

## A question of competence

**Level:** Intermediate–upper intermediate

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Summary:** This lesson is about the importance of intercultural competence in a business situation. In this lesson, students:

1. study a text that explains what intercultural competence is and how people can become better at it;
2. discuss intercultural encounters they have had;
3. compare their ideas on stereotypes, intercultural training and consider what groups they feel they belong in.

**Materials:** One copy of the worksheet per student

**Group size:** Any

**Note:** This lesson plan is for both pre-experience and in-work business students based on an original article first published in *Business Spotlight* issue 4/2020.

### Warmer

- a. To introduce students to the topic, ask them to read through the items in the box and complete each sentence with at least two of these items. They may adapt the sentences and add their own ideas if they want.
- b. Ask them to compare their sentences in small groups and see if they can find a few statements completed in a similar way. Briefly discuss why this might be (e.g. the students are all from the same company or are all around the same age).

### Key words

Students match the key words with the definitions. They should scan the article for the key words and notice how they are used in context. The interview question number after the definitions tells the students in which section of the article the word appears.

**Key:**

- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. approach   | 8. encounters     |
| 2. standing   | 9. offence        |
| 3. readiness  | 10. clear up      |
| 4. outlined   | 11. prerequisites |
| 5. tolerance  | 12. tremendously  |
| 6. resilience | 13. judgemental   |
| 7. renowned   | 14. prejudices    |

### Understanding the article

Students should read the article and answer the questions.

**Key:**

1. age group, gender, professional culture, national culture, professional standing (within a job or company), specific interests
2. Using stereotypes can easily be seen as judgemental, ignorant and even racist.
3. tolerance, mindfulness, resilience and empathy
4. Mader says problems of language competence (such as grammar and pronunciation mistakes) are only really important if they lead to misunderstandings, unintentional amusement or offence. However, cultural competence mistakes (such as being impolite) can stop long-lasting business relationships from developing.
5. As young people come into contact with other cultures, this will lead to more awareness and understanding of other cultures and the ability to communicate effectively with people from these cultures. We may not need training on intercultural competence once we understand each other.

### Using the key words

- a. Students decide which of the key words they need from task 2 to complete the questions 1 to 5.

**Key:**

- |               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. encounters | 4. judgemental |
| 2. clear up   | 5. approach    |
| 3. offence    |                |

- b. Ask students to discuss their answers to the questions in pairs or small groups.

### Discussion

Students discuss the questions relating to intercultural competence in business.