Deep Culture Podcast – Transcript
The Deep Culture Podcast explores the psychological impact of intercultural experiences, informed by the sciences of brain, culture and mind. Join hosts **Joseph Shaules** and **Yvonne van der Pol** as we look at the personal growth that can come from travel, living and working abroad, learning a foreign language, growing up in a multicultural context—and the challenges of bridging different cultural worlds.
(Episode 32 – What is Intercultural Competence?)
We often hear we should develop "intercultural competence". But what does this mean? Is this a single quality or a range of abilities? In this episode, Joseph Shaules and Daniel Glinz dig into this buzzword. They find competing definitions and idealistic assumptions. They explore the gap between the idea of intercultural competence, and the messy reality of intercultural situations. And they discuss the transformative potential of cultural learning from the brain-mind perspective.

Time	Speaker	
00:00:00	Daniel	(Hook) In cases like this, the right attitude would have been the Socratic wisdom, recognizing that I'm a bloody ignorant fool and have no clue what's going on.
00:00:22	Joseph	Hello, this is Joseph Shaules and welcome to the Deep Culture Podcast, where we explore culture and the science of mind. This is a podcast for people who move between different cultural worlds, and we dig into the science and the psychology of culture and mind. And I am here today with Daniel Glinz. Greetings Daniel. Uh, hello from Tokyo where we have a beautiful spring day.
00:00:47	Daniel	Hello, good morning or afternoon from Geneva, Switzerland where we also have finally and nice sunny spring day. Nice to be with you Joseph. And the theme of today's episode is intercultural competence.
00:01:04	Joseph	And this is a word that you hear in intercultural training. Uh and it basically means being good at handling intercultural situations. So someone who has intercultural competence will be, say, effective working in an international environment or getting along in a foreign country.
00:01:23	Daniel	It's an appealing concept because the word competence implies that it's a skill that can be developed.
00:01:30	Joseph	Something that adds value.
00:01:33	Daniel	Indeed, I can build up my intercultural skills, overall a very positive sounding goal.
00:01:41	Joseph	And the podcast team got interested in this because of a survey carried out by the Japan Intercultural Institute. It asked nearly 100 intercultural educators and trainers their thoughts about concepts related to intercultural education.
00:01:58	Daniel	We have talked about this survey before. In episode 27. We ask the question, are you a global citizen? And used results from the same survey.

00:02:11	Joseph	This survey also asked about intercultural competence, and respondents were overwhelmingly positive about this term.
00:02:20	Daniel	Three out of four respondents found it to be helpful. 93% said they had a good understanding of it, and 87% said they could explain it easily.
00:02:34	Joseph	And that was interesting because as the team discussed it, we realized that we didn't necessarily find it easy to understand, and it can sound kind of like a skill set of a global elite.
00:02:48	Daniel	We did agree though that if we think of intercultural competence as an ideal, then it can be a very good thing. It can get us interested in cultural learning. It makes intercultural understanding sound cool, and that may make it easier to sell intercultural trainings.
00:03:08	Joseph	But we also know that liking the term intercultural competence doesn't make it happen because living or working between cultures is hard.
00:03:20	Daniel	So we will take a deeper look at this idea of intercultural competence, and we want to look at two things in particular. First, the basic idea of intercultural competence is obvious.
00:03:33	Joseph	But when you look into what goes into actually developing intercultural competence, things get messy. You find competing terminology, intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural intelligence, global mindset… So what are we really talking about?
00:03:52	Daniel	And you find research into hundreds of factors that are associated with positive outcomes. How can we make sense of all that?
00:04:02	Joseph	And also, we'll look at the gap between the very appealing ideal of intercultural competence and how ignorant and biased we are, how psychologically stressful and messy intercultural experiences can be in real life. And that brings us to part one: What is intercultural competence anyway?
		Part 1: What is Intercultural Competence anyway?
	Joseph	So Daniel, let's try to answer the most basic question. What is intercultural competence? And let's start by looking at the word competence, which the Cambridge online dictionary defines as the 'ability to do something well'.
