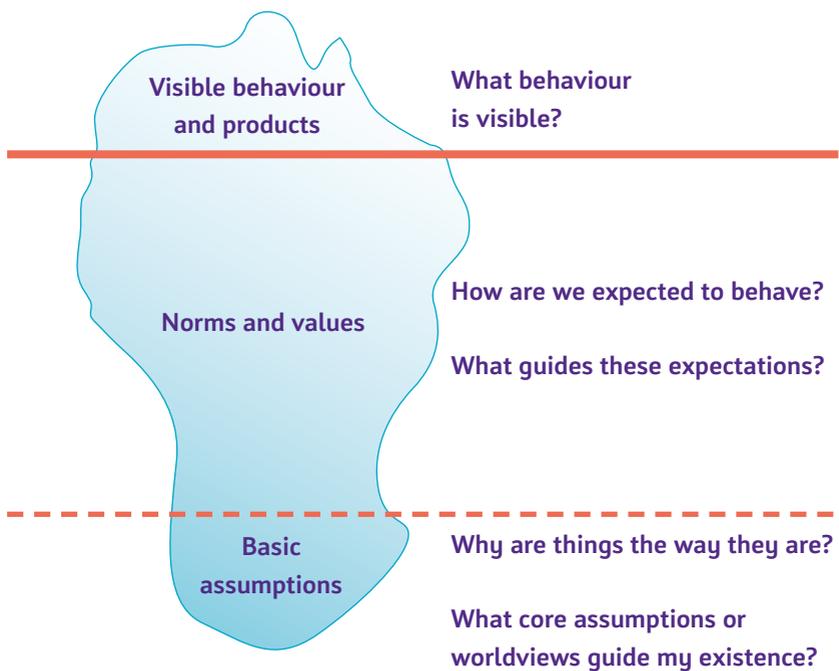


Figure 3: The Iceberg of Culture

You probably have seen many visual ways to depict culture. In this visual we use an iceberg again to represent the key components of cultures and some questions that can help us understand it. Intercultural competence requires that we dive in to the questions below the tip of the iceberg. Not only should we be aware of the expected desired behaviour, but also we should understand the norms (what is appropriate?) and the values (why is it appropriate?) that guide the desired behaviour. A deeper layer (basic assumptions) refers to the worldviews and core beliefs that a culture holds central for their existence and survival. A worldview can be defined as a set of core assumptions and beliefs, which gives meaning to reality and explain why things are the way they are. Worldviews aren't always easy to explain, as they are deeply ingrained in the culture, and not always explicitly articulated. They are integral part of our cultural DNA: it is omnipresent, yet invisible. They are usually traced back in rituals performed in many cultures (think of the famous Haka dance performed by Maori rugby players in New Zealand: it finds its roots in the ancient warriors and it symbolizes strength, unity and victory over the 'enemy').



For more information on our cultural DNA, check [this link](#).

## 2.1 Indirect vs. direct communication styles

Our conversations are usually guided by internal scripts, which dictate our standards for clarity and effectiveness when interacting with others. While for some cultures communication is direct and precise, ambiguity and indirectness prevail in others. These differences can be understood by studying the concepts of **high context** and **low context communication** (Hall, 1981). These two concepts are extremely important, as they help us identify our preferred communication style, at the same time they allow us to become aware of how it is perceived by others.

In low-context cultures, communication is direct and meaning is derived mostly from the verbal message. Messages are interpreted based on what is being said, rather than how it's being said, and individuals are expected to speak their minds with openness and preciseness.

In *high-context cultures*, communication is indirect, and a great deal of the meaning is found in the nonverbal aspect of the message. *How* a message is conveyed takes precedence on *what* is being said. This means that communicators need to develop a great deal of sensitivity and ability to capture the nonverbal cues of indirect communication (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003).

When working in teams these two variables can help you understand how people approach problem solving. For low context cultures, the key issue is the starting point and the context and background come into play as required. For high context cultures, the background history and general context of the issue is the starting point. These two dimensions can also help explain directness in business written communication. For example, for Americans, the first paragraph of a business letter should clearly state what the purpose of the communication is. For Japanese and other high context cultures, the first paragraph usually expresses politeness, acknowledgement of the relationship and even reference to weather conditions.

High context	Low context
Indirect	Direct
Implicit, internalized	Explicit, verbalized
Ambiguous, metaphoric	Precise, literal
Inductive reasoning (starts with main point)	Deductive reasoning (starts with context)
Focus on person, process	Focus on task, end product

These questions can help you think and research how these differences translate in an international context:

- ➔ What do people from different backgrounds pay most attention to: the verbal or the nonverbal aspect of the message?
- ➔ What are (verbal or nonverbal) indications of politeness?
- ➔ What is your conversation partner's perception of your communication style? (Vague? Rude? Informal?)
- ➔ What are your challenges in relation to these differences?



**Would you like to know more about communication styles?**

Check [this link](#).

## 2.2 Our relationship to groups and individual behaviour

Regardless of in which cultures we operate, we all have affiliation to different groups: our family, school, a sport team, our friends, etc. Those groups with which we identify and feel actively connected to are called in-groups. The way we relate to these in-groups can vary greatly across cultures. While in some cultures the goals and desires of the group take precedence over our individual goals and wishes, in others our individual goals do not necessarily have to correspond with our in-groups. This basic difference is explained by the concepts of individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 2001).

