

# Relating Cross-Cultural Competence to Language Proficiency and Regional Expertise



DoD Symposium

The Role of Cross-Cultural Competence in Organizational and Mission Success

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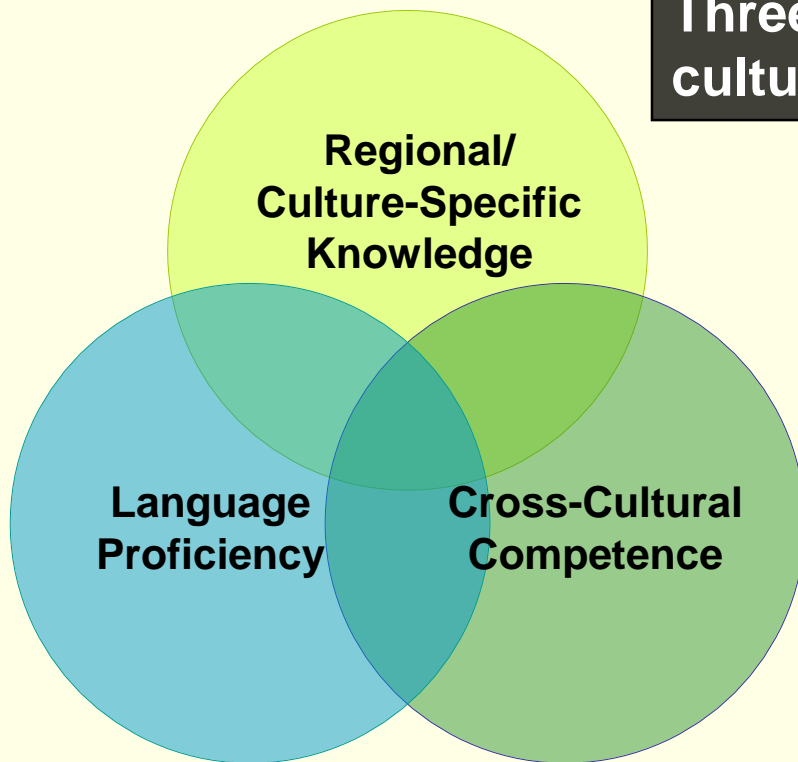
U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences  
Arlington, Virginia (Basic Research)



# The Cultural Capability Triad



Three components combine to provide cultural capability:

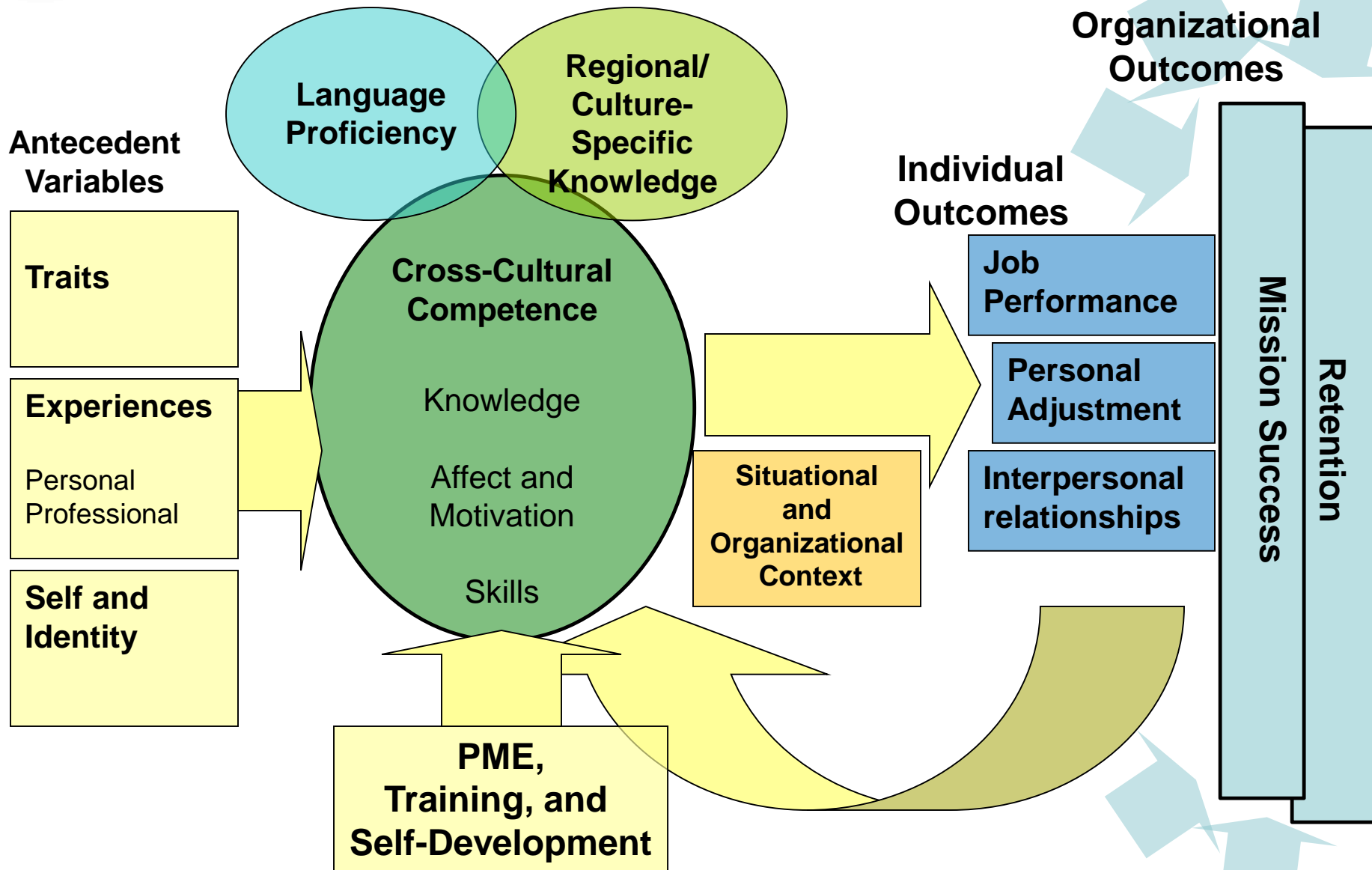


- Regional/culture-specific knowledge and language provide depth for *specific* cultures.
- Cross-cultural competence is *culture-general*:  
i.e., provides the foundation and breadth to quickly learn about and adapt to *any* culture.

Different roles and functions require these components in differing degrees.



# A General Framework for Cross-Cultural Competence





# Cross-Cultural Competence and Intercultural Outcomes

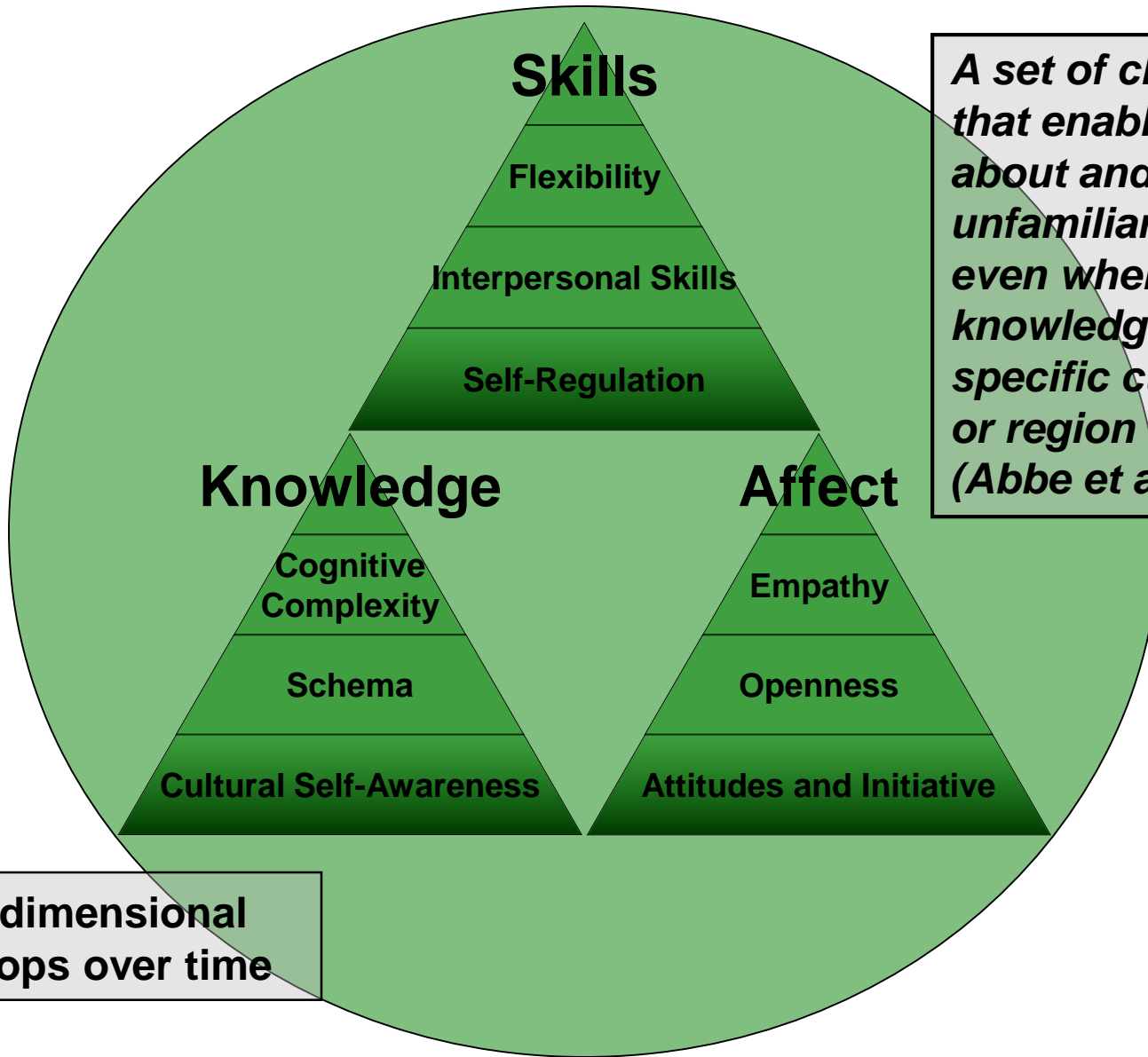


The goal is to make military personnel more effective.