00:05:05	Daniel	So intercultural competence is the ability to do intercultural things well, but what does that mean specifically?
00:05:14	Joseph	Well, the definition of intercultural competence that you find on Wikipedia describes it as "a range of cognitive, effective and behavioral skills that lead to effective and appropriate communication with people of other cultures". And the definition you find on the website of the World Council of Global and Intercultural Competence is a bit more detailed. It refers to intercultural competence as a lifelong process, not just a set of skills, and refers not just to communication but interaction.
00:05:51	Daniel	So this seems pretty straightforward, although all of these definitions seem to be fairly circular when we say that intercultural competence is a "range of skills that produces effective and appropriate intercultural

		outcomes" we haven't learned much that is new. After all, effective and appropriate are simply a different way of saying to do something.
00:06:18	Joseph	And it's clear that whatever intercultural competence is, it's not a single thing. There are many abilities that are required to achieve it.
00:06:28	Daniel	So the bigger question is what are the abilities that we are talking about? Or to put it more in terms of research, what are the factors or the resources we need in order to achieve positive intercultural outcomes?
00:06:45	Joseph	Well, there are hundreds of studies that look at different aspects of intercultural competence and they use different measures of success. One simple example is that for people living abroad, learning the local language is associated with higher levels of psychological wellbeing.
00:07:03	Daniel	That makes sense. So speaking a foreign language is a form of intercultural competence. So what other factors are important for positive outcomes?
00:07:15	Joseph	Well, the scholarship is all over the place. One review found hundreds of factors, just to give you an idea, one major factor is motivation. The attitude that you bring to the intercultural experience and positive outcomes are related to things like openness to others, patience, self-esteem, stress tolerance, developing affective cognitive congruence, feelings of attraction, agency, self-confidence tolerance, and on and on.
00:07:46	Daniel	And that's just one factor category.
00:07:50	Joseph	No, and there are many others. Under the category of knowledge we have things like the ability to gather appropriate information, cognitive complexity, cultural self-awareness, culture-specific information, differentiation, ethno relative view, knowledge of more than one perspective, mindful creativity, political astuteness, realism, self-monitoring, social linguistic awareness, and on and on.
00:08:14	Daniel	Well, each one of those makes sense, but they're not things that are related only to intercultural situations. And there are so many different intercultural situations. Eating food in an unfamiliar ethnic restaurant in your hometown is in some superficial way, an intercultural situation. And so is working for a multinational company with an international team or moving to a different country because your partner comes from there or living in a settlement for displaced people.
00:08:48	Joseph	Right, so this is a challenge for researchers. There isn't a single essential intercultural experience. Each one makes different demands on people.
	(music pause)	
00:09:08	Daniel	Well, let's get back to the factors associated with success.
00:09:12	Joseph	Okay, diving back in under the category of higher order skills, we have things like ability to accommodate behavior, ability to adapt to communication, ability to establish interpersonal relationships, collaborative dialogue, face work management, mindful listening, relationship building, trust building.

00:09:32	Daniel	And we have other broader skills such as attentiveness, cultural empathy, listening, perceptiveness, social sensitivity, as well as the category of composure, which I guess is a kind of emotional intelligence. And that includes things like emotional control, coping with feelings, intentionality, persuasiveness, self-efficacy, self-orientation, need for achievement.
00:10:02	Joseph	And there are other categories as well, including coordination, expressiveness, contextual competencies, outcomes, context, each with a number of different factors. In fact, there are hundreds of factors listed in this particular review.
00:10:19	Daniel	To state the obvious, there seems to be an infinite number of possible factors and an infinite number of possible situations that could place different demands on us.
00:10:30	Joseph	And this is why I personally feel that the idea of intercultural competence works best as an ideal, something to aspire to, but not something that can ever be reduced to a set of particular skills that can be mastered.
00:10:45	Daniel	Indeed, from my perspective, mastery is the opposite of what actually happens in intercultural situations. By definition, in intercultural situations, we are ignorant, at least in the beginning. The ability to live and work interculturally relates to how we deal constructively with our ignorance.
