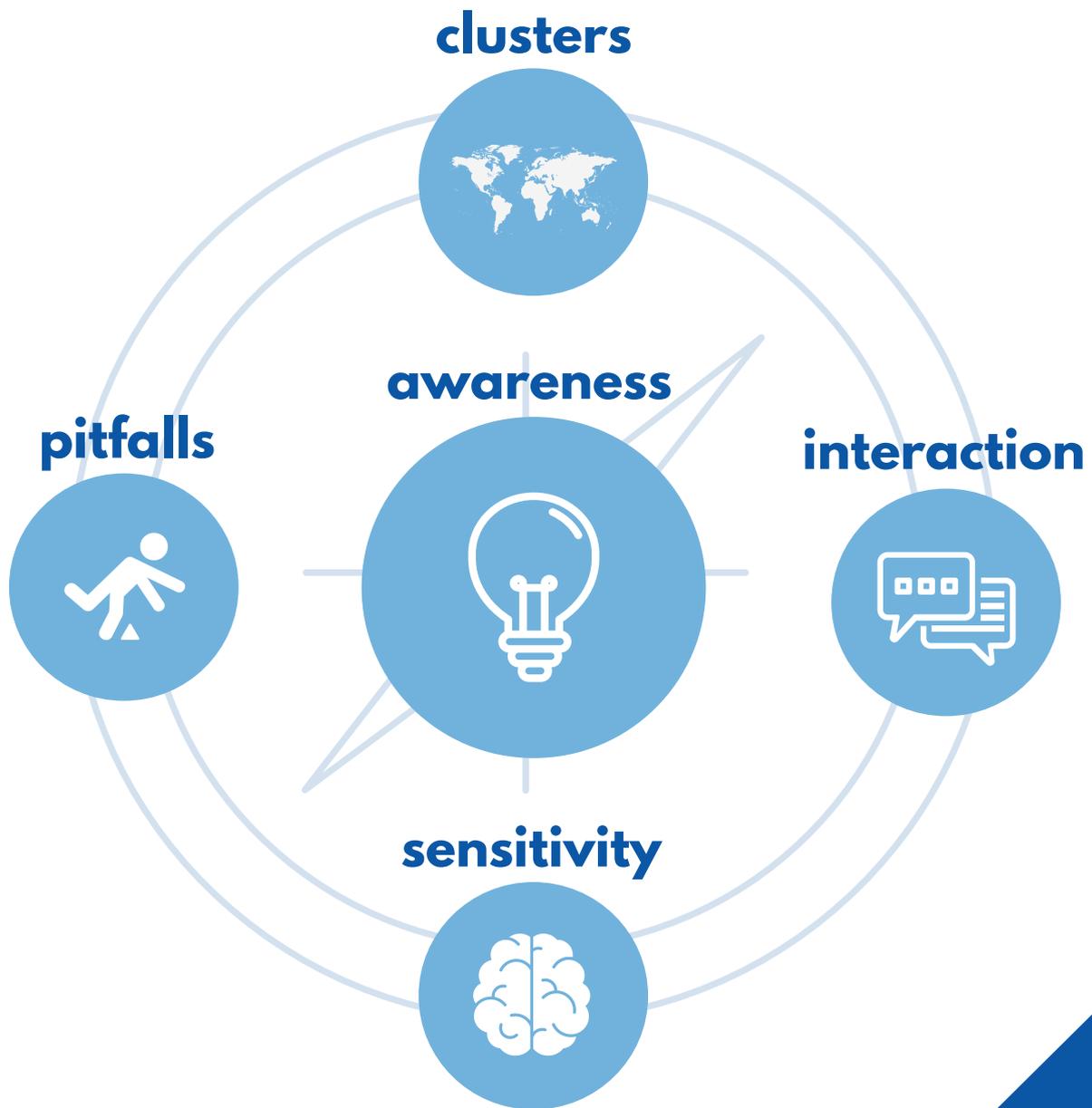


The PACIS model

Effective navigation between
different cultural contexts





Intercultural communication has become an increasingly relevant subject in recent years, partly due to growing globalisation and migration. This means the environment in which we work and live is becoming increasingly diverse. This can enrich society, communication and interaction, but can sometimes also reveal contrasting expectations and lead to miscommunication or even conflict. Whether you are a diplomat, entrepreneur, teacher or soldier, the aim is to navigate as effectively as possible within this intercultural reality.