- Research has shown culture-general characteristics contribute more to effective outcomes than do culture-specific variables.
- Attitudes and skills are particularly important.
  - Non-ethnocentrism
  - Openness
  - Flexibility
  - Interpersonal skills
- Though distinctly culture-general, these characteristics have complementary relationships with culture-specific capabilities.
  - Interdependence in development
  - Interdependence in application



# Conceptualizing Cross-Cultural Competence

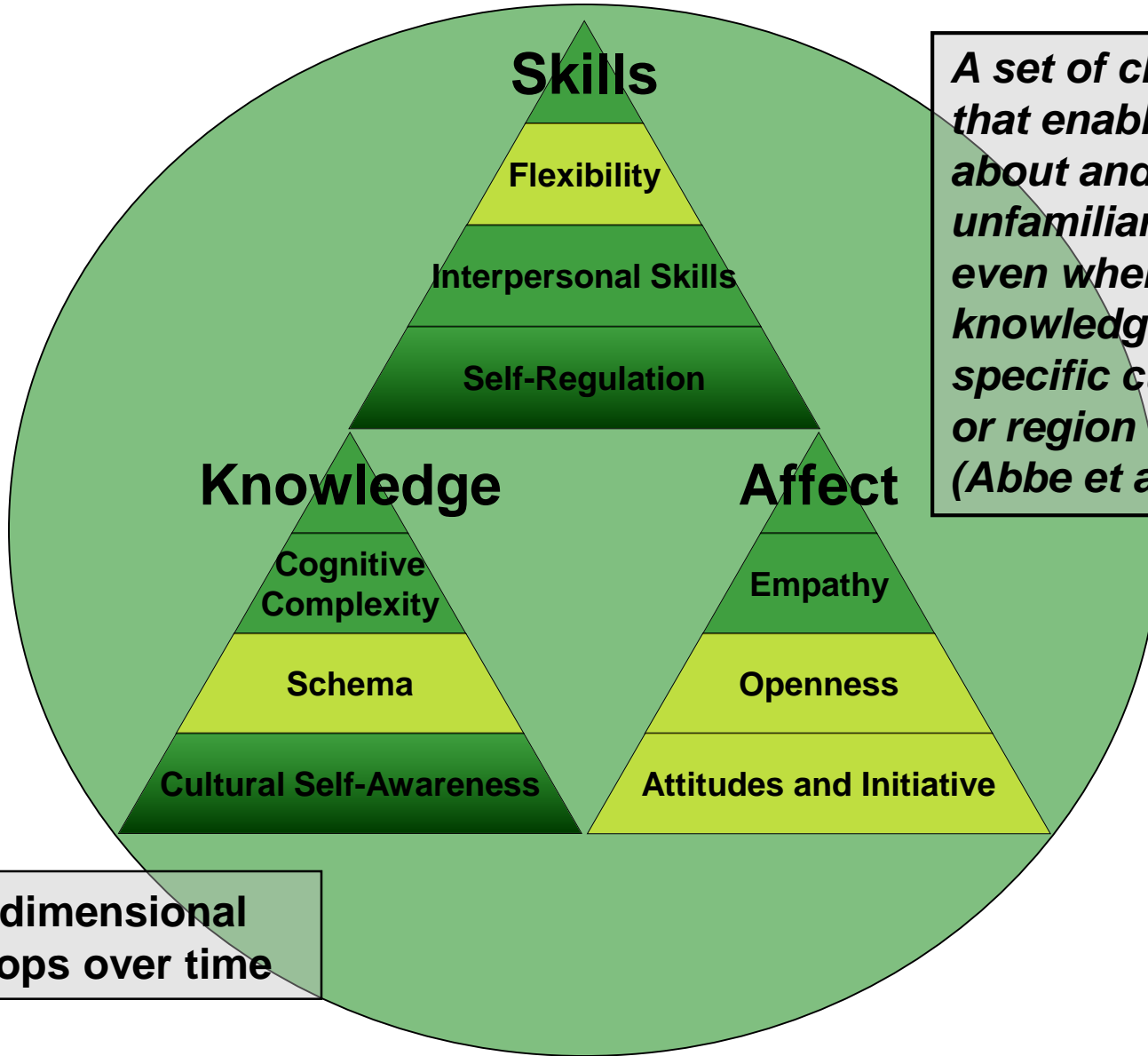


*A set of characteristics that enables learning about and adapting to unfamiliar cultures, even when in-depth knowledge of the specific culture or region is lacking (Abbe et al., 2007)*