In individualist (“I”) cultures, individuals are expected to be independent and self-sufficient in problem-solving, while in collectivist (“we”) cultures there is more value placed on interdependence and a “sense of belonging and responsibility towards the group” (Nunez, p. 39). Usually individualists tend to perceive collectivists’ reliance on others as ‘immature’ or ‘laziness’. On the other hand, collectivists can perceive individualists as ‘selfish’ or ‘uncaring’.

Individualism (“I” oriented)	Collectivism (“We” oriented)
Independence, self-sufficiency	Interdependence, relies on help of others
Personal achievements	Collective achievements
Individual expression, authenticity	Identity ascribed by group affiliation
Individual freedom	Group interest
Preference for confrontational conflict style	Preference for evasive conflict style

The following questions can help you think and research how these differences translate in international/intercultural environments:

- What are your team member’s orientations when working in groups? (*i.e.* self-sufficient vs. interdependent?).
- How can these differences impact your working/learning style?
- What are the criteria for assessing your performance? What value is placed on individual reward or appraisal?
- How do teams agree on course of actions?
- What are your challenges in relation to these differences?



**Would you like to know more about individualism and collectivism?**

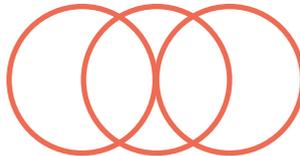
Check [this link](#) where you can find clear-cut comparisons between some countries, based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. If you want to further understand the basic differences between ‘we’ or ‘I’ cultures, check [this link](#).

## 2.3 Time Management and attitudes to time:

The way we manage time and our expectations of how others manage it, is greatly influenced by our values and norms. These values and norms guide our behaviour and can explain why some cultures place a greater value of punctuality while others seem more flexible in dealing with it. A dimension that helps explain these differences are the monochronic vs. polychronic use of time. In **monochronic cultures**, time is experienced as a straight dotted line, where each dot represents a time compartment reserved for one specific activity. Time, for monochronics, is tangible, precise, and measurable. Deadlines are sacred, planning ahead is important, and failure to meet time or planning requirements is perceived as inefficient, sloppy, impolite and unreliable.



In **polychronic cultures**, time is experienced as overlapping circles, and people tend to do more than one thing at the time. Time, for polychronics, is elastic and easily adjustable to the needs of a particular situation. Making time for personal contact is very important, and that means that tasks and deadlines can be delayed if relationship needs our attention.



Monochronic	Polychronic
Does one thing at the time, does not appreciate being disturbed or interrupted	Does more than one thing at the time. Multitasks, therefore interruptions aren't considered as a disturbance.
Punctuality, adherence to deadlines	Flexible with punctuality and deadlines
Planning ahead	Ad-hoc planning
Task oriented	Relationship oriented
Communication is low context	Communication is high context

The following questions can help you think and research how these differences translate in international/intercultural environments:

- What are your values around punctuality and deadlines? How do they compare with people from a different background? Are there any similarities or any differences?
- How often do you make use of diaries? (Agendas?) Is it the norm in other cultures?
- How flexible are you in changing plans and priorities at the last minute? Are there other cultures where their flexibility might seem annoying to you?
- What is your preference? To do many things at the same time? Or do to divide time in compartments?
- What does your host organization (school, employer) expect from you in terms of time management?

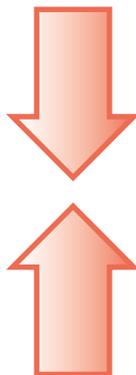


**Would you like to know more?**

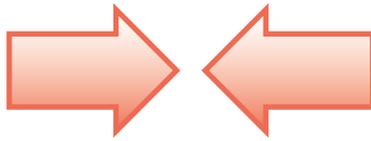
Check [this link](#).

## 2.4 Hierarchy and status

Differences in hierarchy and status help us understand how different cultures communicate towards their superiors and to what extent hierarchy gaps are normally accepted in society. This dimension can be explained by the concepts of hierarchy-oriented cultures (HOC) and equality-oriented cultures (EO).



In hierarchy-oriented cultures, you are expected to pay formal respect to your superiors (*i.e.* teachers, your parents, elders, bosses, royalty, and individuals with high economic status). Not only that, superiors are hardly questioned; and their authority openly expresses power and control. In HO cultures status should be acknowledged and it can affect our communication with others. For example, Chinese students slightly bow when entering or leaving the office of their teacher, and they prefer not ask questions directly in class, as questioning the teacher’s knowledge in public can be perceived as disrespectful.



In equality-oriented cultures, there is less formality when interacting with superiors. An employee or a student does not necessarily have to wait for instructions of their boss or teacher in order to start working on a task or an assignment. Interactions are more direct, and critical suggestions and/ or questions can be posed easily, without fearing that your superior will feel offended. People from HO cultures usually perceived EO’s as rude, impolite, untactful and disrespectful, while CO’s perceive EO’s as submissive and too dependent.

Hierarchy-oriented	Equality-oriented
Status is acknowledged and formally respected	Status is modestly acknowledged and informally respected
Wider gap between superiors and subordinates	Closer gap between superior and subordinate
Richer display of status symbols	Modest display of status symbols
Tendency to authoritarian decision-making	Tendency to a consensus-oriented decision-making
Also called ‘high power distance’ (Hofstede) or ‘ascribed status’ (Trompenaars)	Also called ‘low power distance’ (Hofstede) or ‘achieved status’ (Trompenaars)

- How do these dimensions apply in your cultural context? Is there a higher or lower hierarchy between teacher and student? Or boss and subordinate?
- How are students/employees from different background perceived by locals?
- What are the preferences towards formality or informality? How are you expected to address your boss, or your teacher? [Check this link on forms of addressing teachers].
- What challenges can these differences pose to you? What is your learning curve in this?