Hence there is an increased need for knowledge and improved skills. Clingendael Academy helps professionals to develop these intercultural competences, so that they can cooperate effectively and sensitively across cultural borders.

It is not about do's and don'ts, but about intercultural awareness

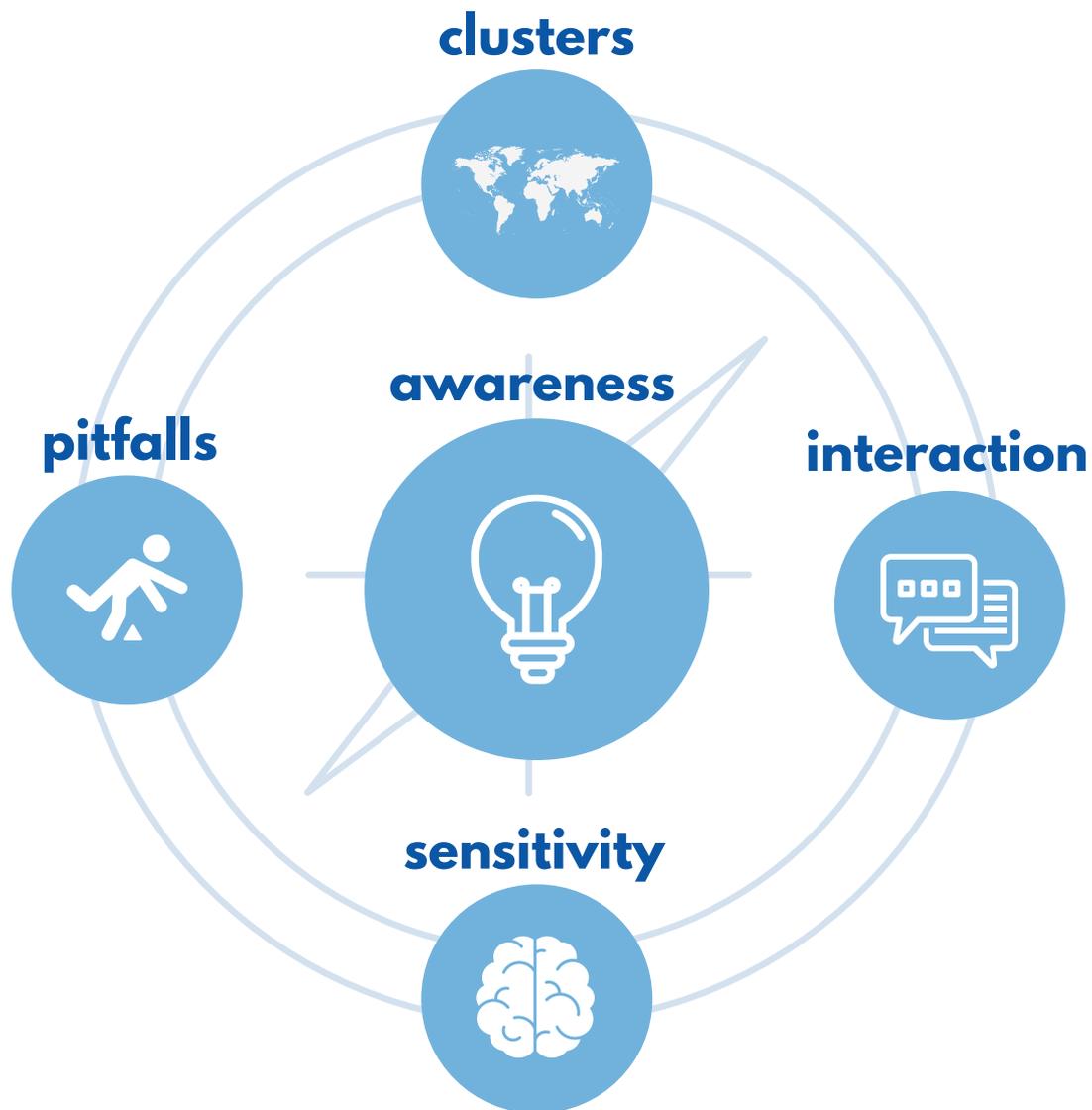
Thinking on intercultural communication training and intercultural competence has evolved in recent decades. Whereas an essentialist approach to cultures often used to be applied in which cultures were seen as static, national entities, we now see a shift to a more non-essentialist approach in which cultures are seen as fluid, reinforcing the notion that people have multicultural identities.