00:11:15	Joseph	Well, you are certainly someone who has worked in very challenging intercultural contexts and in particular as a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross.
00:11:26	Daniel	That's true. I have worked in contexts with enormous cultural differences. For example, in April 1991, when I arrived in Kuwait after the end of the first Gulf War, or when I landed a year later in Sri Lanka, just after a Maoist- inspired insurrection, almost toppled the government. I was totally ignorant of local cultures. In the case of Sri Lanka, I knew about some Buddhist archeologic sites such as Polonnaruwa and Sigiriya Rock. But these historical notions didn't help when I had to deal with military and police officers or with the militants, we came to interview in detention places.
00:12:15	Joseph	Well, this is one obvious limitation with the idea of intercultural competency. This literature is treating it as an overall or general ability.
00:12:25	Daniel	Well, there is no single thing which we can call intercultural competence. It's really a catch-all term for whatever is needed to produce positive outcomes, whatever those are.
00:12:37	Joseph	In fact, on the website of the World Council of Intercultural and Global Competence, it says something similar. In part, "there has been over 60 years of scholarly work on the concepts of intercultural and global competence. Much of that in the global north, there are over 30 terms used for these concepts and many different definitions".

00:13:00	Daniel	But it does seem like people use the term intercultural competence in a very general way to refer to whatever we need to work across cultures.
00:13:10	Joseph	Now, one survey respondent said that intercultural competence quote "is the basis of my work. I call it cultural intelligence. And all my work is focused on developing it in people".
00:13:22	Daniel	So for this person, whether your call is overall quality, intercultural competence, or cultural intelligence, somehow it's still the same thing. And another said, "I think it is very important, whether we call it intercultural competence, cultural intelligence, cultural fluency, etc."
00:13:43	Joseph	And this is really striking. Each person has a feeling or a sense for the goals of intercultural education. And maybe because of this, the particular word being used, uh, just doesn't seem so important. But then how do these ideas help people struggling with intercultural challenges? One respondent said "It works not as a definable concept, but as a goal whose definition emerges through experience."
00:14:14	Daniel	And another person said, "I think the concept is a door to self-reflection and self-awareness as a first step in the process of understanding otherness and responding accordingly in real life situations."
(music pause)		
00:14:43	Joseph	So we can start to see why the survey results were so positive. Many respondents do find the idea of intercultural competence useful.
00:14:54	Daniel	But not everyone was so positive. One core question was stated very clearly by the respondent who said, "How does intercultural competence adapt to real life scenes?"
00:15:08	Joseph	I see their point because intercultural competence is often talked about as a set of tools for intercultural situations in general.
00:15:16	Daniel	However, there is no general intercultural situation. And another critique is that if you talk about intercultural competency as a set of skills that you can have, it turns a very complex challenging phenomenon into a thing.
00:15:35	Joseph	Yes, the technical term is reification. When you talk about something abstract as though it were a physical object, even though in reality there is no single thing that can be called intercultural competence. So it isn't possible to "have" it.
00:15:53	Daniel	Well, as someone who's not a scholar, but who has worked in a lot of very challenging intercultural situations. I find all of this to be quite abstract and to be honest, rather idealistic. Many of the qualities we're talking about such as openness, flexibility are largely attitudes and can you change people's attitudes?
00:16:18	Joseph	And that brings us to part two: Attitude or insight?
Part 2: Attitude or Insight?		
	Joseph	So we have said that intercultural competence can be an inspiring ideal, but let's take a look at some of the challenges, uh, to making those ideals a reality.

00:16:59	Daniel	Well, from my perspective, one obvious challenge is the gap between theory and practice. These scholarly debates and models don't really help us when we are frustrated and overwhelmed by the stresses of dealing with unfamiliar situations.
00:17:16	Joseph	And I'm guessing that you've had plenty of opportunities to experience that.
