



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Academic, Industry & Digital Skills

Week 19

Lisa Bassler

Email: l.bassler@uwtsd.ac.uk

Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

www.uwtsd.ac.uk

23rd April (2:30-4:30pm)	lecture
30th April	Assignment 2 (Live Presentations)
1st May	Assignment 2 Deadline (by 23:59pm)
7th May (2:30-4:30pm)	lecture

Remember: Draft Deadline is Friday, 24th April, at 12pm (noon)

Please remember to send them to me **via email** (the draft Turnitin link is for checking your work against Turnitin only, and any submissions will not be reviewed).

Learning Objectives

- **Industry Competencies and Key Transferable Skills (Part 5):**
Identity and Sense of Place: Cultural Competence & Intercultural Awareness

By the end of this lecture, you will be able to:

- Define culture and cultural competence
- Identify key cultural differences in tourism and workplace contexts
- Communicate effectively across cultures
- Recognise and challenge stereotypes and bias
- Apply cultural awareness in real-world scenarios



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Cultural Competence & Intercultural Awareness

Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

www.uwtsd.ac.uk

What is Culture?

What is Culture?

a: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group

b: the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterises an institution or organisation

c: the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic

d: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behaviour that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

**All
answers
are
correct!**

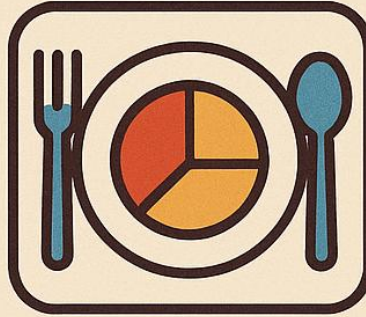
What is Culture?

- There is no single definition, but general consensus that culture refers to a pattern of **values and beliefs which inform attitudes and behaviours** and which **distinguish one group from another** and **binds them together**.
- These values and behaviours are passed on to new members of the group as the right way to see, think, feel and act in given circumstances, referred to by Torrington (1994) as ‘learned frameworks’
- Culture is not static but evolves over time.
- We draw on many sources for our cultural identity, including gender, occupation, social class, workplace, religion, ethnicity.

