

Professional Skills Portfolio

User Experience Design

Ruben de Zwart
14138638

Jannie Oosting

Title page

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Client Name	-
Author/Student name	Ruben de Zwart
Student number	14138638
Lecturer name	Jannie Oosting
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1. Introduction

1.1 About Me: My Origins

I'm Ruben! A Dutch guy. Born and raised in The Netherlands.

I have a very playful nature. I'm curious, sensitive and very emotional. I'm a dreamer. I like to walk and let my mind fly. I'm a great fan of fiction and fantasy. I've always appreciated science fiction movies with cool spaceships too. Because of that and my curiosity, I became knowledgeable in the field of physics and science.

I like movies a lot because they can give me very strong emotional feelings, especially if the story is accompanied by very strong emotional music. Because of this, the kind of music I like to listen to is unsurprisingly music from movies. Hans Zimmer is my favourite movie score composer. But you can also often find me listening to movie scores from, for example, The Lord of the Rings.

This is closely followed by two steps from hell. The music they make is quite modern and does not have a genre. It could be explained like modern classical music. It often involves vocals/ a choir but the creators want it to be about the music/sound/emotion so the lyrics are almost never in English. Most fans like to call this 'epic music'; the creators prefer to call it 'emotional music'.

I'm also good at analyzing. I almost always over think everything. When I walk/cycle, when I wait for anything at all, while standing in the shower and while spending time on the toilet.

Mostly while I'm trying to fall asleep.

I'm very direct and open-minded. I have a strong opinion.

I always want to understand things. Understanding complex things like animal behaviour, ecosystems, emotions or human psychology gives me great satisfaction.

A combination of creativity and analyzing is strategy. I totally love games. To play against other humans and try to outsmart them is so much fun. I will never stop playing.

I will never lose my curiosity.

I will never lose my inner child.

(Also see Figure 8 in attachments)

1.2 Main Topic of Report

My intercultural competence.

1.3 Target audience

This portfolio is for my own reflection and growth of my intercultural competence. (And for Jannie Oosting to grade.)

1.4 Central Question

What can I improve about my intercultural competence?

1.5 Assignment

Map all aspects about my culture, behaviour, preferences and challenges. Set a goal and improve my intercultural competence.

1.6 Process Steps: Description of Chapters

In chapter 2, I will map my own culture by describing the cultural background from me & my family, all cultures that influenced me and my intercultural experience.

In chapter 3, I will describe my communication style, using the models of Hall and Lewis, and how & when I adjust my communication style.

In chapter 4, I will describe my intercultural communication barriers and how I try to overcome them.

In chapter 5, I will describe the intercultural dimensions from the Netherlands, using the model of Hofstede.

In chapter 6, I will describe my learning goals to improve my intercultural competence.

In chapter 7, I will describe whether or not I have achieved my learning goals.

In chapter 8, I will recap my conclusion.

2. My intercultural biography

2.1 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I will talk about my culture, other cultures that influenced me and remarkable traits I possess as a result of my culture. (As can be seen in figure 1)

2.2 Cultural background of me & my family

I was born in the Netherlands. I've lived in the Netherlands my entire life.

The same applies for both my parents and all 4 grandparents.

Basically I'm about as Dutch as it can get.

Both my parents grew up in The Hague and ended up right next to it; where I live right now.

It's the urban part of the Netherlands: the "Randstad".

How did this affect me?

- I speak the Dutch language very well, including the hard G sound (which is hard for foreigners to pronounce).

- I understand the English language very well as this is very common in the Netherlands:

- Almost all movies, commercials and TV series are broadcasted in English (if it is originally made in English of course).

- A lot of signs (E.G. Exit) are in English.

- It is not uncommon for manuals/ product information to not include Dutch so we have to read it in English if we want the knowledge we wish to possess.

- English is mandatory to be taught in all high schools and most primary schools already include it in their curriculum.

2.3 Cultures that influenced me

Through television:

- Shows: Mr. Bean influenced my Humour (British).

- Cartoons: Tom & Jerry influenced my Humour (American).
& Avatar the last Airbender (Wisdom; huge personal growth).

- Anime: Pokémon influenced my fantasy (Japanese).

- Movies: Hollywood & Disney (American) (E.G. Jurassic Park)
& James Bond (British).

- Books: The Name of the Wind (Wisdom; huge personal growth)
(British) & Narnia (Fantasy).

- Food: From all over the world.

- Music: Mostly from the United States.

2.4 My main culture

The Dutch culture consists of Dutch & English speaking inhabitants.

We have a history of trade. As a result, our language has been greatly influenced by our neighbour countries (France, Germany, England). Our inhabitants are also quite mixed due to a history of open borders and being the most tolerant country in the world with freedom of religion. This allowed a lot of scientists to 'escape' prosecution by the Christian church religion by fleeing to The Netherlands.

This increase of open-minded freethinkers and scientists/highly educated people led to an increase in welfare and technological advancement during the 1600-1700. We were the most advanced & wealthy country in the world during that time.

At present time, we still experience the benefits of being part of the more developed and rich countries in the world.

Our trade history made us quite direct and good in negotiating; we speak our minds and like to make profit by trading.

Quite a small part of the Dutch inhabitants have debt.

