



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Intercultural Competence in the Classroom

Intercultural competence can be taught in five separate parts, and one of them only shows up while a conversation is happening. This week works through all five, using Michael Byram's model.

DURATION 5 days · 25 hours	LANGUAGE English (B1+)	GROUP SIZE Max 20 participants
DAILY SCHEDULE 09:30–15:00 Monday to Friday, with a break for lunch	AUDIENCE All school levels No specific prerequisites — open to all teachers and school staff.	CERTIFICATE Attendance + Europass Mobility
COURSE CENTRES Antalya · İstanbul · İzmir · Mersin · Budapest · Bremen · Rome Dates and cities of the scheduled sessions are listed on the course page.		

01 Overview

Is being intercultural a personality some teachers happen to have, or a competence that can be taught? Michael Byram's answer has organised this field since 1997: it is a competence, and it breaks into five parts specific enough to build a week around. Five parts, five days — attitudes, knowledge, interpreting, discovery in real time, and the critical judgement that holds the other four together.

- **Monday** starts where the model starts: attitudes — and the harder half of Byram's definition, suspending belief about your own culture rather than only about other people's.
- **Tuesday** is knowledge, and the correction that matters most: half of it is not facts about countries at all, but knowledge of how interaction itself works.
- **Wednesday** you interpret — taking something from another culture, explaining it, and relating it to something from your own, which is the skill a lesson actually runs on.
- **Thursday** is the part you cannot get from a handout: acquiring what you need in real time, in the middle of a conversation you cannot pause.
- **Friday** is critical cultural awareness — judgement made on explicit criteria — and an honest look at where scholars think Byram's model falls short.

You go home with a worked example under each of the five parts, a document pair you can teach on Monday, a plan for running a structured reflection on a real intercultural encounter with your own class, and the Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters, a tool for doing it. The room itself does some of the teaching: open groups are multinational by design, so Thursday's real-time practice usually happens with people who genuinely read a situation differently from you.

02 Course description

Most courses on cultural diversity ask you to be more open, and leave it there. Openness is not a plan. Michael Byram's model of intercultural communicative competence, published in 1997 and revisited by him in a second edition in 2021, is a plan — because it takes something that sounds like a personal quality and separates it into five distinct capabilities, each of which can be practised, taught and assessed on its own.

They are usually given in French, because that is how Byram wrote them: *savoir être* (attitudes), *savoirs* (knowledge), *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating), *savoir apprendre/faire* (skills of discovery and interaction) and *savoir s'engager* (critical cultural awareness). Each day's programme works from his own wording.

Read those five again and notice how different they are from each other. The second is a curriculum question. The third is a lesson-planning skill. The fourth is tested only while a conversation is happening and cannot be rehearsed from a handout. Treating them as one lump — “intercultural awareness” — is why agreement in the room so often produces nothing on Monday. This week keeps them apart, and gives each one a day.

Thursday is the day worth explaining, because it is the one that resists being put on a slide. Skills of discovery and interaction are what you use when you have no preparation left: a parent says something you did not expect, a student reacts in a way that does not fit, and you have about two seconds. Byram's phrase for the difficulty is exact — operating knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication. You cannot learn that from a list, which is why Thursday is built around live practice — in open sessions, with a group that is multinational by design — and around the Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters, an instrument written by Byram and his colleagues that walks a person back through one real encounter, step by step. You learn it in order to run it with your own students.

Friday does something unusual: it argues with its own framework. Byram's model has been criticised, seriously and from inside the field, for assuming that the goal of an intercultural encounter is agreement — a harmonious resolution of two worldviews. Scholars have questioned whether harmony is a realistic goal, or even a useful one, and have proposed thinking instead in terms of a “community of disagreement”, where a disagreement that stays unresolved can produce more honest engagement than a polite consensus. That argument matters in a staffroom and in a classroom, and you leave able to make it.

The week stays on the competence itself. Displaced and newly arrived learners — the first-weeks routines that get a new pupil enrolled, understood, placed, safe and included — are the subject of *Refugees & Migration and Education*. Friday's argument about disagreement concerns what makes an intercultural exchange honest, not how to settle a dispute between two students, which belongs to *Conflict Management, Emotional Intelligence and Bullying Prevention in Schools*. The whole-school equality project belongs to Inclusive Education for Diversity and Equality. And what you take home is a way of reading a classroom rather than a policy for a school.