- Multi-dimensional
- Develops over time



# Conceptualizing Cross-Cultural Competence



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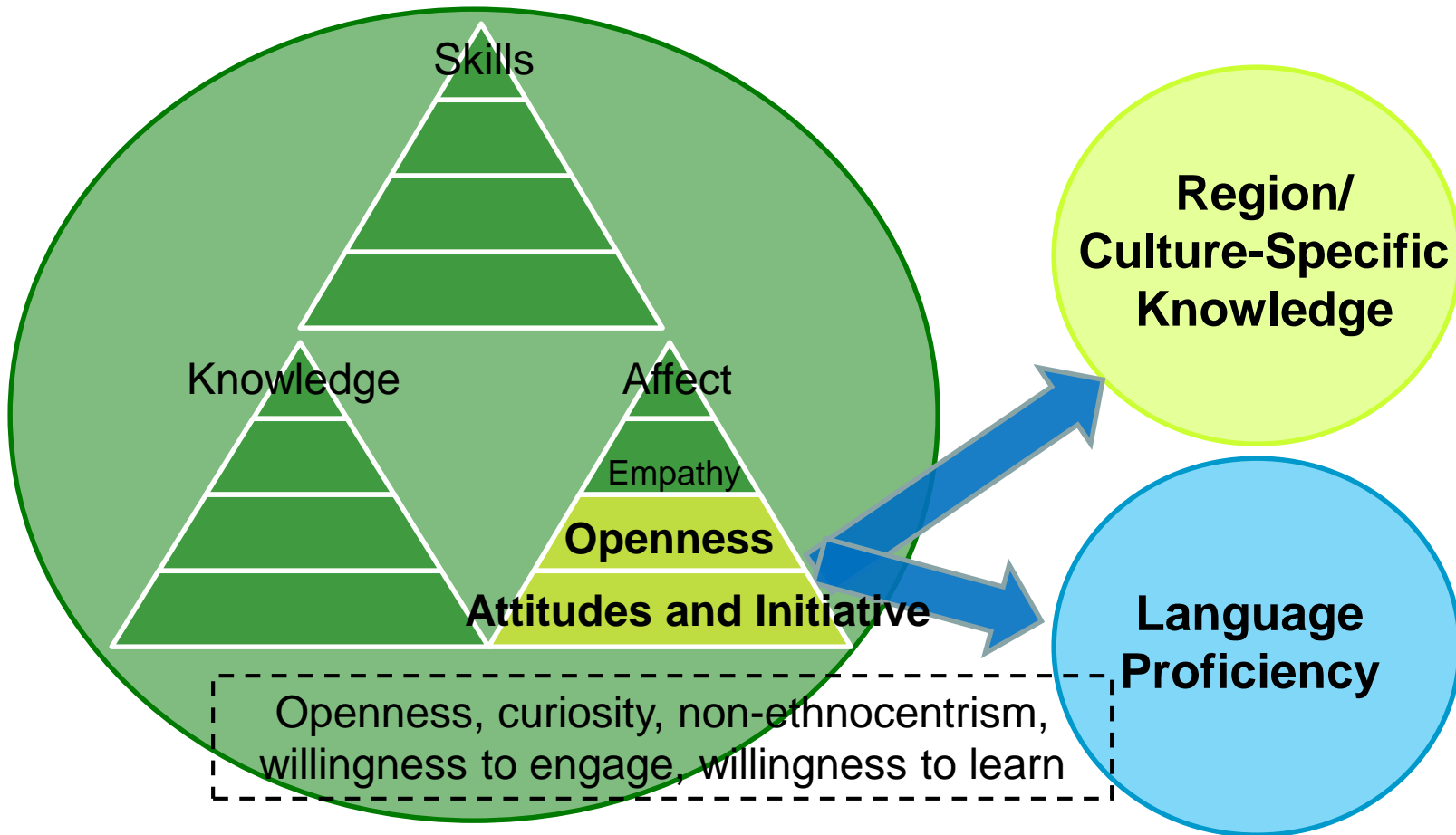
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# Affect and Motivation

Developing culture-specific capabilities depends on culture-general attitudes.

Affect serves as a gateway for cultural and foreign language learning.