We were one of the first to grant all rights to slaves, women, children and people with an untraditional sexual preference. To this day we are one of the most tolerant countries in the world towards anyone who could be classified as 'odd' or 'different' or any minority group.



Figure 1. Visible & Invisible aspects of culture.

Most of us like to collect things; we like stuff.

Because of our geographic location (being below/not much above sea level), most of us can swim quite well. Also because of the absence of high terrain, the Netherlands being almost all flat, we use a lot of bikes for transport. We use them a lot and most of us can cycle quite well.

Also we are the only people in the world who like Liquorice candy. Almost all foreigners dislike this. It probably has to do with the fact that you will only like certain flavours if you start eating it at a young age.

Because of us being direct, we have a strong opinion and are not afraid to share it. I never take critique/comments/other opinions the wrong way. Because of this I also feel like it's okay to share my own opinion openly. I also seriously don't understand how other people can be offended by this. I believe that if you give good arguments and have good intentions, this should never be wrong to mention anything at all.

Our quality time from adults (talking in living room with cookies) to children's parties (see Figure 2 for a typical Dutch invite) is also unique.

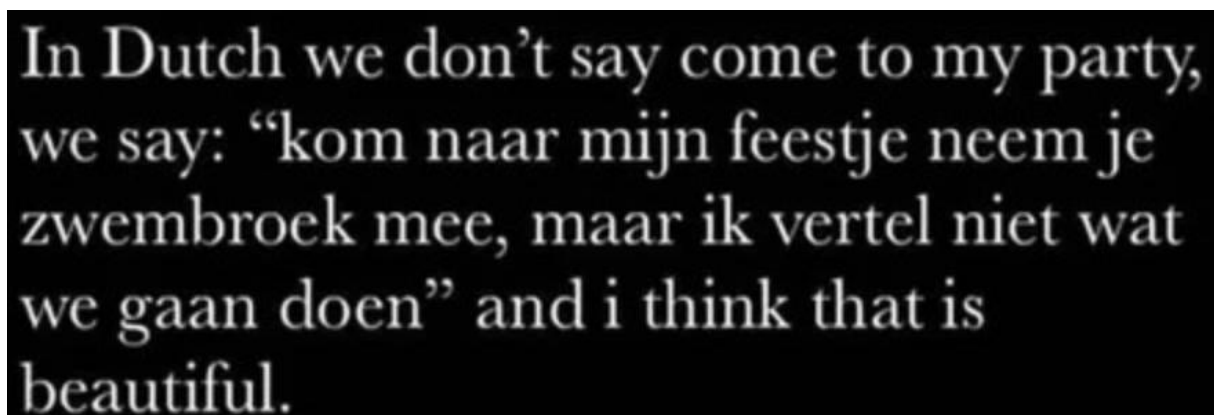


Figure 2. A typical Dutch children party invite example.

2.5 My Intercultural Experience

Working with Dutch people and people from other nationalities with other cultures can be a challenge. Other cultures have other values at work in the boss/employee hierarchy. Being Dutch, I am used to an open and informal work environment where I can address my boss to anything at all; like my opinion about something I think should be improved.

In a lot of other cultures this is not done. They think people above you in the hierarchy should never be confronted.

Because I'm Dutch I think we are all equal and I don't care about ranks. If I believe my boss is making a mistake or could improve something, I go to him immediately and tell him right in the face: Here is the problem and why you should change it (after presenting good arguments).

2.6 Personal Reflection

I'm 100% Dutch. I can swim and I use the bike for main transport. I'm open-minded towards different habits. I'm very direct; I have a strong opinion and am not afraid to share it. I believe humans are all equal and should be treated as such. At work my boss can be addressed as if he is one of my friends. Due to the trade history of The Netherlands, I grew up in an environment with a lot of knowledge and wealth, which gave me a lot of opportunity to develop myself.

3. My communication style

3.1 Chapter Summary

This chapter describes my communication style. Hall's model of high and low context communication and Lewis' model of communication are used as a reference. I also discuss my adjustments on my communication style.

3.2 My Communication style

As can be seen in Figures 10 & 11 (see attachments), I do not have a preferred communication style. According to the test, I seem to be well balanced or all-round. Does this mean that I like/use both low-context communication and high-context communication or that I simply don't excel at either of them?

Maybe it depends on the person I communicate with.

I can communicate with feelings and emotions in a very playful way.

I can also communicate with my mind: using logic and analysing the response that I get. Often keeping it professional and formal and with a very serious feeling attached to it.

I don't necessarily prefer the latter.

3.3 Hall's model of high and low context communication

As can be seen in Figure 3, being Dutch, I prefer low context communication and am not afraid to directly express (negative) feedback.