No session asks you to bring information about a real student.

03 Learning outcomes

- 01 Name all five components of Byram's model, define each in the author's own terms, and say which of the five a given classroom activity actually develops.
- 02 Distinguish the two halves of intercultural knowledge — what a group does, and how interaction itself works — and rebuild a “facts about a country” lesson so that it teaches the second.
- 03 Interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to a document from your own, then turn that process into a lesson your students can follow.
- 04 Handle the real-time part: acquire what you need in the middle of an interaction you cannot pause, and analyse afterwards what you actually did.

- 05 Run a structured reflection on a real intercultural encounter with your own class, using the Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters.
- 06 Evaluate a cultural practice — including one from your own culture — on explicit criteria, and explain the published criticism of Byram's model well enough to argue with it.

04 Methodology

One Savoir a Day	Byram's five components are separated deliberately and given a day each, because the reason intercultural training so often fails is that the five get merged into a single vague quality that nobody can practise.
Byram in His Own Words	Each component is introduced through the author's own definition, with the page it comes from, rather than through a summary — including the component that is easiest to leave out of a summary because it cannot be handed out on paper.
The Room Is the Material	Open groups are multinational by design, so Thursday's real-time interaction work happens with people who actually read a situation differently; a dedicated single-school group works from the supplied role briefings instead.
The Framework Is Argued With	Friday sets out the strongest published criticism of Byram's model alongside the model itself, so participants can defend what they take home instead of only repeating it.

05 Daily programme

Day 1

Attitudes (savoir être): suspending belief about your own culture

- **Icebreaker:** "One thing I assumed everyone did" — in pairs, something you took for normal until you found out others did not; the group lists them, which opens the first component, suspending belief about your own culture
- Introduction to the course and participants; presentation of the schools of the participants
- The model and why it is five parts, not one quality: attitudes, knowledge, interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction, critical cultural awareness — introduced in Byram's own terms, from the 1997 text
- **Byram's definition of attitudes:** curiosity and openness, and a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own
- **The half that gets skipped:** suspending belief about your own practices is harder than being curious about someone else's, and it is the half that changes teaching
- **Practicum:** decentring — each participant names one thing their own school does that would look strange from outside, and tries to explain it without defending it
- **Output:** your own list of practices you can no longer describe as simply normal

Day 2

Knowledge (savoirs): about groups, and about interaction itself

- **Warm-up:** "What is missing from the map" — in pairs, name one group or country you know almost nothing about, and what you would need to find out first
- **Byram's knowledge component in full:** social groups and their products and practices, in your own country and your interlocutor's — and the general processes of societal and individual interaction

- Why the second half is the one that matters in a classroom: knowing how interaction goes wrong is more useful than knowing a list of customs
 - **The single-story problem:** how "facts about a culture" teaching produces confident students who are still unable to hold a conversation
 - **Practicum:** take a supplied "facts about a country" lesson and rebuild it so that it teaches interaction processes instead
 - **Output:** one rebuilt lesson, with the knowledge it now teaches named explicitly
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Day 3

Interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*)

- **Byram's definition:** interpret a document or event from another culture, explain it, and relate it to documents from your own
 - Why this is a teachable skill rather than an opinion: interpretation has a method, and the method can be shown
 - **Practicum with the supplied document pairs:** two texts or images on the same subject from different cultural contexts — what each assumes its reader already knows
 - **Diagnosing a misunderstanding:** working backwards from a communication that failed to the assumption that caused it
 - **Turning it into a lesson:** the same procedure written up as something students can follow without the trainer in the room
 - **Output:** one document pair with your written interpretation and the lesson steps to teach it
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Day 4

Discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*): the part that happens live