ELEMENTS OF CULTURE



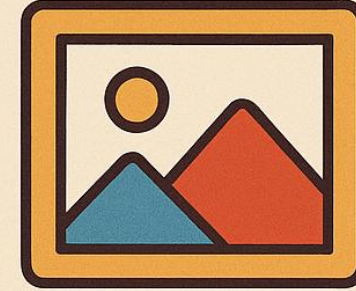
LANGUAGE



CUISINE



ENTERTAINMENT



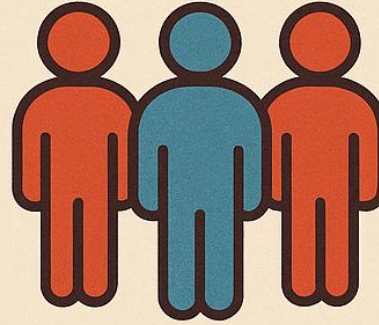
ART



TRADITIONS



DRESS



SOCIAL NORMS

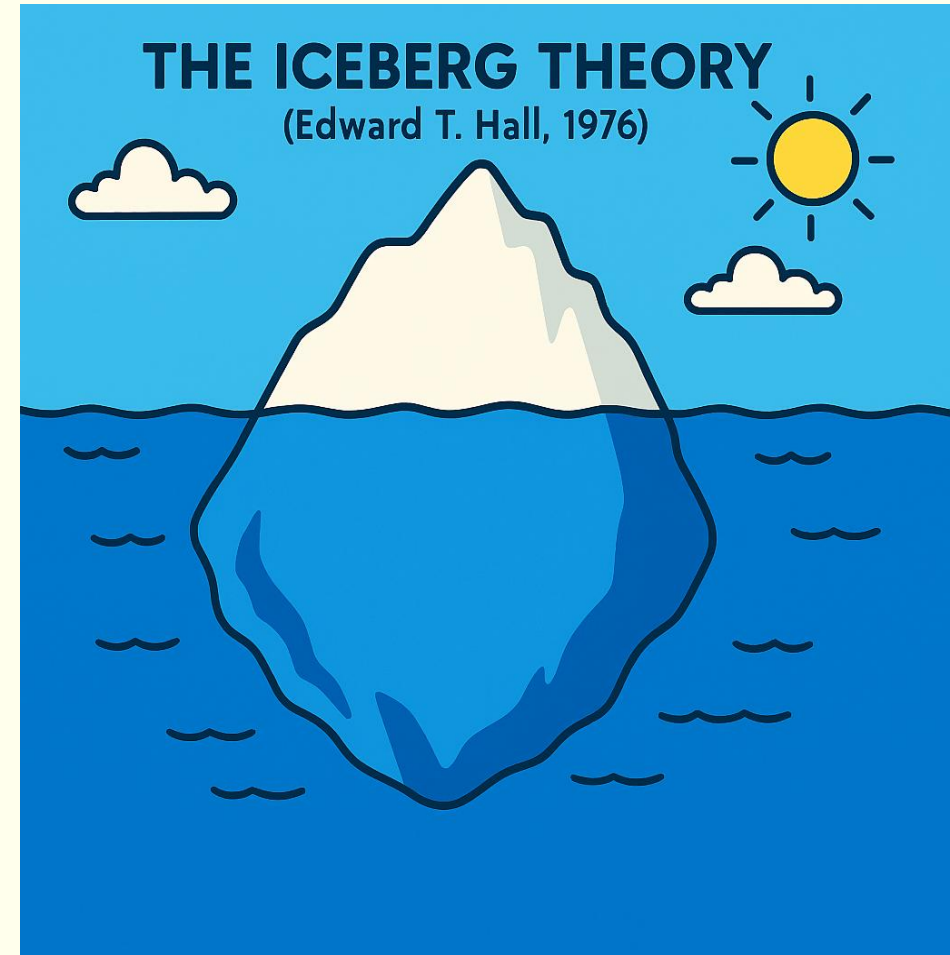


RELIGION

The Iceberg Theory

Conceptualised by Edward T. Hall in 1976.

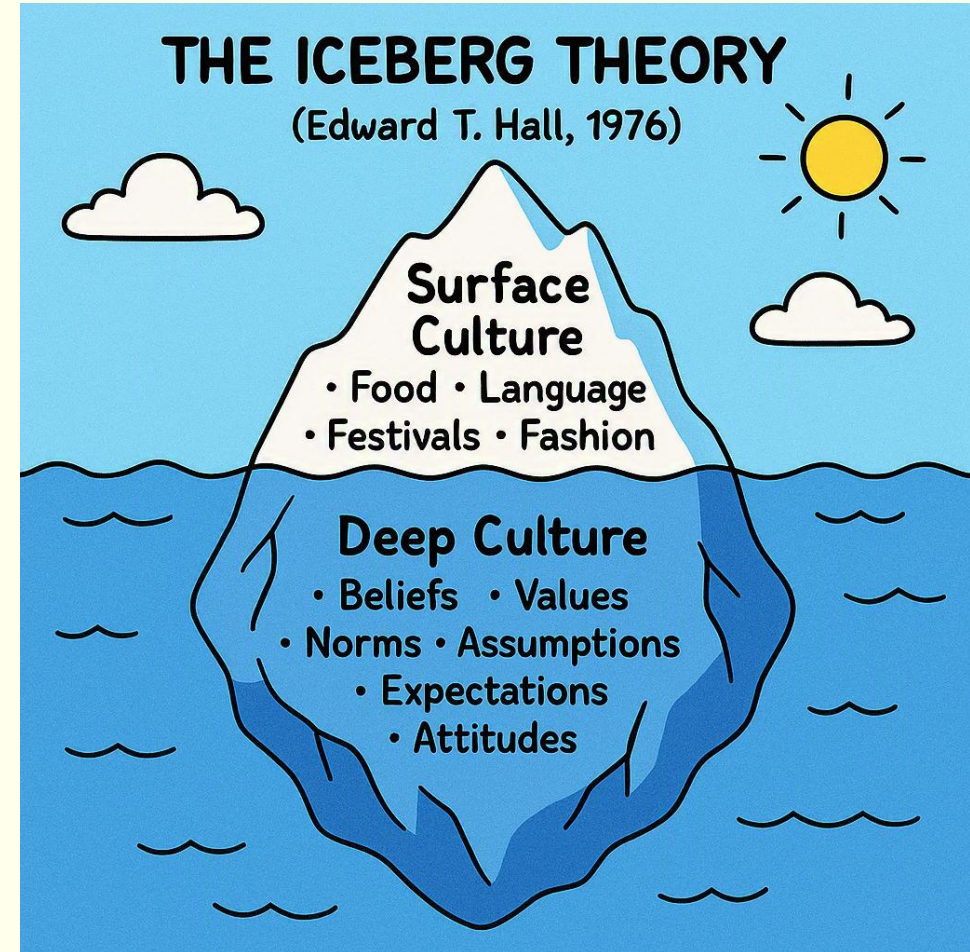
- ❖ What parts of Culture are visible?
- ❖ What parts of Culture are invisible?