**Would you like to know more?**

Check [this link](#) and [this link](#).

## 2.5 Nonverbal communication

Nonverbal communication (NVC) is made of all cues we send and receive, which are not coded into words. It is one of the richest areas in intercultural communication. It often gives us information about how we feel about a situation, making its interpretation highly subjective. NVC is usually referred to as 'the hidden dimension' (Hall, 1981) and it usually occurs at a very high level of unawareness. If you have ever seen yourself in a video, you will probably discover a lot more about what you communicate nonverbally than you thought of before. How do you move your body? How expressive are your hands? What is your posture? What is the pitch of your voice? This high level of unawareness, combined with the lack of knowledge about cultural differences in NVC, makes this aspect of communication a great source of misunderstandings. If we cannot always control our nonverbal behaviour and have problems decoding that of others, how could we better understand it in intercultural situations?

Some theorists have stated that most of our communicative behaviour is nonverbal, but that we are usually drawn to focus on verbal cues mostly. As explained previously, cultures differ in the importance they place to nonverbal cues when interpreting a message (see part on low vs. high context communication on page 9). Cultures also differ in the way they behave by

using different types of nonverbal cues: touch (or *haptics*), the way we use space (or *proxemics*), the way we express and interpret emotions, the way we move our body (*kinesics*), what the sense of smell communicates (*olfactics*), the way we perceive and use time (*chronemics*, see page 11), silence and the non-vocal sounds we make when we use our voice (*paralanguage*).

The way we use space and interpersonal distance (or proxemics) can help us understand notions of privacy and desired norms of physical proximity when interacting with strangers. You can relate this aspect of NVC to individualism and collectivism (see page 10), as individualists have a preference for a greater personal space than collectivists. You can compare it with standing in the middle of a glass bubble: the individualist bubble is very wide and impermeable. The individualists' norms on proxemics indicate that their personal space is 'sacred' and that they decide when they open their private 'bubble' to others. They take time to get to know a person before they let him/her into their personal life, and there is usually a clear distinction between the professional (work or study) and the personal life. Collectivists' bubble, on the other hand, is smaller and permeable. They are more flexible and open when sharing their personal space and can be very spontaneous when inviting strangers to their private 'bubble'. Friendships are formed intuitively and there is overlap between their professional and personal life. Collectivists often perceive individualists as distant, reserved and closed. Individualists, on the other hand, can wrongly perceive collectivists as invasive, disrespectful of privacy or careless when forming relationships.

The way we use touch and immediacy as part of the communication (haptics) can vary greatly from culture to culture. While in some cultures touch, sensory involvement (*i.e.* smell, eye contact) and physical distance during interactions can be perceived as positive; in other cultures touching rarely occurs, unless it's with a person with whom we are emotionally and personally close. Haptics can also help us understand norms about romantic and same-sex interactions, and interpretations of what can be considered sexual harassment. Cultures where touch and physical proximity are a natural part of the interaction are called 'high contact' cultures (*i.e.* Latin America), and cultures where touch is rarely found (*i.e.* Northern Europe) in interpersonal interactions are called 'low contact' cultures (Gudykunst, 2003).

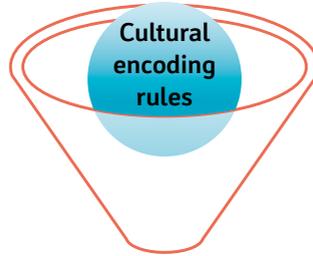
## CULTURAL ENCODING RULES AND CULTURAL DECODING RULES

### NEUTRAL

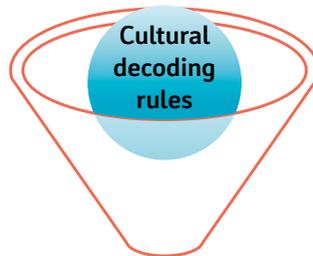
- Controlled
- Preference for being reserved
- Usually separate emotion from reasoning

• N's perceive A's as:

- Exaggerated
- Unreliable
- Irrational
- Aggressive, passionate



**Display of emotions**



**Interpretation of emotions**

### AFFECTIVE

- Expressive
- Tolerance for public display
- Usually integrate emotion and reasoning

• A's perceive N's as:

- Insensitive
- Unreliable
- Repressed
- Heartless

*Figure 4: Culture as a filter*

Another key aspect in nonverbal communication is the cultural filter present in the expression and interpretation of emotions. Whereas all cultures are able to feel and express the same emotions, you can find significant differences on: how public or private are emotions considered? What are the values attached to the expression of emotions? (Honesty? Truthfulness? Weakness? Lack of sincerity?). When dealing with conflict and other situations we should be aware that our cultural filters could bias our interpretation of someone else's emotional reaction. In cultures with a preference for an affective approach, emotions are not often concealed and people tend to be easily heated up. There is more integration of emotion and reasoning, which can be interpreted as subjective or non-reliable by non-affectives. Neutrals, on the other hand, tend to separate emotions from reasoning and have a preference for being reserved and controlled in the display of their emotions. Neutrals are

usually perceived by affectives as ‘cold’ or ‘insensitive’ while neutrals can be perceived as exaggerated, irrational and even aggressive.

This image of the filters can also be adapted to other situations where cultural display rules and cultural decoding rules guide the way we interpret signs, symbols, gestures, etc. It is widely known that one same symbol or gesture can have very different meaning in another culture. Etiquette and formal behaviour should also be taken into consideration. This information is easily retrievable by doing research on the web (try ‘*differences in gestures around the world*’ or ‘*cross cultural etiquette*’ as a search entry and you will find a great amount of articles with illustrative examples).