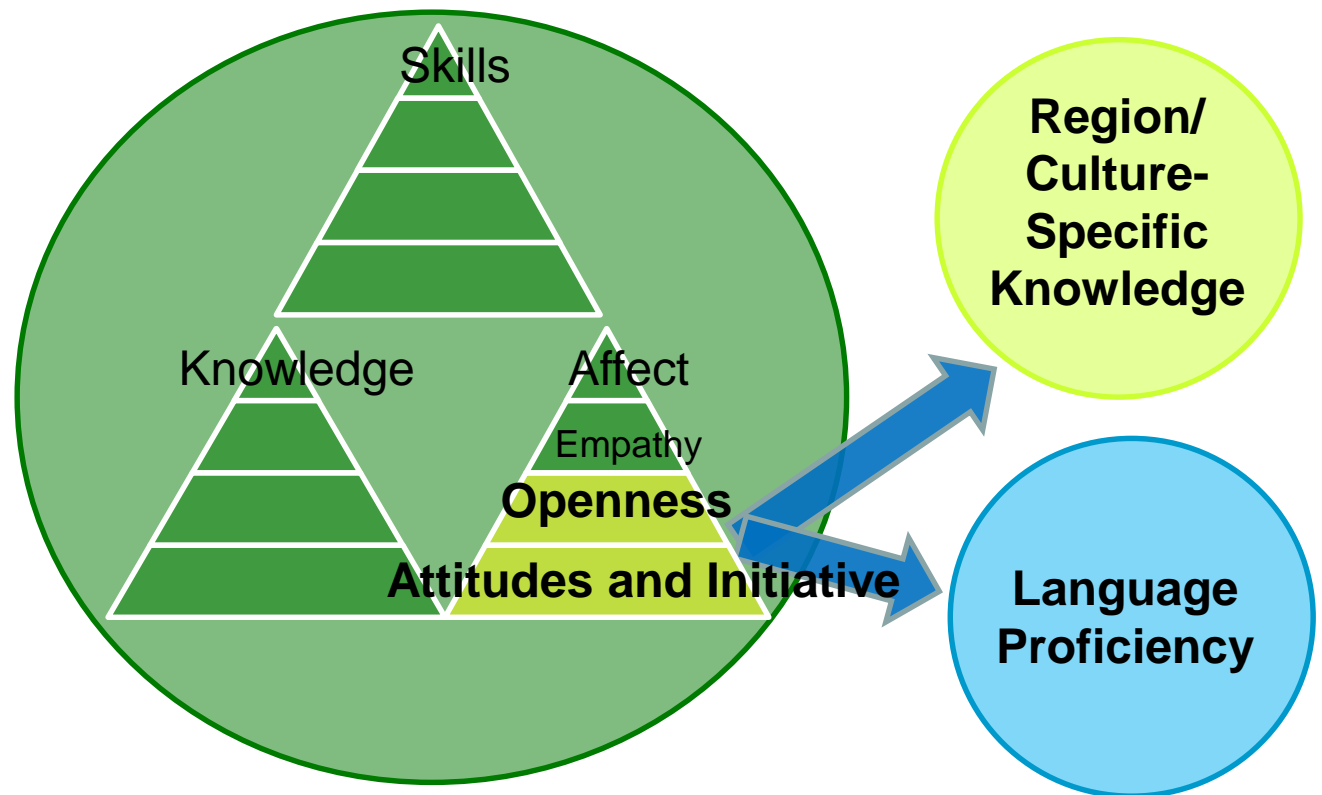


# Affect and Motivation



09L Spc Natasha Ostienava

Affect and motivation are not static. Development can be influenced through experiential learning.







# Knowledge and Cognition

Cultural understanding can be enhanced by developing both culture-specific and culture-general knowledge..



**Region/  
Culture-  
Specific  
Knowledge**

- ← Experiences that are culture-specific and concrete can be used to generate general knowledge.
- General frameworks guide learning about unfamiliar cultures.