The Iceberg Theory (contd.)

Conceptualised by Edward T. Hall in 1976.

- ❖ What parts of Culture are visible?
- ❖ What parts of Culture are invisible?



Activity: Exploring Cultural Differences

1. Work in pairs or groups of three.

2. Research and discuss common cultural differences in the following areas:

- Greetings (e.g. handshakes, eye contact, personal space)
- Time-keeping (e.g. punctuality, attitudes to deadlines)
- Communication styles (e.g. direct vs indirect, body language, tone)

3. Take brief notes on your findings. Include:

- At least one example for each category
- Specific countries or cultures where possible

4. Prepare to share:

- Be ready to give a short summary of your discussion
- Highlight one interesting or surprising difference.



High vs Low-Context Cultures

Low-Context Cultures: Communication is direct, clear, and explicit.

- People say exactly what they mean and less is left to interpretation.
- Rules and procedures are emphasised more than relationships.
- Examples: Germany, United States, Scandinavia

Example: In the US, someone is more likely to say “No, I can’t do that” clearly, without expecting the listener to read between the lines.

High vs Low-Context Cultures (contd.)

High-Context Cultures: Communication is indirect and relies heavily on context.

- People often understand each other through shared experiences, non-verbal cues and implied meanings.
- Relationships and trust are very important.
- Examples: Japan, China, Arab countries, many Latin American cultures.

Example: In Japan, someone might say “It’s a bit difficult” instead of directly saying “No”. The listener is expected to understand the true meaning based on tone and situation.

What is Cultural Competence?

What is Cultural Competence?

Cultural competence is the ability to work effectively with people from other cultures in an effective and sensitive way.

It combines:

- an understanding of other cultures
- experience of engaging with people from different backgrounds
- attitudes that promote intercultural understanding
- behaviours that support positive and effective interaction



The Intercultural Workplace

- As workplaces become increasingly global and diverse, employers often look for candidates who can show awareness and practical experience of communicating across cultures.
- This may include the ability to travel, live or work internationally, or to interact respectfully with clients or colleagues whose backgrounds and perspectives differ from one's own.
- During interviews, you might be assessed through scenario-based questions designed to test **intercultural sensitivity**, as well as your readiness to work effectively with diverse customer groups or international partners.



(Cottrell, 2024)

Appreciating Different Cultures and Languages

*questionnaire adapted from Cottrell (2024)

Appreciating your own culture

- ❖ What do you think of as core to your culture?
- ❖ How different is this to other cultures? How do you know?
- ❖ Of which aspects of your culture are you most proud?
- ❖ Are there things you wish were not part of your culture or that you disagree with?



Appreciating Different Cultures and Languages (contd.)

*questionnaire adapted from Cottrell (2024)



Heroes and heroines

- ❖ Who are the heroes and heroines revered in your country or community?
- ❖ What values do such heroes and heroines represent?
- ❖ Are these values that are important to you?