Nonverbal communication also comprises the way we regulate conversations and the use of silence in communication. Turn taking in conversations and listening are vital components in intercultural communication if we want to understand how to effectively interact in discussions, decision-making process, teamwork, or simply in a social occasion. While in some cultures people place great value on listening and waiting for the other to finish, others constantly interrupt and some others do not

Here are some questions that can help you observe and research nonverbal communication in multicultural settings:

- How much is touch part of the communication? (haptics)
- What are the boundaries for personal space and privacy? (proxemics)
- What signs and gestures are common for your conversation partner?  
What is offensive?
- What value do people place on silence?
- How do people regulate conversations? (turn-taking, listening, raising their voice)
- What clothing is appropriate to wear for different occasions?
- Are emotions considered a private affair?
- What are expected rituals / etiquette in social and professional situations?



**Would you like to know more about nonverbal communication?**

**Cultural dimension: display of emotion. Check [this link](#).**

**On nonverbal communication and negotiations. Check [this link](#).**

**<http://www.crossculture.com/services/negotiating-across-cultures>**

**Global Business Etiquette: a guide to international communication and customs - By J. S. Martin and L. H. Chaney (2006). Check [this link](#).**

## 2.6 Verbal communication

Much has been written in the field of verbal communication. One of the clearest signs in international settings is that of the use of foreign languages. In fact, for many students on an intercultural learning experience, improving their language skills is one of their top priorities. A great part of a successful adaptation process depends on how fluently or efficiently we communicate with the host community. In many cases you will find yourself communicating in a third language, which is not native to you or to your interlocutor. This can create misunderstandings, as you can face translation problems, lack of vocabulary, or you can fail to understand his/her accent, even when our conversation partner is fluent in the language he/she is speaking.

The above-mentioned limitations can influence our confidence, and in many occasions, apprehension can block our capacity to communicate. One of the key challenges for students in this scenario is to become fluent, to improve their technical language skills, and to learn the norms and values communicated by the use of a foreign language. For example, in countries with high hierarchy you might need to address your superiors in a formal way, and that means that you will need to adjust your vocabulary and forms of expressions to that situation.

Studying or working abroad, in a setting that communicates in a foreign language requires planning. International university programmes usually require an entry level, as you will be expected to learn and perform in that language. If you are going on an internship, you will be required to communicate professionally, using specific jargons and capable of formal written communications. The same applies to working environments where more than one language is used for work-related communications.

Languages skills alone, however, do not guarantee a successful adaptation. You need to have the willingness to communicate, the courage to make mistakes and the sensitivity to express yourself in a culturally appropriate manner. Next to that, you also need to be aware of your communication style and that of the other. In cultures where indirect communication is preferred, a “yes” can mean anything from ‘yes’, to ‘maybe’, to ‘no’. In high context cultures, ambiguous expressions are more used (maybe, probably, perhaps)

whereas in low context cultures expressions tend to be concise (precisely, exactly, definitively). And lastly, you need to have good listening skills and develop assertiveness when needing to ask questions when you don't understand your conversation partner. Asking for clarification might be at times an awkward situation, but it can prevent great misunderstandings.

In international contexts, you can think of the following questions, which can help you develop your language skills and sensitivity:

- What level of language is required?
- How will I be mostly using my language skills? (Giving presentations? Writing essays? Talking on the phone? Writing business reports? Writing emails?)
- What kind of support is offered in my host organization?
- What kind of preparation do I need in order to perform at my best?
- What strategies can I use in order to improve my language skills?
- What attitudes do you need to develop in order to become efficient and sensible when communicating in a foreign language?
- What are formal vs. informal forms of addressing others?
- What vocabulary and jargon are you expected to learn and use?



**Would you like to explore more about verbal communication?  
How to overcome language barriers. Check [this link](#).**

## **2.7 Case study: A Dutch businessman meets Mexican counterpart**

(1) Jaap Rozemeijer, Senior Marketing Manager of *(H)eerlijk Fruit BV*, the Netherlands, has to conduct an important 2-day business meeting, concerning the yearly report, with Carlos Muñoz, Marketing Manager of the new *(H)eerlijk Fruit BV* office in Hengelo. Muñoz is 33 years old, and is an expat living in the Netherlands for the last 3 months. He is an expert in fair trade of fruits. Born in Mexico to a German mother and a Mexican father, Muñoz is fluent in German and in charge of handling the German and the Mexican market. The purpose of the meeting is to negotiate whether the new office should extend their contract with the office in Twente and expand to Germany. The first meeting is supposed to take place at 15:00 the following day at the office of Mr. Muñoz.

(2) After a smooth train ride, and an early coffee at the train station, Jaap Rozemeijer leaves for the scheduled appointment at the office of Mr. Muñoz. Tanja, the Management Assistant, receives him and says that Mr. Muñoz will be 15 minutes late. While he waits, Mr. Rozemeijer has the opportunity to meet two other colleagues who will also be present at the meeting. The Management Assistant serves coffee and cakes. At 15:12 Mr. Muñoz arrives and warmly greets Mr. Rozemeijer. He invites all of them into the conference room. Mr. Rozemeijer observes that Mr. Muñoz does not really apologize for his late arrival. “Bad traffic” is the only thing he says.

(3) The meeting starts at 15:30. To Mr. Rozemeijer’s surprise, Mr. Muñoz does not start by discussing the agenda, but by chatting about his most recent visit to Amsterdam. He jokingly refers to his accidental visit to the red light district and the easiness of the Dutch government in allowing women to expose themselves shamelessly. Mr. Rozemeijer feels uncomfortable by the comments of Mr. Muñoz and politely suggests that they start with the meeting.