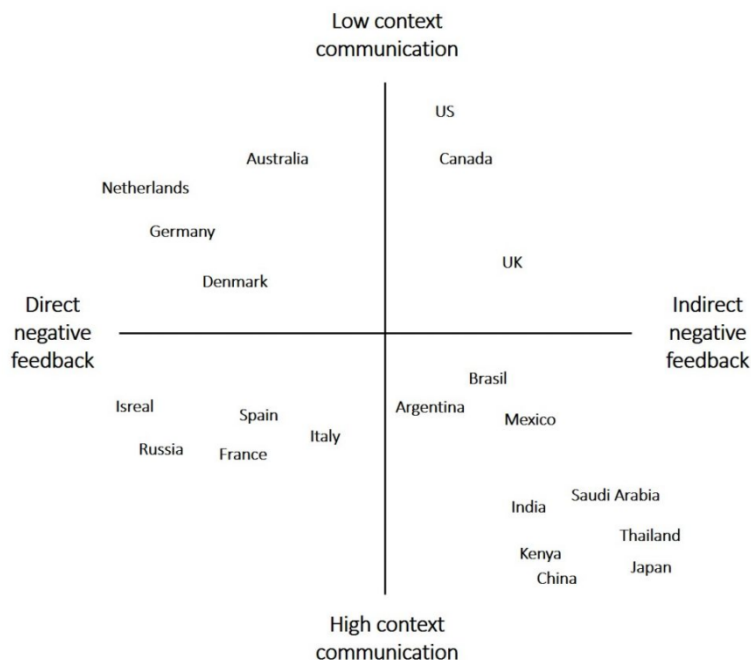


Figure 3. Hall's Model.

3.4 Lewis' Model on Communication

As can be seen in Figure 4, being Dutch, I tend to use a linear-active way of communication.

With a bit of emotional and impulsiveness mixed in.

I'm totally not courteous or compromising at all to people that, in my opinion, do not deserve it.

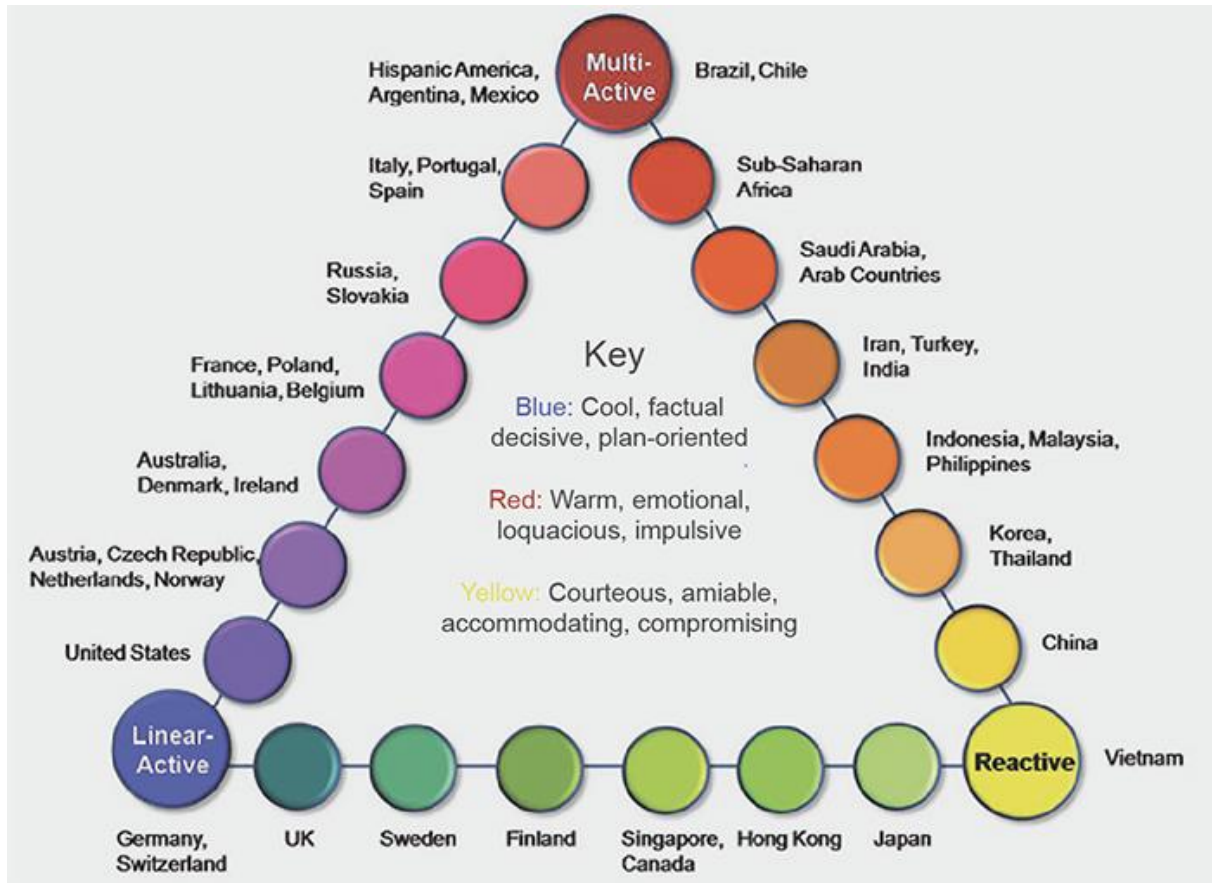


Figure 4. Lewis' Model.

3.5 My adjustments on Communication style

When I communicate with multi-active people, I can adjust very well. I am an emotional and sensitive person and can switch to this without any problem.

Switching to always being nice, even when I encounter people with terrible behaviour, is a challenge for me. I always try to keep in mind that people can have a bad day, make mistakes (we are all human after all), and can still learn. I also think that I should give the good example. With this in mind I can be nice at all times towards everyone in any situation.