Appreciating Different Cultures and Languages (contd.)

*questionnaire adapted from Cottrell (2024)

National stereotypes

- ❖ How are people from your own background conveyed in stereotypes such as in the media or in other countries?
- ❖ How does that stereotype differ from the realities of people you know?
- ❖ How do you feel about such stereotypes?

A **cultural stereotype** is a simplified, widely held belief about a group based on shared identity (such as culture, nationality or religion), often generalised to all members despite individual differences.

E.g. Germans are always punctual and highly efficient.



Appreciating Different Cultures and Languages (contd.)

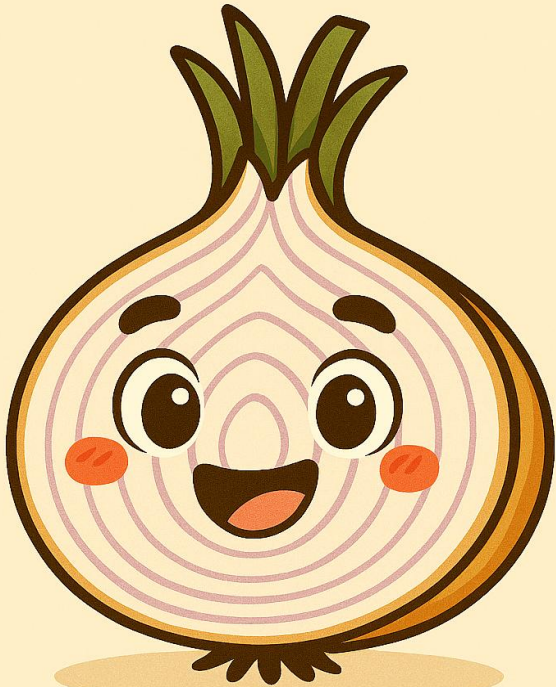
*questionnaire adapted from Cottrell (2024)

What shaped your thinking?

- ❖ How have history, personal experience, time and place shaped your own everyday assumptions?

There isn't a short or quick answer to such a question – there will be many influences. However, it is worth investigating, over time, what has made us think the way we do.

It's Complicated!



Understanding culture is multi-layered!

- ❖ It isn't easy to reach the deeper levels of *culture* and its meanings.
- ❖ What you see on the surface may mask differences below the surface.

**What are cultural
misunderstandings?**

Cultural Misunderstandings

A **cultural misunderstanding** happens when people from different cultures misread or misinterpret each other's behaviour, words or customs because they have different “normal” ways of doing things.



In many Western cultures, direct eye contact is seen as a sign of confidence and honesty. In contrast, in several Asian, African and Latin American cultures, prolonged eye contact may be viewed as rude or confrontational, with more indirect or brief eye contact preferred to show respect, especially in hierarchical relationships.

(Michael, 2022)