Many intercultural communication training courses are still based on such an essentialist view of the subject. Examples are courses such as 'How to negotiate with the Chinese' and 'Dealing with the Dutch'. At Clingendael Academy we believe that such an approach is not only outdated but also counterproductive. The focus on national cultures reaffirms stereotypes.

It also disregards the complexity of the subject, and the existence of intracultural differences.

Clingendael Academy has devised a new training approach by drawing on its decades of practical experience of intercultural communication, combined with its in-house academic knowledge of the subject. The PACIS model for intercultural capacity facilitates a non-essentialist approach to intercultural issues. With this model we offer an integral method to deepen or broaden knowledge and skills in the field of intercultural communication. Participants in our training courses are given tools and insights that help them successfully navigate within different cultural contexts.

For more in-depth knowledge it is possible to add a culture-specific component to our training courses on request. In fulfilling such requests Clingendael Academy works only with local experts, who can provide a culture-specific interpretation of the non-essentialist framework facilitated by the PACIS model.



The PACIS model for effective intercultural communication

The PACIS model consists of five areas: Pitfalls, Awareness, Clusters, Interactions and Sensitivity. Investing in all areas leads to increased intercultural capacity.

Pitfalls

We believe that, in order to facilitate effective intercultural communication, we must first look at possible pitfalls in interactions. Unlike in a traditional training approach, this does not refer to do's and don'ts in specific cultures, but to certain attitudes and behavioural pitfalls that may negatively impact the course of intercultural interactions. Examples include stereotypes, ethnocentrism and essentialism. When tackling this area, we aim not only to learn how to recognise these pitfalls in order to avoid them, but also how we can adequately address the behaviour that is characteristic of these pitfalls.

Awareness

Before we can understand how culture impacts the other person's behaviour and communication style, it is crucial to be aware of our own cultural lens.

Each of us is the product of environmental factors.

Whether it is our educators, teachers or teammates, consciously and unconsciously our social environment largely shapes our cultural conditioning. This cultural conditioning then informs our behaviour, our communication and our interpretation of the other person. We help participants become aware of their own cultural lens and how it can influence intercultural interactions, partly by exploring intercultural case studies and conducting a communicative self-assessment.

Clusters

Professionals looking for a training course in intercultural communication often find themselves in work situations where they have to deal with interlocutors whose cultural conditioning differs from their own. This can lead to incomprehension, frustration and a deteriorated working relationship or atmosphere.

Understanding where those differences come from and how we can deal with them in intercultural interactions can increase the chance of intercultural success.

Based on a clustering of traditional and recent scientific research, Clingendael trainers help the participants to analyse the potential source of any miscommunication or conflict.

We have identified six clusters that can negatively impact intercultural interaction if the differences between the interlocutors are too wide: Power, Values, Communication, Time, Society and Space.



By acquiring knowledge of these six clusters, participants are able to understand cultural differences, recognise miscommunication more quickly and deal with it in their own working practice.