00:17:21	Daniel	Oh, absolutely. In Sri Lanka, for example, I had to learn everything from scratch. I needed to know how power was distributed, how political decisions were implemented. I had to learn what was the role of the Buddhist monks in the conflict, and most importantly, under what specific laws could the police arrest militants and protestors and how long they were allowed to keep them in custody. These were all very concrete and tough questions, and handling them badly could have very severe consequences for people.
00:17:59	Joseph	And I am guessing that in those moments you weren't thinking, "Wow, I'm really adding to my intercultural competence."
00:18:06	Daniel	Not a single minute. I felt ignorant, clumsy, and frustrated. I had no idea whether any action I would undertake would have a positive or a disastrous consequence. It was like flying an airplane with a scarf over my eyes, and at the same time I felt responsible for the passenger's wellbeing. Fortunately, the people who saved us from crashing repeatedly were the locally employed colleagues and the interpreters. They knew much more about the local reality than us, and they constantly helped us to navigate in the dark.
00:18:45	Joseph	And I do think that this is a risk when we talk about intercultural competence, it gives the impression that we are becoming increasingly skilled when it often feels like just the opposite.
00:18:57	Daniel	And this is something that one of the survey participants mentioned saying, I quote, "I don't use the term confidence as I tend to see breakthroughs in cultural understanding as something that is substracted such as stereotypes more than something added like skills."
00:19:19	Joseph	Well, and for sure the satisfaction that I have gotten through living between cultures is not about adding to my skillset, it's…it's deeper than that. My intercultural experiences have changed me. It's not an additive process, it's a transformative one.
00:19:47	Daniel	Oh, absolutely. I dare say that my international experiences have made me more humble and added to this is the realization that we live in a complex world. There are 6,000 or more languages and dialects spoken by countless cultural communities, subcultures different ethnic groups, most of which I will never come into contact with. And competence varies according to the situation and according to what I want to achieve. I was just on a family holiday in Spain, a country whose language I fully master, as a tourist in charge of a family. I felt perfectly competent, but I wouldn't be equally competent if I needed to negotiate a business deal or learn to dance the flamenco. Or I might feel

		competent, but others may not think so. I think there's another challenge to making this ideal of intercultural competence a reality, and that is believing in an ideal, having a certain attitude. This is simply not enough. When the stress of real life situations hits, our reasoning brain is shutting down, our intellectual philosophies vanish and we rely on emotion and instinct.
00:21:12	Joseph	And this is something we talk about a lot on this podcast. From the brain and mind perspective, intercultural understanding is not an analytic ability. It's an intuitive one.
00:21:24	Daniel	We react with our gut, we make on the spot judgements, we jump to conclusions, and we are affected by our feelings.
00:21:33	Joseph	And I did notice a high level of idealism in the survey responses. For example, more than 60% of respondents agreed with the idea that quote, "with the right attitude, cultural misunderstanding, can be largely avoided."
00:21:49	Daniel	Well, I find this idea to be idealistic but not realistic. On another assignment with the ICRC, I was in Kashmir, a disputed territory between Pakistan and India. A so-called right attitude didn't help me to figure out what the officers of the Kashmir police, the Indian Army, the Indian border security forces and the Muslim militants they had arrested were thinking about the conflict. In cases like this, the right attitude would have been the Socratic wisdom, recognizing that I'm a bloody ignorant fool and have no clue what's going on. So my best bet is to shut up, observe, and ask local employees and interpreters for advice. In this case, competence meant that as a group when putting all the knowledge and the resources of different people together, we started to be just a little bit less incompetent.
00:23:06	Joseph	Well, there's another survey item that reflected a real idealism about intercultural competence. Two out of three respondents agreed that cultural biases are learned and can be overcome with the right attitude.
00:23:21	Daniel	From my perspective, this is really a triumph of ideology over reality. The human mind by its evolutionary nature is biased. It makes judgment based on previous experience. It jumps to conclusions, it favors the in-group, it simplifies things with stereotypes and so on.