3.6 Personal Reflection

Being Dutch, I prefer low context and direct communication (even if it's negative). I also prefer Linear-active communication.

I dislike reactive communication the most.

4. My intercultural communication barriers

4.1 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I will discuss any communication barriers I might have and how I (try to) overcome those barriers.

4.2 My barriers in communication

The Dutch culture fits in Bennet's model (see Figure 5) between acceptance and adaptation. As explained earlier in chapter 2, throughout the Dutch history, we have always accepted people from every culture with different opinions and religions. We have adapted a bit to all those different people, but we also feel like they should adapt to us.

People that do not adapt to speaking either Dutch or English (the main languages spoken in The Netherlands) are hard for me to communicate with.

All other aspects (see Figure 6), like different opinions, are not a problem for me at all. (See also Figure 9 in attachments.)

Even if they can get quite offensive (E.G. Islam can be quite extreme shouting around that all non-Islam people are evil or simply less) I simply learned to let it go as people can have different opinions and they are not always right.

However, if people show bad behaviour, I will simply speak my mind and try to correct them.

4.3 Overcoming my barriers

This is a challenge, because I don't easily learn all other languages. I use body language and the help of technology, like Google Translate, to help me out here.

If an attempt to correct bad behaviour is unsuccessful, I try to ignore it.

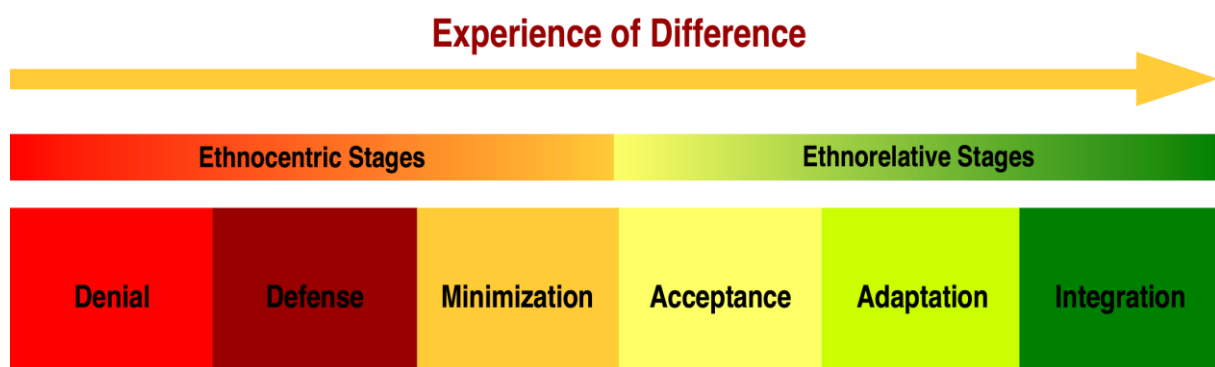


Figure 5. Bennet's Model.

