



Intercultural Studies Glossary

Key Word	Definition
A priori	Gaining knowledge or understanding from a theoretical standpoint rather than from observation and experience.
Acculturate	Adjusting or assimilating to a different culture or environment, usually a dominant one.
Americanisation	The influence of American culture and business practices on other countries.
Anglocentric	A view of the world or perspective that is centred on England, with an implied belief that English culture is superior.
Anthropology	The study of humans within past and present societies with a focus on behaviour, language, culture and how societies are organised.
Aparadigmatic	Something that is not typical, such as an academic field which does not fit neatly into a single framework.
Archetype	A typical example of something.
Assumptions	Believing that something is definite/true or that something will happen without proof.
Attitude (KASA)	Having an open and curious mind-set and a desire to engage with a new environment. This is done without seeing experiences through 'us' and 'them' distinctions.
Awareness (KASA)	Perceiving the environment of the new culture you are in, including verbal and non-verbal cues, and being aware of the possible impact you have on it.
Belongingness	A sense you belong, or that you are accepted as part of a particular group.
Bracketing	When someone suspends judgment and attempts to make familiar things strange.
Burkini	A modest swimsuit worn typically by Muslim women. Fabric covers the majority of the body and the full shape of the woman's body is hidden.
Capitalism	An economic or political system whereby the country's trade and industry are controlled privately (not by the state) for the purpose of profit.
Colonialisation	The process whereby a nation takes control of other people or territories, generally with the objective of enriching itself. It can also coincide with attempts to "modernise" the colony in terms of religion, health, economic systems and processes of governance..
Colonisation	Appropriating a territory for gain, often by settling amongst indigenous populations.
Cosmopolitanism	The idea that all humans belong to a single community based on shared morals.
Covert ethnography	An ethnographic study conducted in secret, where participants do not know they are being studied.
Creole	A stable language passed down from parents that mixes other languages.
Critical cosmopolitanism	The idea that all humans belong to a single, open-minded community based on shared morals that strive to make a more just, equitable and sustainable world.
Critical incidents	Interactions that challenge behaviour or assumptions and can help to promote intercultural awareness and understanding.
Cultural artefact	An item that gives valuable information about the society or group of its creators or users.
Cultural binary	Two related concepts that are opposite in meaning such as male/female, black/white or East/West.
Cultural blocks	Something that reinforces the idea that singular and monolithic.



Cultural resource	A singular or shared concept that has significance to the people traditionally associated with it. These can be physical resources such as buildings or more intangible ideas such as nationality or religious practices.
Cultural threads	Something that emphasises shared experiences rather than differences between cultures.
Culturalist approach	A view that culture is centrally important in terms of explaining human society, thereby the concept of culture is over-used.
Culture	Written with a capital c, it is also sometimes known as 'high culture', and most commonly associated with the arts (visual, literary, performance etc).
culture	Written with a lower case c, and sometimes described as 'low culture', specific phenomena associated with everyday interactions of people .
Culture Shock	Proposed by Kalervo Oberg: when someone feels uncomfortable, unhappy or confused by the new cultural environment they are in.
Determinism	The idea that all events (including behaviours) have an external cause, not determined by free will.
Deterritorialisation	The process of separating social, political or cultural practices from their original/native place and population.
Diaspora	Originally used to describe the dispersion of Jews beyond Israel, but is now also used to describe the migration of a community or nation outside of its traditional or historical homeland.
Differentialist	The viewpoint that it is important to protect differences, especially those that are ethnic or cultural in nature.
Differentialist bias	Fixating on the things that are perceived to be different and seen as threatening at the expense of recognising similarities.
Disciplinary regimes	A rule or practice that people in particular environments follow in order to self-monitor their behaviour. By doing this, they will behave with the socially-accepted or appropriate etiquette for that situation.
Discourse	Communication by written or spoken words. Written or spoken language that tries to represent how things are.
Discrimination	The unjustified and prejudicial treatment of people based on the group, class or category to which they are perceived to belong.
Elitism	The belief that society should be led by an elite, or superior group of beings.
Environmental factors	Factors within the environment, or external to yourself, that have an influence on a phenomenon.
Essentialism	The belief that everything has a set of attributes essential to its identity and function. For example, that gender, race and other group characteristics are fixed and all individuals within that group will behave the same way.
Ethnocentrism	Evaluating other cultures and societies based on the assumption that one's own culture is superior
Ethnography	The study of different people and cultures, including their customs, environments, habits and mutual differences.
Globalisation	The process of making the world more interconnected and therefore more integrated. Products and services marketed in one country are made available in other countries and cultural practices are exchanged.
Hate speech	All forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred towards any group of people.
Hegemony	To predominate or control over another.
Hero's journey	The narrative of a hero who goes on an adventure, succeeds or becomes victorious, and returns home a changed person; the monomyth.
High Culture	Written with a capital c, it is also sometimes known as 'Culture', and most commonly associated with the arts (visual, literary, performance etc).
Homogenous	Many things considered as one or the same.
Homophily	The tendency of people to group with others who have similar interests.
Hybridity	A cross between two separate characteristics or traits.
Identity	The perception, meaning or definition of what a person or entity is.