Interaction

Culture can impact the course of interaction in different ways. A good understanding of the communication process is important to understand this influence. The process consists of different stages and actors.

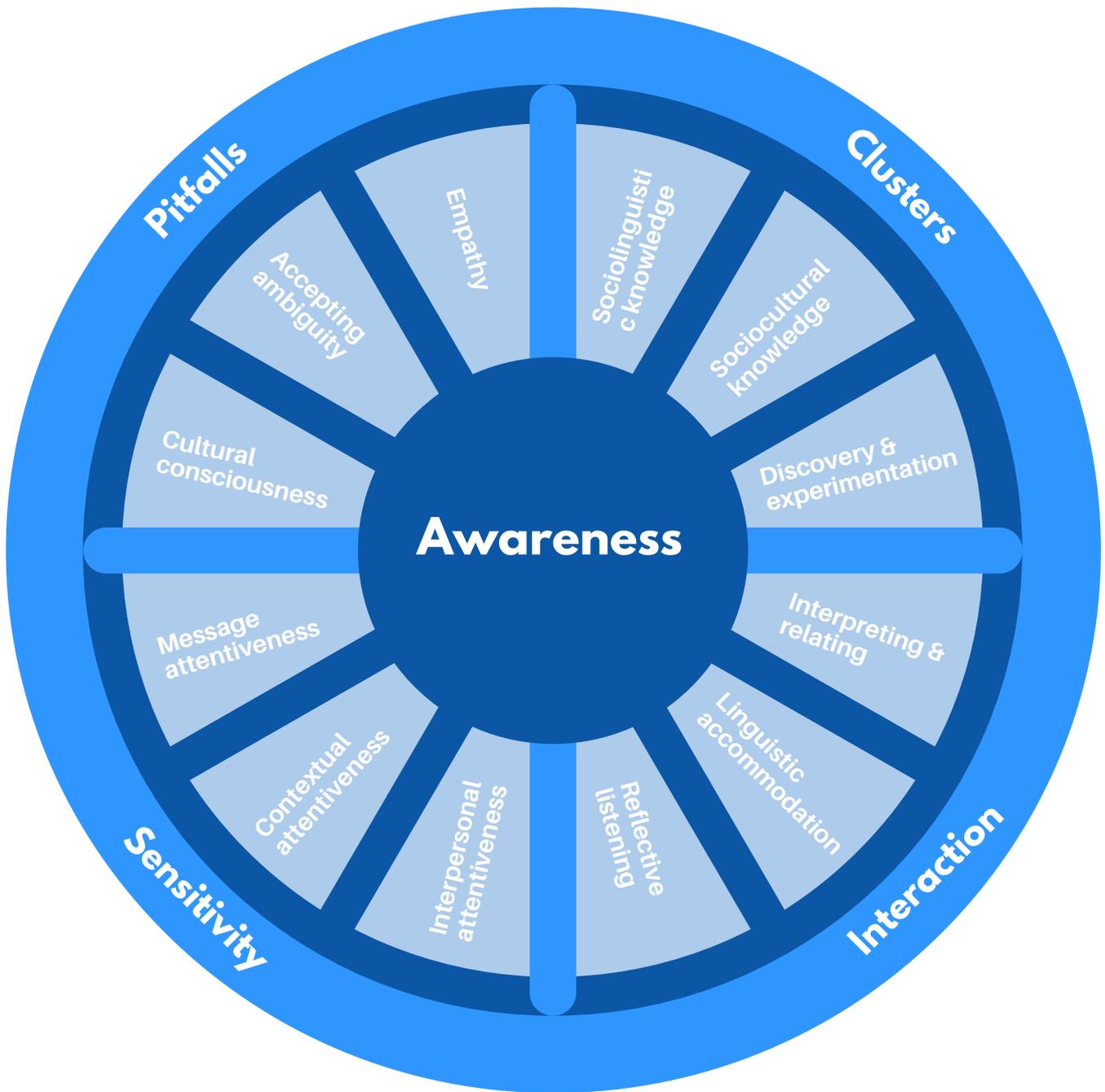
Miscommunication can occur on a linguistic level or a pragmatic level. The former could include differences in characteristics of the language spoken: the use of certain jargon, having a strong dialect or using different communication styles.