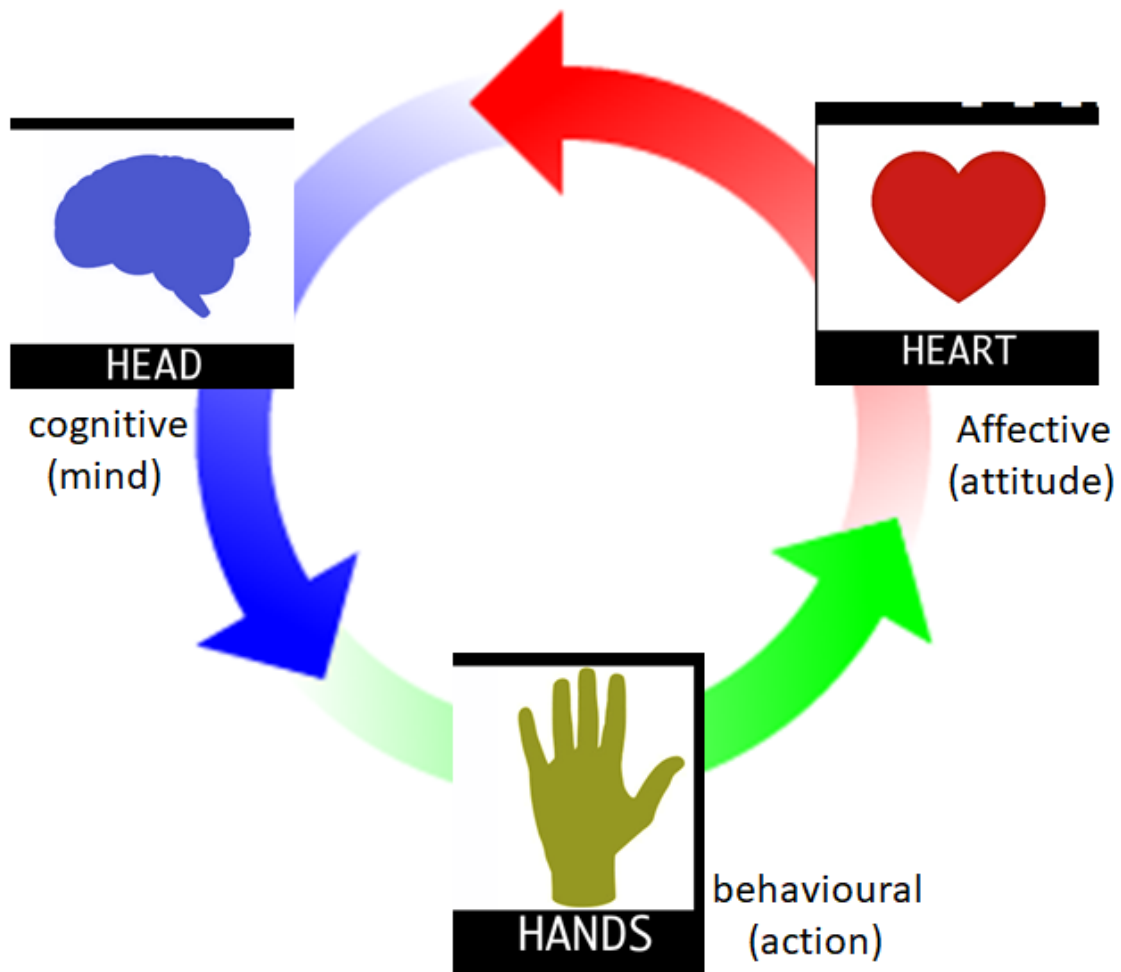


Figure 6. Intercultural Competence.

4.4 Personal Reflection

The only communication barrier I have is not being able to talk to someone due to not speaking the same language. I try to overcome this with the help of Google Translate and body language.

5. Intercultural dimensions of Hofstede applied on my main culture

5.1 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I will shortly discuss all intercultural dimensions from Hofstede about the Dutch culture.

5.2 Power distance

Low score: Power distance in The Netherlands is small. At work, the boss/manager is almost equal to the employees.

5.3 Uncertainty avoidance

Average score: We take some risks every now and then (trading & inventing spirit/history) but we also have a mandatory health care and education system for everyone under the age of 18.

5.4 Individualism – Collectivism

High score: Individualism in The Netherlands is high. Everyone is responsible for their own actions.

5.5 Masculinity – Femininity

Low score: The Dutch are feminine. We work to live and we do not live to work. We discuss about problems until a solution everyone agrees upon is found. Most people have access to this decision making process (we all have the right to vote).

5.6 Long term orientation - Short term orientation

High score: The Dutch care more about the future. Education is important for us. We have quite a low crime rate and low average debt. Traditions are not that important for us; we are flexible to change them and adapt when needed.

5.7 Indulgence – Restraint

High score: The Dutch are quite indulgent. Again: we work to live and not the other way around. We have a lot of pets, hobbies, holidays, free time and facilities. Most families go on holiday each year.

5.8 Personal Reflection

The Dutch culture scores low on: Power distance and Masculinity.

The Dutch culture scores high on: Individualism, Long term orientation and Indulgence.

The Dutch culture scores average on uncertainty avoidance.

6. My objectives and my learning goals

6.1 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I will discuss my objectives and formulate some learning goals to reach those objectives.

6.2 My Objectives

I want to become more intercultural competent and less socially awkward. I'm an introvert by nature and I like how approachable Dutch people are, but I'm also interested to learn new things about other cultures and their mindset. Hence, I want to satiate my curiosity and get to know my classmates.

6.3 My Learning Goals

Become friends with at least 1 of my non-Dutch classmates.

Action plan: Converse with my classmates. Be nice. Ask them to hang out after class for school assignments or some fun.

Learn how to pronounce all names from my classmates during semester 1.

Action plan: Write all the names down. Repeat the names in my head. Use the names when addressing people. Ask if I pronounce it right. Repeat until satisfied.

Learn about the cultures from all my classmates during semester 1.

Action plan: Have at least one little chat with every classmate and ask away about where they come from. Their family. What's it like in their country and what they miss. Sympathize and remember as much as I can.

Work on my English speaking skills. (some vocabulary, mostly pronunciation).

Action plan: Practice. Speak English every day. Have as much conversations as possible in English with your classmates to keep improving. Ask and share opinions. No small talk. Be open.

6.4 Personal Reflection

To improve my intercultural competence, I will become friends with at least one classmate, learn how to pronounce all names of my classmates and learn about their cultures. I will also practice my English speaking skills daily.

7. My achievements

7.1 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I will reflect on whether I've reached my learning goals, formulated in chapter 6.

7.2 Results. Did I reach my goals?

Become friends with at least 1 of my non-Dutch classmates.