Ideology	A system of ideas and ideals that can form the basis of an economic or political theory/policy.
Imperial	Relating to an empire.
In-groups	Those who identify themselves as being a member of a social group with similar interests or behaviours.
Intercultural competence	The ability to communicate effectively with people from other cultures.
Interculturality	The interaction of people from different backgrounds and space/time in a way that demonstrates knowledge and understanding.
KASA model	A model based on one by Mike Byram. KASA describes the four main areas of intercultural competence. KASA stands for knowledge, awareness, skills and attitude.
Kinship theory	A model that holds human society is organised according to family ties and relationships.
Kikikushijo	The name given to the children of Japanese ex-patriates who have been educated abroad.
Knowledge (from KASA)	Knowing information about a society but also understanding how the society is organised, how it functions and some of the complexities and variations across its environment.
Languaculture (LC)	The term used to describe language as not just involving vocabulary and grammar, but also past knowledge, habits and practices of the local culture.
Linguistic imperialism	The transfer of a dominant language to other populations.
Low Culture	Written with a lower case c, specific phenomena associated with everyday interactions of people within a particular culture.
McDonaldisation	Term invented by George Ritzer to describe the adoption of the fast-food restaurant 'McDonalds' in a non-American country, now used to also generally describe the influence of American culture elsewhere in the world.
Meta-cognition	Becoming aware of your own thinking and thinking patterns.
Methodological nationalism	The assumption that one's own nation/state/society is the only place of analysis for social processes, ignoring any small cultures or transnational links.
Monolithic	Something considered to be large, powerful, indivisible and slow to change.
Monomyth	The 'hero's journey', the narrative of a hero who goes on an adventure, succeeds or becomes victorious, and returns home a changed person.
Multiculturalism	The view that all cultures in society deserve equal respect (in terms of rights and opportunities).
Narrative	An account of events, a story.
Nationhood	Having the status of a separate state or nation.
Neoliberalism	The transfer of economic and social process control to the private sector, away from the public/state control.
Nomenclature	Naming of phenomena or entities.
Observer's paradox	When an observer of a social environment is, themselves, affecting the environment.
Orientalism	The depiction of Eastern cultures (Middle Eastern, South Asian, East Asian) as different and exotic with an implied belief that they are inferior to those of the "West", most notably Europe and North America.
Othering	The process of separating people into 'us' and 'them' groups. The exclusion of people who do not fit the norm of the social group.
Out-groups	Individuals who are excluded from a social group. Those who do not or cannot identify themselves as part of the in-group.
Paralinguistic behaviours	A range of factors that include gestures and qualities within someone's voice, separate to the meaning of the words spoken, that provide signals or information to the listener.
Particularistic	The idea that a particular context guides someone's behaviour.
Pidgin	A simplified form of communication between people who do not share a common language and may involve words, sounds or body language from multiple languages and cultures.



Positivism	The idea that definitive knowledge can only come from objective validation through scientific methods.
Post-colonialism	The study of the cultural legacy of colonialism, analysing the consequences of external control on indigenous populations.
Preconceptions	An idea or assumption made before an event or situation occurs.
Predisposition factors	Factors that can cause someone to be predisposed (or more likely than others) to something.
Protagonist	The leading character in a narrative.
Proxemics	The study of how humans use space.
Reverse culture shock	When someone finds it difficult to re-adjust back into their own culture after a long period of time in a distinctly different culture.
Rich point	A critical incident that focuses on languaculture
Secular	Not connected with religious or spiritual matters.
Skills (KASA)	The ability to navigate and communicate in another cultural environment, but also to negotiate the assumptions and expectations there.
Small cultures	Smaller scale situations and practices that contain a cohesive in-group that form their own set of practices, behaviour and understanding.
Social Linguistic Theory	The idea that language and social classes are closely linked, with language being heavily influenced by society.
Sociology	The study of society, including patterns of social relationships, social interactions and culture.
Stereotyping	Assigning an over-simplified idea to represent a person, group of people or other entity.
Structural functionalism	An approach to explaining how society functions that sees society as complex, with individual parts working together to promote solidarity and stability.
Syncretic religions	Religions that attempt to blend or reconcile two or more religious belief systems, eg Chrislam (the blend of Christianity and Islam within Nigeria) or Santeria (the fusion of West African belief systems and Catholicism in the Caribbean).
U curve	Model developed by Lysgaard in 1955, it described the change in emotional state of someone who is experiencing a different culture to their own.
Universalistic	The belief that something is applicable in all circumstances, universally.
W curve	Model developed by Gullahorn in 1963, it adds to the U curve model of Lysgaard describing both the challenges of adapting to a new culture and on return home.
Writ large	Something that is clear and obvious, possibly larger and easier to examine.