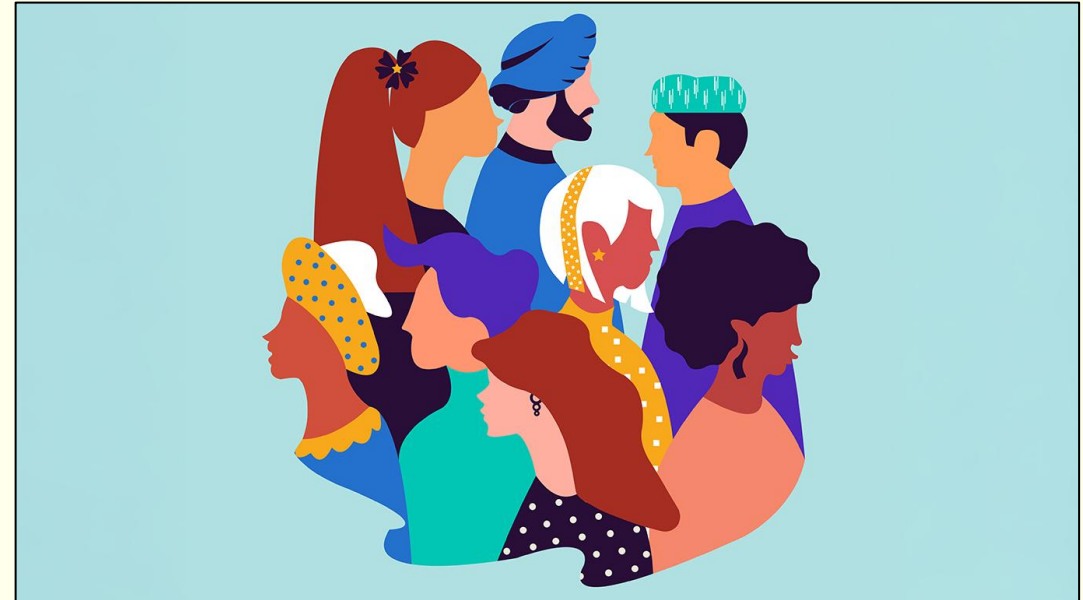
Activity: Cultural Misunderstandings

1. Think about a time when you have been in a situation that could have been a cultural misunderstanding.
2. Discuss with a partner.
3. Research the cultural misunderstanding and identify what went wrong and how it could be handled better.



Solving Cultural Misunderstandings

- ✓ Increase cultural awareness
- ✓ Practice active listening
- ✓ Clarify and confirm understanding
- ✓ Avoid stereotypes
- ✓ Adapt communication styles
- ✓ Be patient and open-minded



Unconscious Bias



Access:

[Unconscious Bias - Leadership and Management](#)

Unconscious Bias

**So, what is
unconscious
bias?**

Unconscious bias refers to automatic, implicit assumptions we make about others based on background, culture or identity. These biases can influence decisions without us realising.

It can affect:

- **Hiring and promotions** (e.g. favouring people with similar backgrounds)
- **Education** (e.g. different expectations of students)
- **Healthcare** (e.g. differences in how symptoms are interpreted)
- **Everyday interactions** (e.g. assumptions about competence or behaviour)

Mitigating Unconscious Bias

Understanding and addressing unconscious bias is essential for fostering an inclusive and equitable workplace.

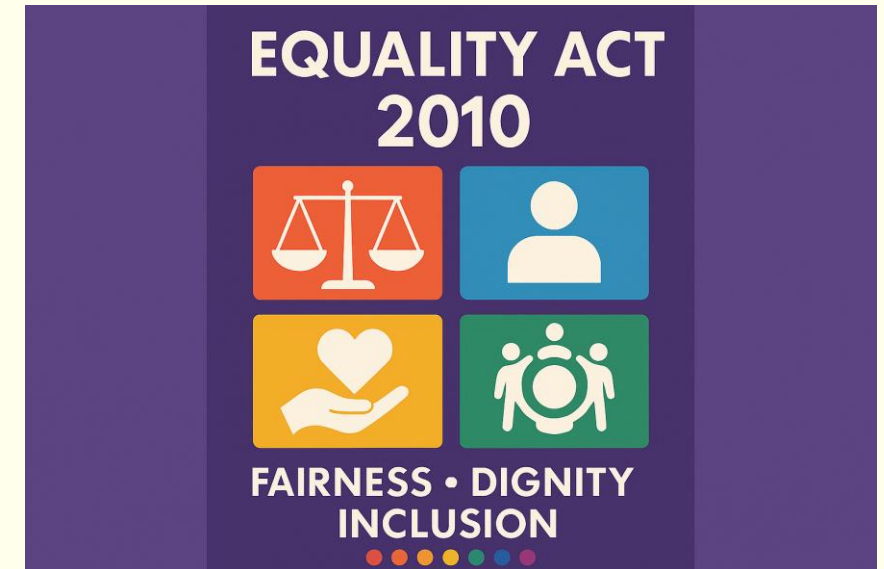
Good practices for mitigating unconscious bias include:

- **Slow down decisions** – rushing increases reliance on gut feelings and stereotypes. Take time to review information and consider multiple perspectives.
- **Challenge assumptions** – avoid relying on preconceived ideas; seek evidence to support fair, impartial judgements.
- **Commit to continuous learning** – regularly reflect, learn and build strategies to recognise and reduce your own biases.
- **Involve diverse perspectives** – include others in decision-making to ensure a more balanced and well-rounded view.