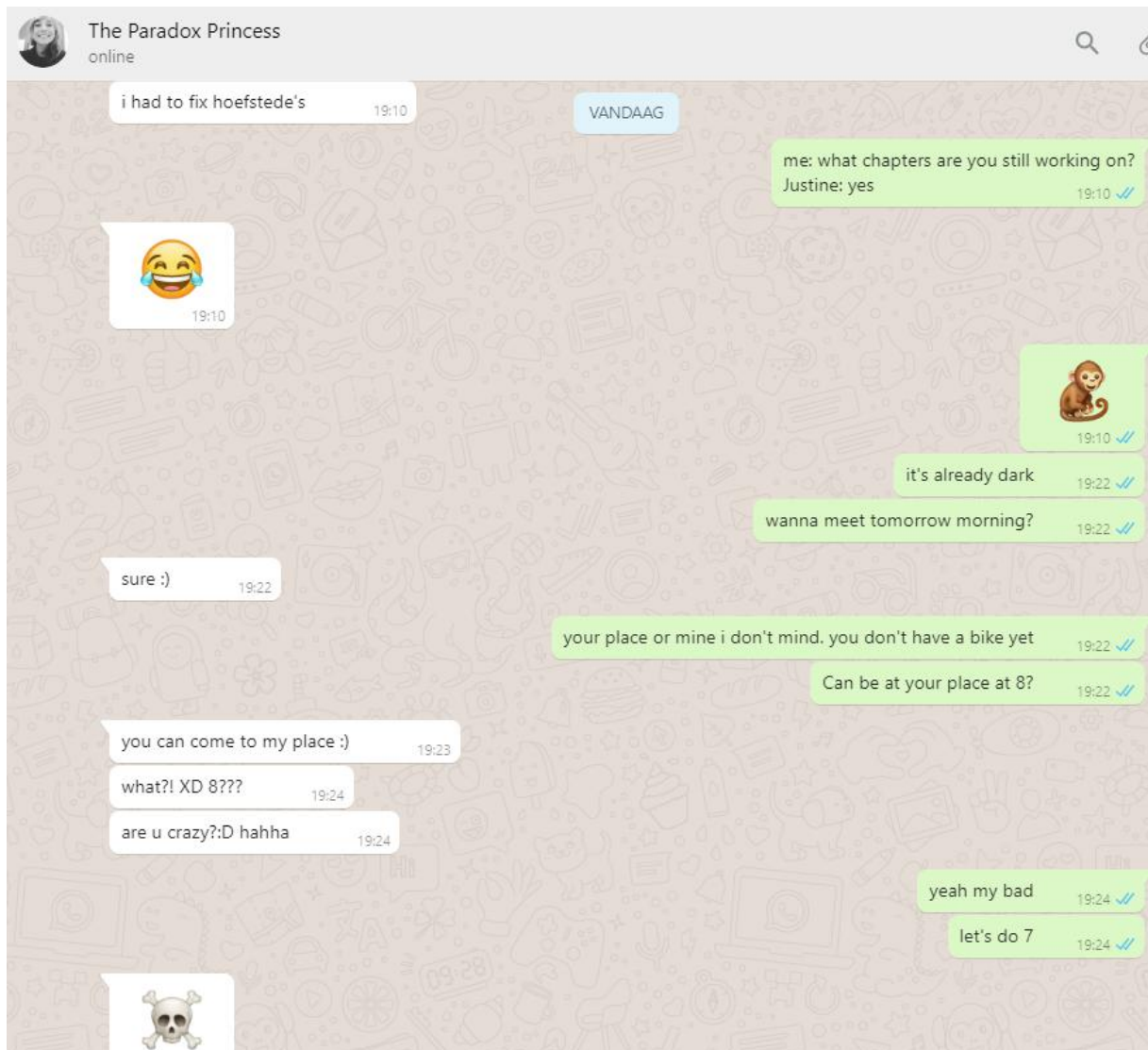


Figure 7. Screenshot of Whatsapp conversation with one of my friends from class.

Succes! (see figure 7). (Tomorrow I'll teach her how to play chess; we both love games!)

Learn how to pronounce all names from my classmates during semester 1.

Check. This was my easiest goal and not much of a challenge really. But it was a good start. The hardest name was Laco (pronounce "Laatzo")

Learn about the cultures from all my classmates during semester 1.

Fail. I didn't have a deep and meaningful conversation with all of my classmates yet. But I'm getting there. I'll have to keep working on this one the upcoming weeks.

So far I'm satisfied with my progress though.

Work on my English speaking skills. (some vocabulary, mostly pronunciation).

I will never be done with this one. I've been talking English with my classmates every school day. But I still talk Dutch sometimes with my Dutch classmates. I consider this goal as partly success and unfinished/ongoing.

This goal has no end and thus is not SMART formulated, but I feel like this goal is still an important part of my intercultural competence and should be included in my portfolio.

7.3 Personal Reflection

I've successfully become friends with at least one non-Dutch classmate and I've successfully learned how to pronounce all names of my classmates.

I've failed to have a meaningful conversation with all my classmates about their culture and values so far, but I'm getting there. This will be my objective for the upcoming weeks.

I've partially achieved my goal to work on my English speaking skills.

8. Final conclusion

8.1 To what extent did I manage to improve my intercultural competence?

I managed to map my cultural background, and cultures that influenced me, in chapter 2.

I mapped my communication style as low context and linear active in chapter 3.

I talked about my communication barriers (not speaking the same language and tolerance toward people with bad behaviour) and how to overcome them (use of body language and Google Translate, giving good example or ignore) in chapter 4.

I discussed the intercultural dimensions from Hofstede about The Netherlands in chapter 5.

I set up 4 learning goals to improve my intercultural competence in chapter 6.

And I discussed that I achieved 2 of my goals in chapter 7. The 2 other goals are still in progress; one might never be finished as “improving English language” as a goal could always be improved and thus can never be finished.

8.2 What is my future action plan?

To continue improving my intercultural competence, I will do several things:

- Talk English with my Dutch classmates at all times in class.
- Keep interacting with my classmates during & after class! They are smart and interesting and I'm starting to like them more and more.
- Meet up with classmates after school for any fun activities besides partying as much as possible.

