



HubICL
Intercultural Learning Hub

EMIC PERSPECTIVE

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Mentorship, Assessment and Research

What is the emic perspective?

- An *insider's* perspective on culture
- Provides an in-depth look into the practices, beliefs, and behaviors of a culture
- Research from an emic perspective involves immersion in a particular culture and centers accounts of people within that culture

What is the etic perspective?

- An *outsider's* perspective on culture
- Provides a surface look into the practices, beliefs, and behaviors of a culture
- Research from an etic perspective centers the views of the researcher and focuses on descriptions

Purpose of the emic perspective

- Allows us to construct what's underneath "the iceberg" and how it could make sense for someone from a different culture to behave in a particular way
- A way to grant legitimacy and validity to other cultural viewpoints and norms.

How to get an emic perspective on a culture

- Immerse yourself without being disruptive.
- Learn the local language, jargon, lingo, etc.
- Listen to individuals within the culture and let them share their stories without judgment.
- Build a rapport with individuals within the culture by getting to know them and their beliefs, values, customs, and norms.

Example 1:

Xue and Kerstetter (2019) used an emic approach to understand how residents in Chongdu Valley, China adapted to rural tourism as their main form of livelihood when it had previously been agricultural. The residents described a period of culture shock when they first began making the transition, difficulty in overcoming cultural barriers between themselves and the tourists, and a period of adaptation where they had to modify their everyday lives/norms to accommodate this livelihood. The researchers tried to define and explain the experiences of locals with their own language. What difficulties might scholars encounter when trying to adopt an emic perspective?

Xue, L., & Kerstetter, D. (2018). Rural tourism and livelihood change: An emic perspective. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 43(3), 416-437. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348018807289>

Example 2:

Kaur Mehar Singh (2019) investigated lecturers' perspectives on why international graduate students in Malaysia often have difficulties with academic writing. The lecturers seemed to suggest that students' writing challenges stemmed from their lack of proficiency with the English language in general, as well as a lack of resources for them to get further help. Singh listened to the lecturers tell stories of their experiences with international graduate students. Whose emic perspective is represented here?

Kaur Mehar Singh, M. (2019). Academic reading and writing challenges among international EFL master's students in a Malaysian University: The voice of lecturers. *Journal of International Students*, 9(4), 972-992.

<http://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2016-1603-06>