The Equality Act 2010

Whilst no specific laws directly target unconscious bias, **The Equality Act 2010** addresses discrimination and mandates reasonable adjustments to prevent disadvantaging individuals with protected characteristics.

It also covers indirect discrimination, where policies or practices rooted in unconscious bias can negatively impact someone through their protected characteristics.



Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity refers to the presence of differences within a given setting.

Examples include:

- Race and ethnicity
- Gender and gender identity
- Age
- Socioeconomic status
- Disability
- Religion
- Sexual orientation
- Cultural background

Inclusion is the practice of ensuring people feel a sense of belonging and support.

Key aspects:

- Respect and value all individuals
- Encourage participation
- Create safe environments
- Ensure equitable access to opportunities



Diversity & Inclusion

Organisations with strong D&I:

- Perform better financially
- Have higher employee retention
- Attract top talent
- Build stronger reputations

(Hardiman, 2024)



Inclusive leaders:

- Model respectful behaviour
- Challenge bias
- Support diverse teams
- Make equitable decisions

Barriers to Inclusion:

- Unconscious bias
- Stereotyping
- Discrimination
- Lack of representation
- Organisational culture

Open-Mindedness

- **Open-mindedness** at work is the foundation for strong critical thinking, better collaboration and smarter decision-making. It helps you spot new possibilities, hear different perspectives and grow in multi-dimensional ways.
- The more open-minded you are, the easier it is to take in new information, challenge your assumptions and build better relationships.
- With some simple brain training, you can develop open-mindedness as a natural state of being.

**OPEN-
MINDEDNESS**

Open-Mindedness (contd.)

- **Be honest about your biases**

We all have assumptions. Notice when you're dismissing ideas or preparing a rebuttal before someone finishes. Drop the "I already know" mindset and ask, "*What if I don't?*". That pause creates space to learn – even when it's uncomfortable.

- **Listen to learn, not just to respond**

Open-mindedness means truly considering what others say. Ask genuine questions. Don't interrupt or defend – practice active listening. This is crucial with feedback: even when it stings, it fuels growth and builds trust.

- **Try something unfamiliar**

Seek new experiences that push you slightly beyond your comfort zone – explore new topics, talk to different people, say yes to challenges. They expand your perspective and build adaptability.

Being open-minded doesn't mean abandoning your views. It means holding them lightly and allowing them to evolve. The more open you are, the more possibilities you create. Start now!

Summary – Building Cultural Competence

- ✓ Building cultural competence isn't a single milestone – it's an ongoing process of learning, reflection and adjustment.
- ✓ Start with self-awareness: examine your own background, assumptions and biases. You can't interpret others accurately without recognising your own lens.
- ✓ Next, build knowledge – not by relying on stereotypes, but by learning about histories, values and contexts. Reading, global news and resources from organisations like UNESCO can deepen understanding.

Summary – Building Cultural Competence (contd.)

- ✓ Equally important is direct interaction. Engaging with diverse people – through travel, community or work – develops practical skills. Approach these experiences with curiosity, and prioritise listening over judging.
- ✓ Strong communication is key. Cultural competence shows in how you speak and behave, including tone, body language and awareness of differing norms.
- ✓ Finally, reflect and stay adaptable. Learn from each interaction, seek feedback when possible, and remember that culture is dynamic – competence comes from continuous openness and willingness to adjust.

