

# Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters



## Module 2

### Activity 1: Shifting perspectives

#### Commentary

What did you record in your account? What were the points of difference you noticed?

#### A) Did you write about dress?

**Tawfiq** has a smart military-style uniform. He is formal and official. Is it easy for Dina and her friends to feel at ease in his presence? **Dina**, on the other hand, is casually dressed in jeans. Would Dina's way of dressing make Tawfiq feel comfortable or uncomfortable?

#### B) Did you write about body language?

**Tawfiq** stands in a dignified, upright manner. The way he holds the box under his arm gives him a formal, military air. His men are lined up behind him. Does he look like someone who is easy to talk to or get to know? **Dina** stands with her hands on hips. What impression might this give to Tawfiq? As she stands in this manner in the doorway, does she seem welcoming? Maybe the way she holds herself in front of a visitor seems rather immodest or impolite. When Tawfiq says he is from Egypt, Dina laughs and waves her finger at him. Do you think Tawfiq is used to people reacting to him like this?

#### C) Did you write about gender?

**Tawfiq**, in his police uniform with his company of men and his military manner, has an air of masculine authority. **Dina** is the only woman, but she has more authority than the two men in her group. It is clear she is the person the visitor needs to talk to. Does difference in gender make it more or less easy to relate to other people?

#### D) Did you write about spoken language?

The characters speak to each other in English. This is a foreign language for both of them. Perhaps this has an equalising effect. At the same time there are differences in the way they use English. **Tawfiq's** English is very formal and polite ('I wonder if you could be so kind to help ...'). He also talks about things that are outside Dina's experience (cultural centres, Arab culture, ceremonial orchestra). What effect might Tawfiq's language and vocabulary have on Dina's impressions of him? **Dina's** English is more direct. She uses a

# Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters



lot of negatives in response to his question ('no Arab Centre', 'not culture, not Israeli culture, not Arab ...no culture at all'), emphasised by the waving of her hand. Maybe this language seems rather rude and dismissive to Tawfiq.

## E) Did you write about the character's relationship to the place of encounter?

**Tawfiq** is lost and puzzled. Dina's appearance and behaviour as well as her words might give him clues about the kind of place this is. **Dina**, on the other hand, is on her home territory. This group of musicians in their smart and foreign uniforms must seem very out of place to her in her home environment. She and her friends give the impression that their home town is boring. Maybe the visitors bring some interest to their rather dull lives.

## F) Your ideas?

Did you think of any other factors that may have influenced each character's experience of the encounter and their views of the other person?