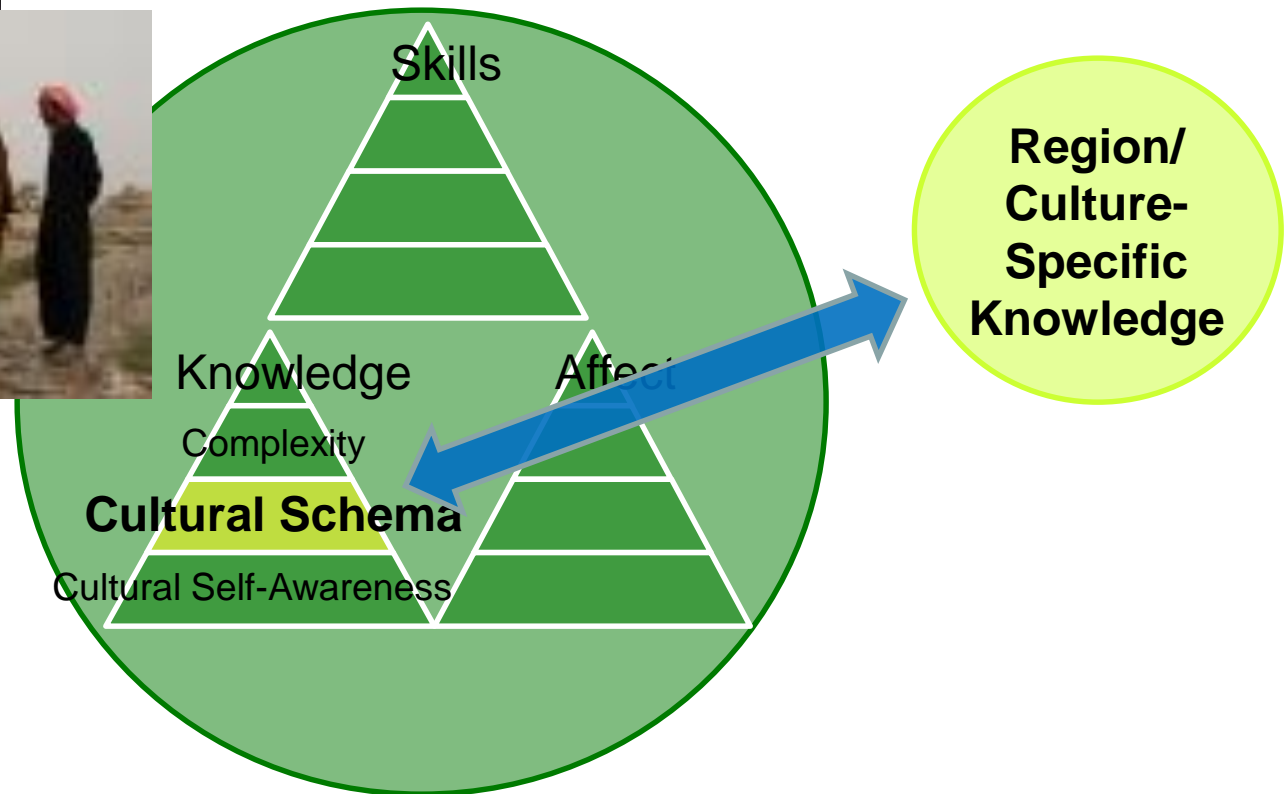
# Knowledge and Cognition



SOF Soldiers reported using general cultural knowledge and interpersonal skills to navigate unfamiliar communities and learn the local culture.



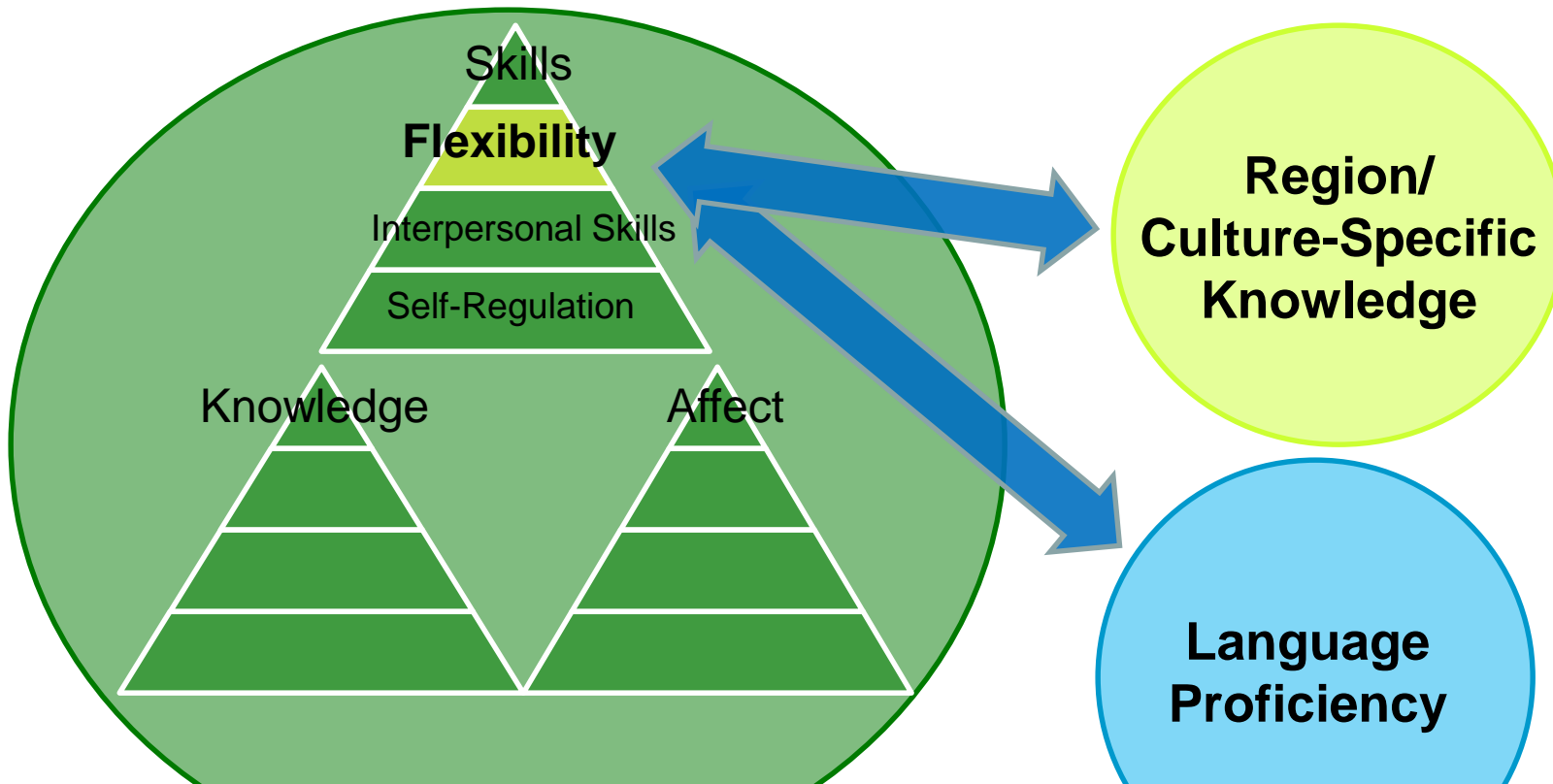
Civil Affairs in Iraq





# Skills

Learning and using culture-specific capabilities depends on cultural flexibility – adapting in response to situational cues.



