**Learning Outcome: Explain, using examples, emic and etic concepts**

The terms etic and emic originate in linguistics (Pike). Linguistics studies both universal sounds common to all languages as well as sounds unique to one language. When applied to social sciences like psychology, it highlights differences in approach between research that aims to uncover what is common to all humans and studies that investigate what is unique to one culture.

**Etic concepts**

Etic (think of the t in etic as meaning together)

Etic research compares psychological phenomena across cultures to find out what could be universal in human behaviour. The purpose of research is to test theories developed in one particular culture (usually western), across other cultures to investigate whether phenomena are culture-specific or universal. This is achieved by carrying out cross cultural research.

Examples:

* Kashima and Triandis (1986)-American (self serving bias) and Japanese (modesty bias)
* Berry (1967)
* Bond and Smith (1996)

All of these studies found differences between cultures.

**Universal behaviours**

* Ekman (in the 1960’s)-facial expressions of 6 emotions (more have since been added) are universal. Anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness and surprise.

**Problems with the ‘Etic’ view**

* Smith & Bond (1998) found that Psychology is Ethnocentric- the assumption that one’s own culture is the standard by which other cultures are assessed. E.g. research carried out in the USA can be applied in Japan.
* They reviewed textbooks and found that only 10% of the world is sampled in psychological research.

**Emic Concepts**

Emic research studies one culture alone to understand culture specific behaviour. Researchers attempt to study behaviour through the eyes of the people that live in that culture. There is no interest in cross cultural comparisons. Emic studies do not import theoretical frameworks from one culture to another. Instead the way the phenomena is linked to the culture (structure) and the meaning it has to this particular culture is emphasized (context).

This approach is characterized by cultural relativism-the assumption that all cultures are equally worthy of study.

Examples:

* Bartlett 1932-Mentioned the extraordinary ability of Swazi herdsmen to recall individual characteristics of their cattle. He explained that the Swazi culture revolves around possession and care of cattle and it is important for people to recognize their animals because it is part of their fortune.
* Yap (1967) Culture bound syndromes- A CBS is a culturally specific psychological disorder that can only be fully understood within a specific cultural context. For example Koro or taijin kyofoshu. See the link below for more information:
* <http://psychology.wikia.com/wiki/Culture_bound_syndromes>