- **Warm-up:** "Something I misread" — in pairs, a small moment when you misread a person from another background, told without names; it opens the day on live discovery
- Why this component resists teaching, and why that makes it the easiest one to quietly leave out: it cannot be delivered as a handout
- **Byram's definition:** acquiring new knowledge of a culture and operating knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction
- Live practice in the multinational group (in a single-school group, using the supplied role briefings): unrehearsed exchanges where participants have to find out what they need while the conversation is running, then reconstruct what they did
- The Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters: a structured reflection, written by Byram and colleagues, that takes a person back through one real encounter — how it works and how to run it with a class; a version for younger learners with picture cards also exists
- **Practicum:** plan the encounter-reflection you will run with your own students, including which encounter and when
- **Output:** a completed reflection on one of your own encounters, and the plan for running the same process with your class

Day 5

Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*), and arguing with the model

- **Byram's fifth component:** evaluating perspectives, practices, and products critically and on the basis of explicit criteria — in other cultures and in your own
- **The two words that do the work:** explicit criteria. What separates critical evaluation from prejudice is that the criteria are stated and applied to both sides
- **Where Byram took this next:** intercultural citizenship, including the ethical issues in teaching it (Byram, Porto and Wagner, 2021)
- **The criticism, given straight:** scholars have argued that the model quietly assumes agreement is the goal, and have proposed a "community of disagreement" instead — a disagreement that stays open can produce more honest engagement than a polite consensus
- **What that changes in a classroom:** how to run a discussion that does not have to end in everyone agreeing, and why that is not the same as letting anything be said
- **Assembly:** the five components on one page, each with your own worked example from the week and the one you know you avoid
- Course evaluation and discussion of future collaborations
- Issuance of the Certificate of Attendance

PLEASE NOTE

Sessions run from 09:30 to 15:00, Monday to Friday, with a break for lunch. Timings can shift a little to suit the venue and the group.

Course activities and content may vary depending on participants' needs and the trainer leading the session; any changes are at the trainer's discretion. If there is a specific topic you would like included, please let us know — content-related requests must reach us at least 3 weeks before the course start date so we can confirm them in time.

06 Materials

- The five components of Byram's model in the author's own definitions, worked with throughout the week — from the 1997 text
- The Council of Europe's Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters, introduced on Day 4 as the instrument to run with your own students — available from the Council of Europe website
- A set of paired documents from different cultural contexts, supplied by the course and used for the interpretation work on Day 3
- Encounter accounts and role briefings for the real-time interaction practice on Day 4, supplied by the course
- Your own one-page card of the five components, each with a worked example from the week

07 How to prepare

- The documents, encounters and situations used during the week are supplied by the course, so there is nothing to prepare.
- No session asks you for information about a real student, and you will not be asked to name anyone.
- If you would like to arrive with something in mind, one thing is enough: a moment when a conversation with someone from a different background did not go the way you expected. You share only as much as you are comfortable sharing.

08 After the course

- Participants will receive their Certificate of Attendance and the co-signed Europass Mobility document.
- Participants will complete a general course evaluation and event survey.
- Participants will receive course materials, videos, photos, and PDF documents in both digital and print formats.
- Follow-up support: self-evaluation materials are provided. Depending on the group, an email group may be set up so that participants can keep exchanging ideas.

09 Why this is Erasmus+ eligible

The Erasmus+ Programme Guide names this course's subject directly. Under the priority on participation in democratic life, common values and civic engagement, it states that the Programme "promotes active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning by encouraging projects and activities that foster the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy" (Erasmus+ Programme Guide 2026, Part A, p. 10). Intercultural competence and critical thinking are not adjacent to this course — they are its two halves: the first four days build the competence, and the fifth is spent on the critical judgement that decides what to do with it.

10 What the course fee covers

INCLUDED IN THE COURSE FEE

- 25 hours of training and course materials
- Certificate of Attendance + Europass support
- On-site local support throughout the week

ARRANGED SEPARATELY BY THE PARTICIPANT

- Travel to the host city — invitation letter on request
- Accommodation — we share recommended options
- Travel & health insurance

ISSUED BY

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COURSE PAGE

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ABOUT ERASMUS MOBILITY ACADEMY

Erasmus Mobility Academy (OID: E10304561) is an Erasmus+ training provider offering professional development courses for educators, school staff and youth workers across Europe. Our courses are designed for international mobility — open to participants travelling from a country other than the host country — and support schools in building lasting institutional capacity. We provide structured learning, logistical guidance and certification with Europass.