Knowing multiple cultures or languages also contributes to flexibility – expands one's behavioral repertoire.



# Skills

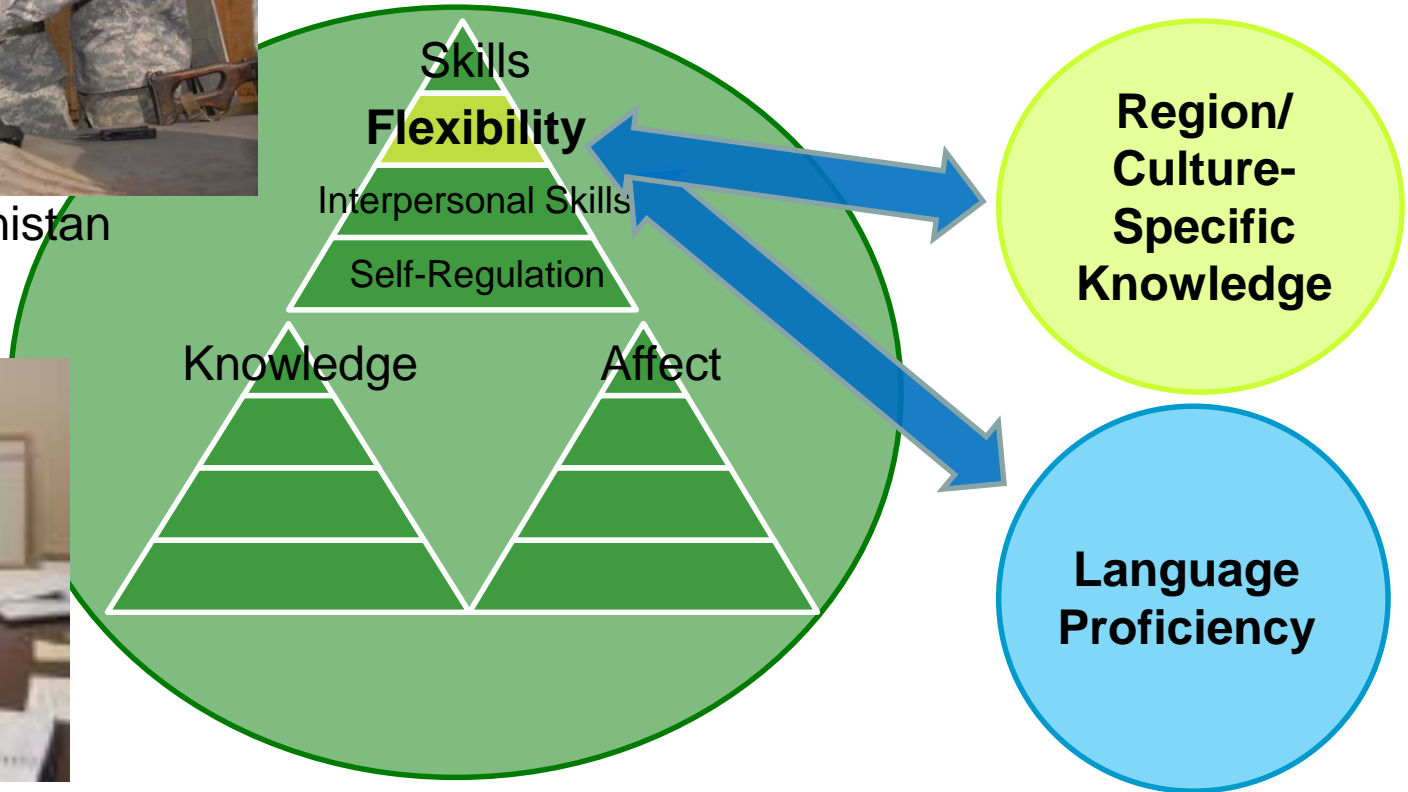


Advisors in Afghanistan

Adaptability depends on the ability and willingness to switch cultural lenses, but also requires knowing which lenses apply.



Intel Analysts





# Levels of Cross-Cultural Competence



As with other domains of expertise, levels of intercultural development can be identified.

These levels are related to, but distinguishable from, language proficiency and regional knowledge. Different capabilities develop at different rates.

	<b>Level of Cross-Cultural Competence</b>	<b>Be</b> (Attitudes/ Affect)	<b>Know</b> (Knowledge/ Cognition)	<b>Do</b> (Behavior / Skills)
1	Novice	*		
2	Tactician		*	
3	Operator			*
4	Generalist			