(4) The meeting finally commences and they start to discuss the report with the other colleagues (the Accountant and the Assistant Marketing Manager). After the meeting, Muñoz suggests to go for a drink in the city center. Mr. Rozemeijer still feels a little bit irritated about Muñoz unpunctuality as well as the previous comments and answers, “No, I have already done that this morning on my way to the office, maybe it is a better idea for us to immediately start writing the memo of this meeting”. Mr. Rozemeijer can’t believe that Mr. Muñoz just refuses to continue with work, as he is indeed eager to send the memo of the meeting to his office in Amsterdam. Upon Muñoz insistence, they end up visiting the city center and having a drink in Muñoz favourite bar. Muñoz tells Mr. Rozemeijer, with great enthusiasm, about his passion for whiskey and his absolute dislike for jenever. As Muñoz orders two whiskeys, Mr. Rozemeijer thinks to himself, “This is a complete waste of time!” I wonder if Muñoz ever does any work! Maybe he forgot that the memo has to be sent today. These South Americans are indeed lazy; always mañana, mañana!”

(5) The next morning Muñoz is almost twenty minutes late (they had an appointment for breakfast at 8:00) and he suggests that they should

meet at his office after breakfast to write the memo. With a heavy heart Mr. Rozemeijer agrees and after breakfast they head for the office. Muñoz introduces Mr. Rozemeijer to the rest of the staff as “Doctor Rozemeijer, our big boss from the head office in Amsterdam to whom we owe this great office”. Mr. Rozemeijer feels quite awkward with the very formal and authoritarian attitude of Muñoz towards his staff.

(6) After Muñoz shows him around the office they finally get down to business. They discuss the memo. Mr. Rozemeijer and Muñoz compile a document, highlighting the major decisions taken. Muñoz asks his assistant Tanja to send the document to Amsterdam and also to bring them some coffee and cookies from the kitchen. Mr. Rozemeijer is surprised at the fact that Muñoz expects a Management Assistant to serve them; after all, she doesn't work in the kitchen!

(7) After a short discussion about Mr. Rozemeijer's journey back home and the awful weather awaiting in Amsterdam, Mr. Rozemeijer and Muñoz finally bid each other farewell. Muñoz refers to Mr. Rozemeijer's visit as successful and productive and after a warm handshake and a “manly hug”; Mr. Rozemeijer receives a bottle of tequila as gift. He feels a bit embarrassed about being hugged and doubts whether he should accept the expensive gift. Finally he does take it with him. During the journey back home he thinks to himself, “what a strange guy, this Muñoz character. He was trying to get into my good books, probably because the financial situation at *(H)eerlijk Fruit in Hengelo* is not all that stable. These South Americans are not to be trusted. They should learn that it's the Dutch way or the highway. After all, we know much better how to conduct effective negotiations”.

- What intercultural misunderstandings can you recognize?
- What kind of competences can help Mr. Rozemeijer and Muñoz reach a more effective intercultural communication?
- Do you have some advice on how Muñoz and Rozemeijer can bridge the gap in their communication?
- Which cultural dimensions can be used to understand the situations sketched in this case study?



### **3. Goal setting and monitoring - Defining your goals and priorities**

When you are functioning in international / multicultural environments, it is essential that you define in advance what you would like to learn from the opportunities that are offered to you. In this scenario, it's always good to ask yourself what your priorities are and how ready you are to embark yourself in this learning experience. In other words, you need to define your goals in a clear, objective manner. The goals can be based on different intercultural skills and international competences. They can be academic, linguistic, professional, social, pertaining specific aspects of your personal development, etc. The important thing is that you are conscious about the reasons why these goals are a priority at this point of your student life.

Setting goals can help you with: a) providing clarity in your academic, professional and personal learning needs, b) creating the basis against which your learning success can be measured and c) setting up the starting point for your learning strategy. Goals are easily evaluated and most likely to be achieved when they correspond to the SMART-F criteria. SMART-F stands for:

#### **Specific:**

What is your (learning) goal? The description should be concrete enough and should avoid too broad/abstract statements. For example: "I will speak fluent Spanish within 6 months" is far more concrete than to say: "I want to improve my Spanish".

**Measurable:**

How will you achieve your (learning) goal? Which actions will you take? It is important to look into the time frame of your intercultural learning experience, so that you can be realistic about the timing and possibilities of your learning process. It is also necessary to establish some criteria and interim evaluation moments, in order to monitor your progress and your level of success.

**Achievable:**

Are you well prepared for your (learning) goals? How motivated are you? How much more preparation is necessary?

**Realistic:**

Is your goal based on realistic expectations? The planning of your goal should be based on real-time / situational factors. It is important to evaluate the context and other parallel priorities at the time of making a plan.

**Time bound:**

When will you begin and when do you expect to have achieved your goal? Setting a deadline and periodic evaluations are important steps here. It helps you keep focused and keep track of your progress.

**Flexible:** How will you prepare for unexpected tasks? Usually plans can change due to situational factors. That is why it is important that you keep a level of flexibility in your schedule, so you can have time to readjust your actions or make the necessary extra effort.

Specific Goal	Specific	Measur-able	Achiev-able	Realistic	Time bound	Flexible

Based on the SMART-F model, check if your targets meet the SMART criteria. Organize your targets by putting them in a table like this one above. Note down any weaknesses you can identify in your targets and try to improve them.