00:23:44	Joseph	And we have talked about this in detail on this podcast before. Check out episode nine: *Bias is not bias.*
00:23:51	Daniel	Well, forgive me if I tend to be a little sarcastic, but asking everybody to love each other will not lead us towards world peace. But there is another, rather uncomfortable truth with this idealism. I think the idea of intercultural competence appeals to rather privileged people who choose to have intercultural experiences, expatriates living abroad, managers working with international teams, students going abroad to study. You and I, Joseph, are in a group of people that have lived a life of intercultural choice, and that is really a privilege.
00:24:33	Joseph	And this is something that Ishita Ray has also given a lot of thought to.

00:24:40	Ishita	Sharad is a software engineer from a small town in India. On his first overseas assignment, he's sent to the US to maintain the online risk portfolio infrastructure of a top American investment bank. This is Sharad's dream come true. He rents a small apartment in a lower income neighborhood in the US, which he shares with two other engineers in similar situations, if things go well, he can help his family pay off his educational loans and perhaps help his father purchase the agricultural land he works on. Sharad has always been hardworking, but he has little idea about living and working abroad. He's a first-generation learner of his family who grew up speaking a local language, which was also the primary language of instruction in school. He later studied English in middle school and during his engineering degree. But his English is not strong, and his knowledge of the United States comes from movies and popular television series. Sharad is serious and polite. He knows better than to speak up in disagreement during a meeting. It would mean disrespecting a high-status American client. And so, Sharad struggles to communicate clearly to his American manager that the team will miss the project deadline if the client's request is agreed to. In a situation like this, we could say that Sharad needs intercultural competence, that this could be the key to his quote unquote success. But this assumes a level playing field among stakeholders and implies that productivity and personal rewards are the ultimate goals of intercultural contact.
00:26:44	Ishita	But the truth is that Sharad faces enormous psychological pressures and profound socioeconomic consequences. He grew up in a society where fitting in with others is more rewarding than competing through individual skill sets. Living and working in the US requires deep adjustments at the level of self. In intercultural situations that are imbalanced, there's often a lot at stake. Should we tell Sharad that he's missing some key competencies? Should we measure him in terms of his "outcomes"? It seems to me that for Sharad, a concept like intercultural competence is like a house of cards. The concepts stack up neatly. They create an impressive theoretical structure, but the winds of the real world can easily bring down the whole pack.
00:27:58	Daniel	For me, what we learn from intercultural experiences is not so much skills or attitudes, but insight. And the key to insight is not so different from the key to wisdom. From the moment we accept that we do not live in reality, but in our own representation of reality, we can unlock the door. Finding this key is only possible with humility. If we accept that our own perception, our own values, our own truths, our constructs, shared worlds of the mind, then we can accept that other people or rather groups of people experience different mental worlds. Some people learn to cross between these different facets of truth the hard way others never do. But regardless, these lessons are much deeper than any competency or outcome.

00:28:57	Joseph	And that brings us to part three: The Autopilot
Part 3: The Autopilot		
00:29:20	Daniel	Well, Joseph, I was getting a little bit philosophical at the end of part two, but in part three, we would like to see what the brain and mind sciences can teach us about these questions.
00:29:34	Joseph	Okay, and fair warning. Here comes a bunch of technical jargon. Often the theorizing around intercultural competence involves conceptualizing or modeling the components or the processes involved in achieving positive intercultural outcomes. So, we might start by proposing that intercultural competence involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Then those categories can be broken down into smaller bits. Often what we end up with is a taxonomy, like the factors we were discussing in part one, and then there are competing theoretical constructs as well. For example, intercultural sensitivity has been defined as "the ability to incorporate cultural difference into our worldview". Or we might create a theoretical model that describes the process of gaining intercultural abilities. There's a face work-based model of intercultural competence associated with Stella Ting-Toomey that talks about the knowledge dimension, the mindfulness dimension, interaction skills, and face work competence criteria. Darla Deardorff's pyramid model has attitudes at the base with knowledge and skills above that with desired internal and then external outcomes at the top. Mike Byram has developed a model of intercultural communicative competence involving five "savoirs" - five forms of knowledge. Then there's Milton Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. And I will stop here, and that is just to name a few.