~fin

Attachments

Personal DNA

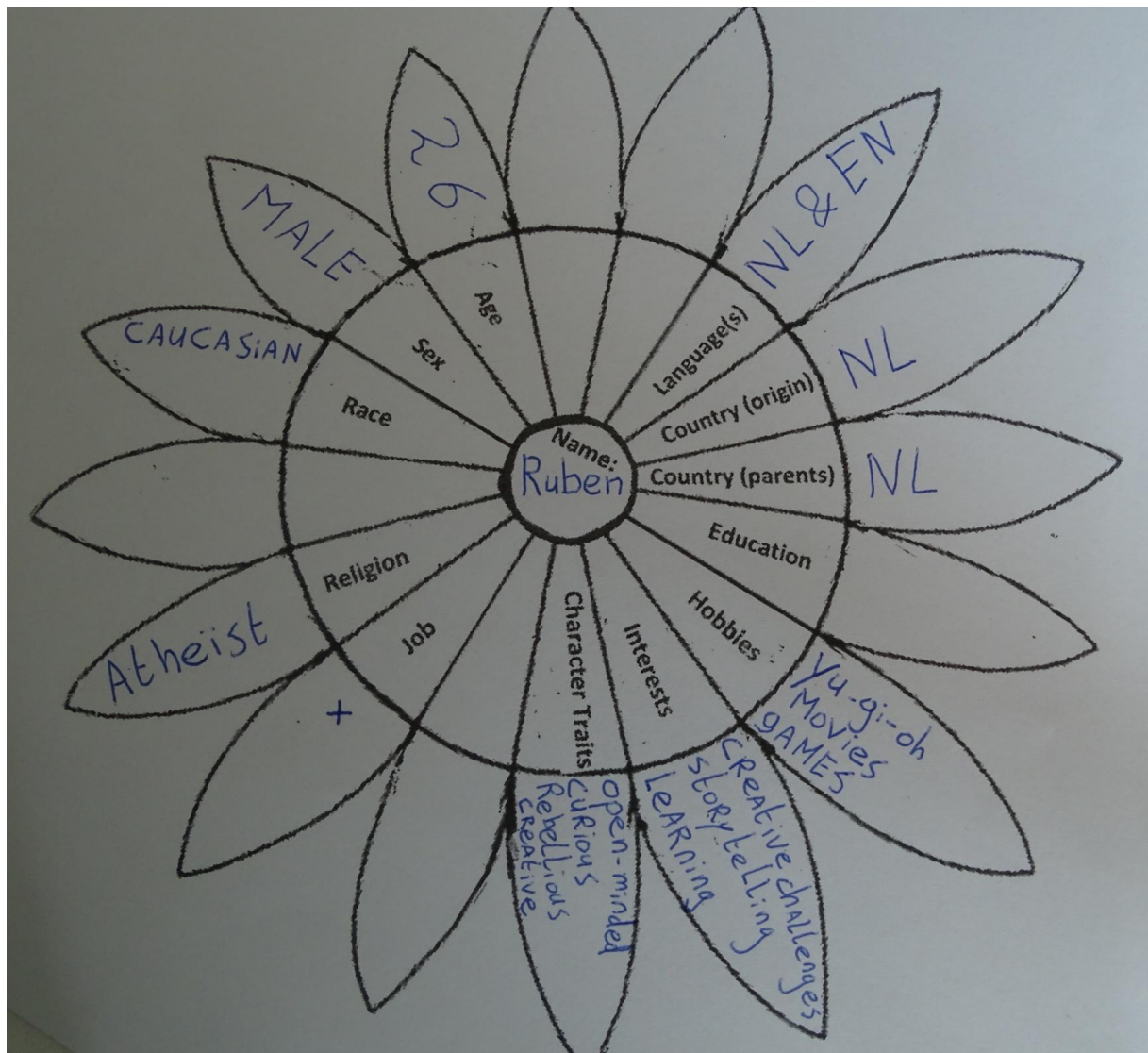


Figure 8. DNA Flower

Not sure if I was supposed to fill in the empty leaves with additional top-secret information about myself. And at this point I'm too afraid to ask.

Tests

Workshop 1: Handout Intercultural competence self-reflection

1.

The items below are very important in developing intercultural competence and in interacting effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures.

Please rate yourself on the following:

5= very high 4= high 3= average 2= below average 1= poor

1. Respect (valuing other cultures)	5	4	3	2	1
2. Openness (to learning from other cultures)	5	4	3	2	1
3. Tolerance for ambiguity (=uncertainty of what something means)	5	4	3	2	1
4. Flexibility (in using appropriate way of communicating and behaving in intercultural situations)	5	4	3	2	1
5. Curiosity	5	4	3	2	1
6. Withholding judgement	5	4	3	2	1
7. Understanding of own cultural background	5	4	3	2	1
8. Understanding of others' worldviews	5	4	3	2	1
9. Adaptability (to different ways of communicating and behaving, to new cultural environments)	5	4	3	2	1
10. Communication skills (appropriate and effective communication in intercultural settings)	5	4	3	2	1

2.