SMART goals work best and make it easier to stick with. It takes time for a goal to crystallize, or to clearly become a skill that you can master. It will probably take a while before you notice some progress. In some cases, you will only notice after some time. That is why it is important to monitor your progress and do some regular reflection – you will become more mindful and therefore more able to work on achieving your goal before it's too late.

Goals need practice and planning. It is important to foresee scenarios where your goals can be learned or developed. Would you like to improve your networking skills? Then think of which opportunities your host organization can offer you in order to practice this: is there a course that you can follow? Are there any initiatives, which facilitate networking amongst professional and students? Who can give you some orientation on where to network and how to network? And what international competences will you need in order to network efficiently?

Keeping your goal in sight makes it stick. You can do this by writing them down, by sticking some memos on your fridge, or by simply voicing your goal out loud each morning as a reminder of what you want and what you're working for. Reminding yourself of your goals helps to train to brain to make it happen. At the same time, you can ask your mentor to help you monitor your goal, by making them a continuous topic of conversation during your interim evaluations.

A goal is best achieved if you are genuinely motivated. Pleasing others first than yourself does not usually work. You need to own your goal, and pursue it because it is important to you and because you want to do it. Of course you will have demands and expectations from your school, employer or host organization, which might differ from yours. The key in this case is to find a balance and to find energy in the things that you desire to achieve. You will

most likely discover a sense of independency and develop the ability of self-motivation.

Difficulties do not mean failure. Diving into a new experience means that you will probably go through some ups and downs. You will need time to adjust to a new learning environment or to a new working situation, and you will probably go through some moments where things are messed up. These experiences will help you to become more mindful and competent, and they are a golden opportunity to practice new skills. They usually represent those ‘turning points’ where a great deal of learning at many levels occurs.



**Would you like to know about goal setting?**

Please check [this link](#) .

## 4. Observation and Reflection: Action research model: a good basis for documenting and making sense of your intercultural learning.

### 4.1. Action Research



*Figure 5: The action research cycle*

Action research is a method, which can be used to improve your intercultural competences. Not only does it involve critical reflection, but it also supports your preparation and/or planning for (similar) future scenarios.

During international/multicultural encounters, you will go through different new, exciting and sometimes frustrating moments. As mentioned before, these experiences are a rich source of learning, only if we take the time to document them, to understand them and reflect upon them. The action research method allows you to organize the steps through which you can document these experiences, analyze your learning and reflect upon the significance that it has for your professional, academic and/or personal development.

When you are on the quest of achieving your learning goals, it helps to take a step back when you have a striking experience. First you map the scenario objectively: was the experience part of your plan? What brought you to the moment of that experience? Secondly, you describe that experience with objective detail (what happened? what did you see, what did you hear? how did you feel? how did you react?). Third, you try to interpret what happened, using different perspectives (did you have false expectations, did you draw conclusions that were justified, did you make your own cultural background the yardstick by which to measure the other?). Fourth, you try to establish what you have learned, and what you can do with it in a future encounter (how can I apply this knowledge in future scenarios?). Finally, you can reflect on your learning experiences by connecting it to your personal growth, academic development or professional ambitions (what does this experience mean to me in the context of my international learning experience? What does it mean for my personal, academic and/or professional future? What is my key learning point of all this experience? What international competences did I apply, learned or developed?). And very importantly, how can I plan for a similar learning experience?

## **4.2 Observation and Reflection: Preparing your Intercultural Career Writing paper**

One of the most powerful approaches to intercultural learning, or indeed any kind of learning that involves social interaction, is the cycle of experiencing, observing, analyzing, reflecting and planning.

Of these reflection is perhaps the most important. One of the main tasks we set you, therefore, is preparing a reflection exercise called 'Intercultural Career Writing'.

### 4.2.1 What is a Reflection Exercise?

A Reflection Exercise is a written presentation of a self-reflection about a specific issue. It is not only a tool for you to use during your stay abroad or in a multicultural classroom, it may also serve as a means of assessment of the intercultural competences you acquired.

A Reflection Exercise is not a diary or journal, although these may have been a way of processing your reflections before actually writing the paper. It is a type of essay, and as such requires:

- An introduction: what points will you discuss? Why?
- A well-structured body, which presents your thoughts clearly and logically to the reader,: what ideas will form the base of your reflection? What experiences and examples can you use to illustrate them? What skills and competences are related to these learning experiences?
- A conclusion: what were the highlights of your learning? How does this learning experience support your study and future professional profile?

A Reflection Exercise is designed to show your learning in a certain field, and, more importantly, your awareness of how that learning came about. Thus it is an interaction between ideas received from outside (e.g. books, lectures, school experiences, personal impressions) and your own internal understanding and interpretation of those ideas.

More than anything else, a Reflection Exercise invites **self-reflection**.

The capacity for self-reflection is a vital personal and professional quality of a good professional. Self-reflection in this context involves a constant questioning of one's own assumptions, and a capacity to analyze and synthesize information to create new perspectives and understanding. This is a constant process and leads to an on-going commitment to improve and refine one's own learning practice. These Reflection Papers are teaching you a technique that you will use all your professional life.

### 4.2.2 What does your reader expect in a Reflection exercise?

In a Reflection Paper your reader expects you to show that you can:

- Acquire a certain amount of knowledge in a specific area of teaching and learning
- Relate this knowledge to personal experience

- Analyze your current knowledge, your experiences and your own assumptions to gain a broader perspective on the theory and practice of your discipline
- Communicate these things clearly (logical argument, and writing skills at a professional standard)
- Think deeply.