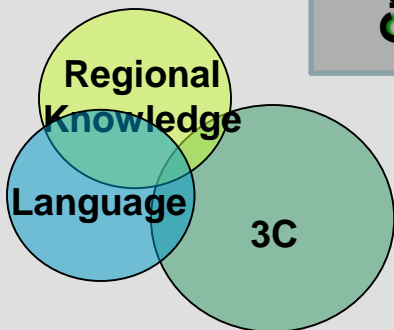
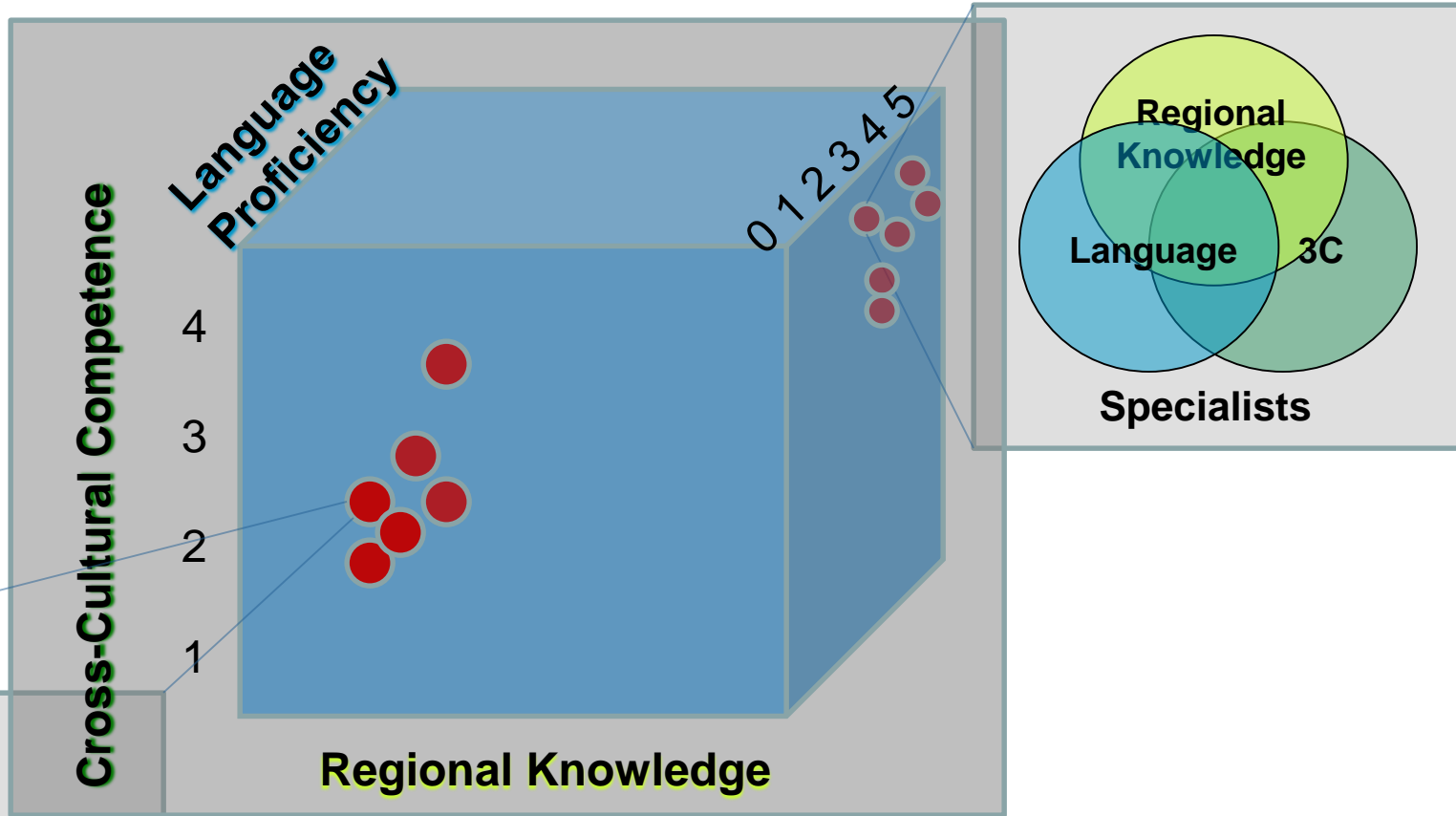


# Levels of Cross-Cultural Competence

Level of Cross-Cultural Competence		Be (Affect/Attitudes) e.g.:	Know (Knowledge/Cognition) e.g.:	Do (Behavior /Skills) e.g.:
1	Novice	Little interest in other cultures, ethnocentric attitudes	Sparse schema; holds stereotypes; generally unaware of own cultural lenses	Basic communication skills; can apply skills under low stress, low cultural distance
2	Tactician	Willing to engage when relevant to mission; non-ethnocentric; unstable efficacy beliefs	Cultural awareness; basic understanding of cultural difference	Regulates own reactions; able to communicate and exert interpersonal influence
3	Operator	Willing to engage; receptive to cultural learning ; intercultural efficacy appropriate to skill level	Culturally self-aware; rich cultural schema; can identify cultural impact in specific situations	Switches cultural lenses with effort; extensive repertoire of behaviors and influence tactics
4	Generalist	Open to cultural learning; engages in empathy when appropriate; high intercultural efficacy	Complex schema; readily updates with new knowledge; generalizes from culture-specific experiences	Switches cultural lenses and behaviors without conscious effort; able to anticipate behavior, lead across cultures



# Developing Cultural Capability



**The specific mix of capabilities will depend on the mission, job function, and/or role.**

**General Purpose Forces**



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