Reflect on situations requiring intercultural competence:

What helped make you more appropriate and effective in your interactions? *Speaking The same Language*

How you can continue to develop your intercultural competence, especially areas you rated as lower?

*PRACTICE CONVERSATIONS
with classmates*

*body Language
PATIENCE & UNDERSTANDING*

Adapted from "Handout: Intercultural competence: self-reflection," in Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models, eds. K. Berardo and D. K. Deardoff (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2012), 51-52

Figure 9: Intercultural competence self-reflection

Self-Assessment 2.2

Low- and High-Context Communication Scale

Directions: Below are 32 statements regarding how you feel about communicating in different ways. In the blank to the left of each item, indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement. If you are unsure or think that an item does not apply to you, enter a 5 in the blank.

Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Strongly Agree
<u>7</u>										
<u>1</u>										
<u>9</u>										
<u>3</u>										
<u>1</u>										
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<u>9</u>										

1. I catch on to what others mean, even when they do not say it directly.
2. I show respect to superiors, even if I dislike them.
3. I use my feelings to determine whether to trust another person.
4. I find silence awkward in conversation.
5. I communicate in an indirect fashion.
6. I use many colorful words when I talk.
7. In argument, I insist on very precise definitions.
8. I avoid clear-cut expressions of feelings when I communicate with others.
9. I am good at figuring out what others think of me.
10. My verbal and nonverbal speech tends to be very dramatic.
11. I listen attentively, even when others are talking in an uninteresting manner.
12. I maintain harmony in my communication with others.
13. Feelings are a valuable source of information.
14. When pressed for an opinion, I respond with an ambiguous statement/position.
15. I try to adjust myself to the feelings of the person with whom I am communicating.
16. I actively use a lot of facial expressions when I talk.
17. My feelings tell me how to act in a given situation.
18. I am able to distinguish between a sincere invitation and one intended as a gesture of politeness.
19. I believe that exaggerating stories makes conversation fun.
20. I orient people through my emotions.
21. I find myself initiating conversations with strangers while waiting in line.
22. As a rule, I openly express my feelings and emotions.

Figure 10. High-Low context communication test 1/2

- 7 23. I feel uncomfortable and awkward in social situations where everybody else is talking except me.
- 8 24. I readily reveal personal things about myself.
- 8 25. I like to be accurate when I communicate.
- 7 26. I can read another person "like a book."
- 3 27. I use silence to avoid upsetting others when I communicate.
- 9 28. I openly show my disagreement with others.
- 8 29. I am a very precise communicator.
- 7 30. I can sit with another person, not say anything, and still be comfortable.
- 2 31. I think that untalkative people are boring.
- 6 32. I am an extremely open communicator.

Scoring: Reverse your score for Items 4, 6, 7, 10, 16, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 31, and 32. If your original score was 1, reverse it to a 9; if your original score was a 2, reverse it to an 8; and so on. After reversing the score for those 15 items, simply sum the 32 items. Lower scores indicate low-context communication. Higher scores indicate high-context communication.

Figure 11: High-Low context communication test 2/2

After reversing the selected items the total sum is 152. Dividing that by 32 gives an average score of 4,75. This is as average as it can be!

Feedback peer + my reflection on his feedback

5.3 Uncertainty avoidance

Average score: We take some risks every now and then (trading & inventing spirit/history) but we also have a mandatory health care and education system for everyone under the age of 18.)

5.4 Individualism – Collectivism

High score: Individualism in The Netherlands is high. Everyone is responsible for their own actions.

Comment [JG31]: Not sure about this, but according to the book uncertainty avoidance is NOT risk avoidance (p.88). I believe Jannie did talk about this though, so 🙄🙄🙄

Figure 12. Feedback from peer 1/3.

4.2 My barriers in communication

The Dutch culture fits in Bennet's model (see Figure 5) between acceptance and adaptation. (As earlier explained) in chapter 2, throughout the Dutch history, we have always accepted people from every culture with different opinions and religions. We have adapted a bit to all those different people, but

Comment [JG23]: References at the end of a sentence don't interrupt reading flow.

Comment [JG24]: As explained earlier in

Figure 13. Feedback from peer 2/3.

1.2 Main Topic of Report

My intercultural competence.

1.3 Target audience

This portfolio is for my own reflection and growth of my intercultural competence. (And for Jannie Oosting to grade.)

1.4 Central Question

What can I improve about my intercultural competence?

1.5 Assignment

Map all aspects about my culture, behavior, preferences and challenges. Set a goal and improve my intercultural competence.)

Comment [JG5]: Maybe make this one big section that flows together?

Figure 13. Feedback from peer 3/3.

How I improved my portfolio using this feedback.

Jeffrey was my peer review buddy. Figures 11,12 and 13 show some of his comments on my first 5 chapters. I will discuss them shortly.

Figure 11 shows a comment that made me doubt. I decided not to change anything because I trust the information from the teacher in the lecture.

Figure 12 shows a comment about moving a figure reference to the end of the sentence. I did not agree on doing this so I didn't change it. The other comment is one of the many grammar/spelling comments that really helped me improve the readability of my portfolio.

Figure 13 shows a comment about my introduction chapter. I prefer topics to be divided in small and easy to understand parts, which give a good overview. I carefully thought about changing it but in the end I choose to leave it as it is.