Because it is labeled as a reflection, do not be tempted to just write down everything you can think about or simply tell what happened. Analyze your experiences to discover the ideas or concepts that lay behind them, or theories you have learnt that could be applied to them. Thus, never just tell the story: **always** use an event as a way of referring to an idea or theory. Then structure the points in your Reflection Exercise according to these concepts. Again, this is good preparation for your professional lives. Looking for the concepts behind experience is an ability that you must have as an internationally competent graduate.

#### 4.2.3 Strategies for critical reflection

Here are some strategies, which will help you achieve the deep thinking necessary in a Reflection Exercise. Note the emphasis on questioning.

- Ask yourself **why** something happened, or **why** something did not happen.
- Ask yourself what was good: why?; what was bad: why?; what was interesting and relevant? Why?
- Think of **alternatives**; what other things could have happened and how could you devise ways of making them happen?
- Look for **other points of view** (e.g., what was this like from the perspective of the person from another culture?).
- Look for **hidden assumptions** in others' attitudes, and in your own (e.g., what incidents in my own schooling have led me to believe this?; what are the hidden rules in my own culture?).
- Parts and qualities: look at something as a **collection of parts** (components and relationships), but also as a **set of qualities** (e.g., values and judgments).
- Look at something from an **opposite** point of view to challenge it.
- Ask **who might be advantaged** and **who might be disadvantaged** by current (and new hypothetical) responses and actions.

Adapted from: Critical Reflection. University of New England. Academic Literacy. <http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/alo>

#### 4.2.4 How to plan for your reflection exercise

For your reflection exercise, you are expected to using the steps of the Action Research Model –ARM on page 24 (Fig. 5).

1. Keep a diary of your most relevant experiences. It might be that you have more than one key learning moment, so it's important to keep track of what's really triggering your curiosity.
2. Make deadlines for every phase and agree on those with your mentor.
3. Bring your story to life. Besides your narrative, think of:
  - What visuals best illustrate your story? (A drawing? A photograph?)
  - What keywords best represent the mood that you experienced during that story?
  - What would be the leading tagline or title of your story?

Imagine that you are publishing this story in a blog dedicated to international learning experiences. The readers are young people like you, who want to learn about what to expect and who are curious to know how a young person like you sees the world and deals with it. The stories can be funny, serious, shocking, etc. What is important is that you reflect your personal learning experience.

In the end, you are asked to reflect upon your learning, highlighting the intercultural competences that you learned or developed in these striking interactions. There's no limit of words for each story – You can be as extensive and detailed as you can, the idea is to narrate it in such a way that someone who doesn't know you can also learn from your reflection.

#### 5.2.5 Logbook

In order to keep track of your experiences, you can keep a logbook, which summarizes your learning. This table below can help you to have an overview of the things that you are learning. This is NOT a substitution of the ongoing reflections, but a summary overview.

Description of a learning situation	What key-words reflect the essence of my story?	International competences at work			
		Attitude Activated or learned	Skills Applied or learned	Knowledge Used or learned	Behaviour Displayed or learned



## 5. List of homework and assigned readings

### Preparation for session 1:

- Read student guide on international competences and intercultural competence (pages 3-10 until indirect vs. direct communication styles).

### Homework for session 2:

- Answer the following questions (maximum a page).
  - What are the advantages of being a student in a diverse classroom? What are your learning possibilities?
  - What could be possible challenges of working with mixed groups?
  - What values and norms do you find important in order to keep a positive and harmonious atmosphere in the classroom?
- Read student guide on intercultural dimensions (pages 10-18).
- Read case study: A Dutch businessman meets Mexican counterpart (pp 19-20).

### Homework for session 3:

- Pick two cultural dimensions that are interesting to you. Find someone from a different cultural background than yours and interview him/ her about his/her experience with these two dimensions.
  - Report on your findings:
    - What dimensions did you pick?
    - Who did you interview? (Cultural background, age, time living in The Netherlands).
    - What questions did you ask?
    - What similarities and differences did you find?
- Revisit the list of intercultural competences on page 33. Prepare a 5-minute PowerPoint presentation and answer the following questions:
  - Which of these competences do you want to develop during this semester?
  - Which are your top three priorities? Why?

### Homework for session 4:

- Based on your mind map, elaborate a list of actions that you need to take in order to meet your objectives.
- Read student guide on SMART planning (pages 21-23).
- Read instructions for personal reflection (pages 22-27).



## 6. Reflection Exercise

After you have continuously self-monitored your learning process, you are expected to write a final reflection exercise. This final reflection exercise will reflect your overall learning experience. After looking back at the different stories of your international learning experience, what is the key learning that you bring back with you?

### Contents

#### 1. What were your learning objectives?

- a. List the initial learning objectives
- b. Explain whether these objectives changed along the way and why.
- c. Which actions did you plan in order to achieve these objectives?
- d. Did you follow upon your plan? Explain.
- e. Were there any challenges in following up your plan? Explain.

#### 2. What experiences can best illustrate the efforts you made in order to achieve your learning objectives?

- a. How did these experiences help you acquire intercultural competences?
- b. What are the most important things you learned?
- c. What effect did it have on you?

#### 3. Your intercultural career:

- a. What specific competences did you learn?
- b. How will these competences support you in your next academic/professional steps?

#### 4. Explain in a 3-minute Professional Pitch: what makes you an interculturally competent person? Here you have some guiding questions. See page 34 for instructions on the format for this pitch.

- a. What intercultural competences do you possess?
- b. What is their added value in your current academic life?
- c. How do they connect to your professional ambition?
- d. What metaphor can you use, that reflects the essence of your learning?