00:31:13	Daniel	Well, Joseph, you have also developed a theoretical model for language and culture learning.
00:31:20	Joseph	Uh, well, yes, I'm afraid I'm also guilty of theorizing. Uh, it's called the Developmental Model of Linguaculture Learning.
(music pause)		
00:31:38	Daniel	Well, it's good to know that all these ideas are out there, but let's not get lost. So, what is the difference between all that and intercultural competence from the brain mind perspective? And the basic answer is straightforward. From the perspective of our cognitive processes, an intercultural situation is one in which we confront unfamiliar cultural patterns. This is closely related to something we have talked about on this podcast before, predictive processing, also called predictive coding.
00:32:18	Joseph	As we go about our everyday lives, our brain is constantly predicting what will come next based on our previous experience. These predictions are based on mental models of the world that we have built up through trial and error. As long as the world responds to us in a predictable way, our perceptions are routine. And this lets us respond in routine ways.

00:32:43	Daniel	A simple example - we are better at recognizing letters when they are part of a word, because our brain can predict the presence of the letter in that context.
00:32:54	Joseph	And when you are walking down a familiar street, you barely notice the details of your environment and you navigate that space automatically.
00:33:03	Daniel	And when you buy something at your local supermarket, you may interact with a clerk and barely remember what you said.
00:33:11	Joseph	Simply put, we spend most of our time on autopilot.
00:33:15	Daniel	But foreign environments trigger different responses. When you walk down the street on your first day in a foreign country, you notice all kinds of things - signs in a different script, the sounds of a foreign language, cars driving on the other side of the road. We notice 1,001 little things that are different from what we are used to.
00:33:39	Joseph	And this mental busyness happens because the models that our mind uses in its predictive processing don't match the input coming in through the senses. In effect, it finds anomalies. And so, our mind must work over time to take in the new information and make sense of our experiences.
00:33:58	Daniel	An intercultural experience is one in which we must make sense of the patterns that don't fit the mental habits of our unconscious autopilot.
00:34:09	Joseph	And I talk about the autopilot in my teaching. I ask my students to reflect on the reactions of their autopilot during foreign experiences.
00:34:19	Daniel	When we use cognitive processes, as is a starting point for intercultural education, it allows us to focus on intercultural experiences rather than definitions and obstructions.
00:34:32	Joseph	So from this perspective, intercultural competence is not a set of skills. It's a process of learning new patterns that includes relatively explicit patterns like learning the layout of a new city or how a subway system works, what we often call surface culture.
00:34:50	Daniel	But we are also social primates, very closely attuned to other people, and we read patterns of behavior as well. Those patterns are very subtle, and our autopilot guides our behavior and our judgments about what people are doing, their intentions, whether they are being reasonable.
00:35:11	Joseph	I remember I was coaching a German manager working in Japan with a team of Japanese engineers. I asked him how everything was going and he said, "Oh, it's fine. But there's just one little thing in meetings when I ask if there are any questions, no one speaks up. But then later they stop by my office and ask me questions. To be honest, it irritates me. It's really a waste of my time to deal with individually when they could simply speak up in front of the whole team. I thought that Japanese were collectivists, but they don't speak up when they're together. Of course, maybe they haven't been trained in critical thinking."
	(music pause)	
00:35:57	Daniel	Wow, that's quite a series of interpretations and judgments.

00:36:03	Joseph	Yes, and negative judgments. There's a lot of cognitive complexity going on. The intuitive autopilot has identified an anomaly - not asking questions in meetings, has struggled to identify the pattern - why this happens, has tried to use his background knowledge and his analytic mind saying that Japanese are supposed to be collectivist.
00:36:28	Daniel	Except as you said that he's making negative judgements. He says his Japanese colleagues are inefficient, which is probably wrong. He's judging them based on German standards. Those deeper cultural patterns are not easy to read or figure out until you've really had a chance to work with people. Over time, it takes a lot of trial and error because our intuitive autopilot learns through experience assisted by the analytic capacities of the conscious mind. So how does intercultural competence fit in here?
