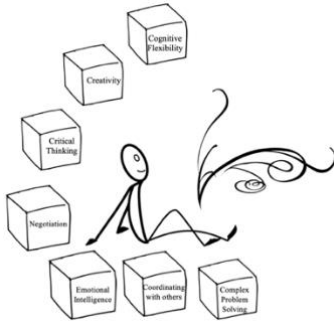


Scaffolding Cultural Differences – Personal Space (Secondary)

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Cultural differences extend far beyond language, greetings, gestures, dress and beliefs. The very space we create when we meet people - or the absence of that space - is indicative of where we come from and what our understanding is of the (dis)comfort level of those we are with.

This scaffold helps us see how we can honour physical space, amongst many other differences between cultures. It includes the affective side of learning - in developing more understanding and compassionate citizens of the world as our students travel across the planet physically and/or virtually.



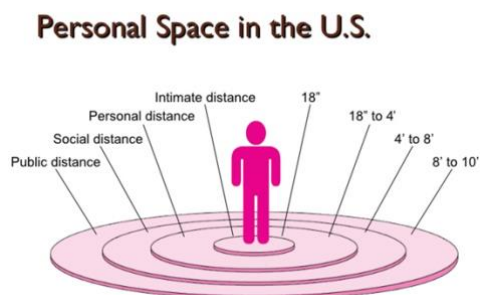
WEATHER IS HORRIBLE, BUT THE ONLY SHELTER IS OCCUPIED.

The image above is an amusing look at Finnish cultural peculiarities, drawn by a Finnish artist Karolina Korhonen, in her hugely popular [Finnish Nightmares](#). It shows the differences in how we perceive and feel the same situation, and how we have the choice to either react, or to adjust to and empathise with other's comfort levels.

Emotional intelligence is defined as 'the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.' (Goleman 1993:317). Findings show that emotional intelligence is malleable and can be fostered with focused attention and effort. (Brackett and Katulak, 2006). What this promotes is the idea of the plasticity of the brain and how as teachers, we can help ourselves and our students develop emotional skills. (Mercer, 2017). In this way, we learn to connect to others – who may be experiencing the same events in very different ways – and find a common ground to reach a mutual, emotionally safe understanding.

Step by Step:

1. Elicit affective responses by getting students in groups, standing and facing each other and taking turns slowly taking three steps towards each of their classmates and then three steps back. They note and discuss the expressions on their classmates' faces, their own feelings as they get nearer and farther away, and how their classmates say they felt.
2. Begin a more focused conversation through the following material:
 - studying Hall's [four \(4\) zones of personal space](#): public, social, personal, intimate (family) and debate whether it is true for you and/or people you know.
 - Consider the personal space of the average American and compare it with the personal space in your culture (if you are American, choose another culture)



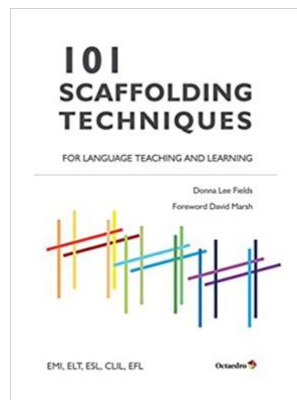
- watch the first 30 seconds of the video [Invading Personal Space](#) with the sound off. Students discuss whether they would react the same way to someone coming so close to them in the street and on a street bench and what they would do if this happened.
- give students a copy of the comic strip [Finnish Nightmares: Public Spaces \(Bus Stop\)](#).
- read the differences between cultures in the PPT [Cultural Differences](#)
- study the scenes in the cartoon frames below.



3. Based on the information chosen, students formulate two (2) lower-order thinking questions and three (3) higher-order thinking questions. each other higher-order level such as:



- Do you like personal space?
 - What would you do if someone bowed to you instead of shaking your hand or giving you two kisses?
 - How does personal space change the intimacy of a conversation?
 - What if you invited 10 people, from 10 different cultures to a party? How would you compensate for the cultural differences?
4. Students choose one cultural difference that they have learned and make it visible in some way.



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