Learn a New Culture



Access:

[Learn a new culture |](#)
[Julien S. Bourrelle |](#)
[TEDxArendal - YouTube](#)

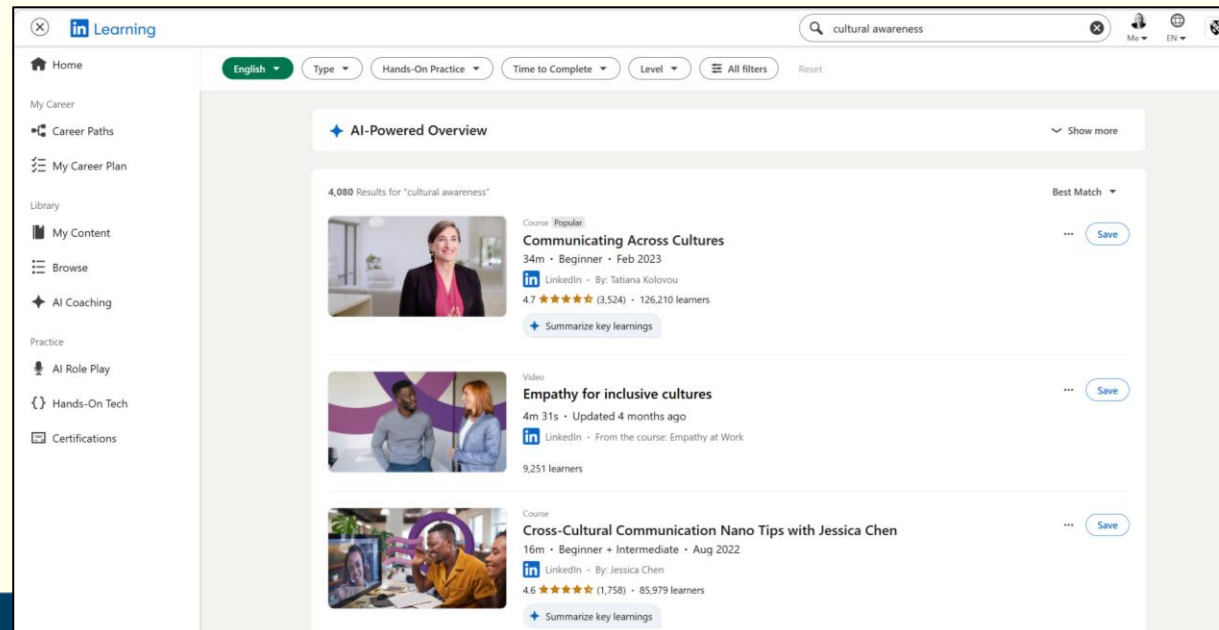
(TEDx Talks, 2017)

LinkedIn Learning

LinkedIn LEARNING



Remember to check out LinkedIn Learning for self-paced (asynchronous) learning. There are lots of courses and workshops on interpersonal skills – just search for “cultural awareness” (or similar keywords) in the search bar as demonstrated below:





**Our FINAL lecture will take place on Thursday,
7th May at 2:30pm,
in Room IM13
(Innovation Matrix).**

Trawsnewid Addysg, Trawsnewid Bywydau
Transforming Education, Transforming Lives

References

Cottrell, S. (2024) *The study skills handbook*. 6th edn. Bloomsbury.

Hardiman, K. (2024) *The Impact of DEI on Financial Performance: The Proof is in the Statistics!*. Available at: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/impact-dei-financial-performance-proof-statistics-kate-hardiman-v6q7c/> (Accessed: 1st April 2026).

Litmos Heroes (2016) *Unconscious Bias – Leadership and Management*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dloCJq8shZE> (Accessed: 1st April 2026).

Michael, R. (2022) *Eye contact*. Available at: <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/communication-and-mass-media/eye-contact#bibliography> (Accessed: 1st April 2026).

TEDx Talks (2017) *Learn a new culture / Julien S. Bourrelle / TEDxArendal*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhA9eypocE0> (Accessed: 1st April 2026).

UWTSD Career Centre (n.d.) *3 steps to being more open-minded*. Available at: <https://uwtsd.careercentre.me/resources/elearning/Hub.aspx?redirect=/e-learning/asset/view/4813> (Accessed: 3rd April 2026).

UWTSD Career Centre (n.d.) *Unconscious bias*. Available at: <https://uwtsd.careercentre.me/elearning/scorm.aspx?CourseId=1aBsndx0a/wJ3Pcsj1MF4w==> (Accessed: 1st April 2026).