00:37:09	Joseph	From the brain and mind perspective, we're not exercising a set of skills in cases like this. We're trying to compensate for our ignorance.
00:37:18	Daniel	Well, the main thing I have learned is that whenever you arrive in a new environment, you have to start learning from scratch. You always remain a beginner. You are on a path, but you never really reached a goal. But let's go back to the question of intercultural competence.
00:37:38	Joseph	Well, from the brain mind perspective, our goal is to better navigate our intercultural experiences through an understanding of the mind.
00:37:47	Daniel	And this means that we can stick with an empirical understanding without relying on ideals.
00:37:54	Joseph	Yes, in my classes, we learn how culture shapes our mind and affects our perceptions, how we process information. There is research into how culture shapes our identity, how we experience emotion.
00:38:08	Daniel	For me, I think it is important the learners understand that the human mind is cultural by nature. We cannot go beyond culture because the mind itself is cultural.
00:38:21	Joseph	And part of that is seeing that our reactions to foreign experiences are not in our conscious control. It's natural to have negative reactions, what I call resistance. We are, after all, ethnocentric by nature.
00:38:36	Daniel	I think this is empirically true, but based on the survey, it seems that many intercultural professionals don't see it that way. In fact, 75% agreed with a statement ethnocentrism is something we learned from our environment, so it can be overcome by education.
00:38:57	Joseph	I think this misunderstanding comes from confusing ethnocentrism with learned prejudice. Of course, we do learn negative attitudes towards certain people from society.
00:39:09	Daniel	But that's different from ethnocentrism itself.
00:39:13	Joseph	Yes, ethnocentrism, judging things from our cultural perspective, happens unavoidably simply because we make judgements and interpretations based on our previous experience. So of course, we judge things based on our own cultural perspective. How could it be otherwise?

00:39:33	Daniel	In a similar vein, I think our understanding of cognitive biases can be very useful in intercultural education. We can learn how our mind naturally takes shortcuts and simplifies.
00:39:46	Joseph	Well, in my classes, For example, students learn about the in-group bias, confirmation bias, stereotyping. These are all closely related to the difficulties we have interpreting foreign environments, and we are really piling on a lot of detail here. But another area of research that we can use relates to empathy. We talked about this in episode eight - *Empathy across Cultures*. Our ability to empathize involves a number of different cognitive processes, and it's closely tied to our motivational system. In effect, it can be turned on and off.
00:40:22	Daniel	So let's pull these threads together. We've said that the idea of intercultural competence can be a good first step to ask deeper questions about what's going on inside us as we navigate intercultural situations. And when we do, there's a lot of research to guide us about the way culture shapes our cognitive processes, about patterns of cultural difference, about our reactions to foreign environments, about our judgments and biases, ethnocentrism, the kind of cognitive overload that leads to culture shock. And one thing that becomes clear is that the mind is complex. Cultural difference is deeper than we might think. It's understandable that we struggle, and as we do, we don't just increase our competencies, we grow as human beings.
00:41:19	Joseph	And I think that's a good place to bring this episode to a close. Let's mention some of our sources. If you're interested in learning more about intercultural competence, check out the *Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* edited by Darla Deardorff. Also check out the *World Council of Intercultural and Global Competence*. You can find it on the web. And if you're interested in the theorizing that I do, I will send you a free excerpt from my book, *Language, Culture and the Embodied Mind*. The Deep Culture Podcast is sponsored by the Japan Intercultural Institute an NPO dedicated to intercultural education and research. I'm the director of JII. If you're interested in Culture and the Mind, check out JII's Brain Mind and Culture Masterclass. To find out more, just do a web search for the Japan Intercultural Institute. If you liked today's episode, spread the word on social media. You can write us at dcpodcast@japanintercultural.org . Thanks to our sound engineer, Robinson Fritz and everyone else on the podcast team, and thanks to you, Daniel, for sharing this time with me.
00:42:27	Daniel	Thank you, Joseph. It was enjoyable and instructive as usual.