#### 5. Feedback on preparation module. We would like to hear from you:

- a. What did you find useful and what not?
- b. What you have missed and what should be included?
- c. What did you enjoy the most?

## 7. References:

Deardorff, D. (2009) – *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*. Sage Publications, Inc.

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Sullivan, E. (2004). *Study Abroad for Dummies*. Wesley Publishing, Inc.

Thomas, D. and Inkson, K. (2009) – *Cultural Intelligence – Living and working globally*. Second Edition. Berret-Koehler Publishers.

Trompenaars, F. and Hampden-Turner, C. (1997) – *Riding the waves of culture – Understanding cultural diversity in business*. Second edition. Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

## 8. List of self-study/recommended links:

1. DiversityDNA: your unique cultural DNA profile (page 9).  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thTgveMQcKEandfeature=plcp>
2. On Communication styles (page 10).  
Cultural Dimension: direct versus indirect communication style.  
Interfacet Training. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCIAb6hvPgY>
3. Comparing cultures based on Hofstede's dimensions (page 11).  
Intercultural Business Communication tool. Kwintessential.  
<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/intercultural-business-communication/tool.php>
4. On individualism vs. collectivism (page 11).  
Cultural Dimension: me or we. Interfacet Training.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CW7aWKXB5J4>
5. On time management and attitudes to time (page 12).  
Cultural Dimension: time versus relationship. Interfacet Training.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KK9HLOB2-Hk&feature=relmfu>
6. On hierarchy & status (page 13).  
Harzing, Anne-Wil. How to address your teacher? Country differences in preferred ways of address for university teachers.  
<http://www.harzing.com/teacher.htm>
7. Cultural Dimension: low versus high power distance. Interfacet Training:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqaa42gbqhA>
8. Cultural Dimension: achieved status versus ascribed status. Interfacet Training.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&feature=endscreen&v=lk mS-jTGN1A>

9. On Non verbal communication (page 16).  
Cultural dimension: display of emotion. Interfacet Training.  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwDDb\\_h2i0A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwDDb_h2i0A)
10. On nonverbal communication and negotiations  
Richard Lewis Communications. Negotiating across Cultures.  
<http://www.crossculture.com/services/negotiating-across-cultures>
11. Global Business Etiquette: a guide to international communication and customs - By J. S. Martin and L. H. Chaney (2006).  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/93409663/Global-Business-Etiquette-a-Guide-to-International-Communication-and-Customs>
12. How to overcome language barriers (page 17).
13. IBUS7314 International Study in Asian Business – 2010.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=db0091FabF8>
14. Would you like to know more about goal setting? (Page 21).  
Setting Goals. International Student Center. Education Abroad. San Diego State University.  
<http://www.isc.sdsu.edu/content/Abroad/EAFuture/settinggoals.html>
15. Strategies for critical reflection (page 34).  
Critical Reflection. University of New England. Academic Literacy. A site for Bachelor of Education Students.  
<http://www.une.edu.au/tlc/alo/>

## 9. List of Intercultural Competences:

### Intercultural Competence: Key Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

#### 1. Knowledge

- General cultural knowledge: to be familiar with the patterns and components of the concept of culture.
- Self-knowledge: to understand your own cultural context and how you may be perceived by others.
- Culture-specific knowledge: to be familiar with the culture of your counterpart, including its social norms, values and history.

#### 2. Skills

- Language skills: to be able to speak a second or third language; and an appreciation of the challenges associated with learning and interacting in a second or third language.
- Interaction analysis/complexity thinking: to be able to consider the various factors that may influence behaviour and affect intercultural interactions.
- Relationship-building skills: to be able to build productive and positive relationships, based on mutual trust and understanding.
- Listening skills: to be able to listen with attention and in a non-judgmental way.
- Information-gathering skills: to know how to research new, accurate, unbiased information.
- Problem-solving skills: to be able to find alternative solutions to problems, in a creative and inclusive manner.

#### 3. Attitudes

- Cultural empathy and curiosity: being interested in the other, asking personal questions, being willing to understand the point of view of the other.
- Open-mindedness: is interested in exploring new information, and is willing to understand other values, norms and ways of perceiving the world in a non-judgmental way.

- Risk oriented, emotionally stable: to be motivated to communicate in unfamiliar contexts, willing to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Social initiative: to openly (and publicly) interact with people from different backgrounds.
- Comfortable with ambiguity or unclear situations.
- Empathic and imaginative: to be able to place yourself in the shoes of the other.
- Flexibility: to be open to change, and to seek change.
- Self-reflective: being able to learn from past experiences.
- Respectful of difference.
- Sense of humor.

## **10. Instructions for your Professional Pitch.**

1. Your pitch should be 3 minutes.
2. The format of your pitch should be audiovisual. You can choose between:
  - a. A three-minute pitch performed in front of a video camera.
  - b. Digital story telling.

### **WHAT IS DIGITAL STORYTELLING?**

- This is a “short, first person video-narrative created by combining recorded voice, still and moving images, and music or other sounds. Digital storyteller: Anyone who has a desire to document life experience, ideas, or feelings through the use of story and digital media. Usually someone with little to no prior experience in the realm of video production”. The digital stories can relate to past, present and/or future
- You can find instructions on the web page of the Centre for Digital Story telling through the following link:  
<http://www.storycenter.org/cookbook.pdf>

[dehaagsehogeschool.nl/lectoraat-is](https://dehaagsehogeschool.nl/lectoraat-is)



**De Haagse Hogeschool**  
Johanna Westerdijkplein 75  
2521 EH Den Haag

[dehaagsehogeschool.nl/lectoraten](https://dehaagsehogeschool.nl/lectoraten)