Miscommunication caused by pragmatic differences occurs because the intention of the message does not match the interpretation of the message. This misinterpretation of the message can be caused by assumptions we make about the intention of the communication and the behaviour of the other person. During our training courses, participants investigate the influence of culture on the communication process and understand their own communication style.

Sensitivity

There are various conversational and listening skills and strategies that can be used to act and communicate with intercultural sensitivity. For example, someone who masters reflective listening cannot assume mutual understanding - at least at the outset. That person is able to establish a collaborative dialogue: a conversation in which participants can arrive at a shared interpretation of the message. An important part of this is being able to ask the right questions, while checking whether the intention of the message matches the interpretation of the speaker.

There are several ways to deal with miscommunication or conflict in intercultural interactions: we can ignore it, try to dominate the situation, accommodate the other person, seek compromise or explore other possible solutions. We make participants aware of the choices they have in dealing with intercultural conflict and help them choose the right strategy.



Interconnectedness

The PACIS model offers an integrated approach to the development of intercultural competences.

The emphasis is not only on cultural differences, as is common in essentialist training approaches, but rather on how the different areas of the model can reinforce each other and thus contribute to successful intercultural interactions. An increased knowledge of clusters, for example, leads to more awareness, while the recognition and acknowledgement of pitfalls contributes to enhanced intercultural sensitivity. The subjects are thus interrelated and influence each other.

Training methodology

Our training methodology features a high degree of interaction: the various areas of the PACIS model are highlighted by means of anecdotal examples from intercultural practice and explored together with participants through individual reflection, plenary case studies, role play and simulations.

The PACIS model as an analysis tool

The PACIS model is useful not only as a framework for our training courses but also as an analysis tool to understand intercultural conflict or miscommunication.

This is followed by a fictionalised anecdote from a former student that lends itself to systematic intercultural analysis using the PACIS model.

Case: I'm not doing anything wrong, am I?

"I worked remotely for a French organisation, with a French boss and colleagues of many different nationalities around the world. The working relationship with one of my colleagues was very difficult. He did not keep appointments and often responded rudely to my requests to carry out tasks. I discussed this with my manager. This was followed by an angry e-mail, sent to both me and my colleague, in which our manager criticised the way we worked. I was very surprised, as I was sure I hadn't done anything wrong. Although I didn't understand why I was being criticised, the working relationship between me and my colleague improved after the e-mail from our boss."

Pitfalls

Ethnocentrism may have been a pitfall here. I saw my way of working as the right way of working. I was used to a certain way of interacting that did not match my colleague's way of working.

Awareness

*Although I thought I communicated quite indirectly – compared to my Dutch colleagues – I realised that my **communication style** was still quite direct compared to people from other cultural contexts.*

Clusters

*I suspect there is a subconscious difference in the way my colleague and I view **hierarchy**. I am younger [than my colleague], but I do have more work experience. Maybe my colleague finds it difficult when a more junior colleague asks him to perform tasks. I have always worked in flat organisations, and I am used to everyone being able to have their say in the workplace.*

Interaction

*When I asked my boss why the e-mail was also sent to me, I realised it was a case of **pragmatic miscommunication**. My manager told me he wanted to protect my colleague from losing face, so did not want to put the blame on him alone.*

His intention was to make clear that my colleague needed to change his attitude to work, whereas my interpretation was that I was not doing my job properly.

Sensitivity

My boss's statement initially felt like a very clumsy way to tackle my colleague about his behaviour. I really had to read between the lines to understand his intention. I now realise that this kind of communication can be effective, as our working relationship is a lot better now. I find that we now approach each other more as equals.



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