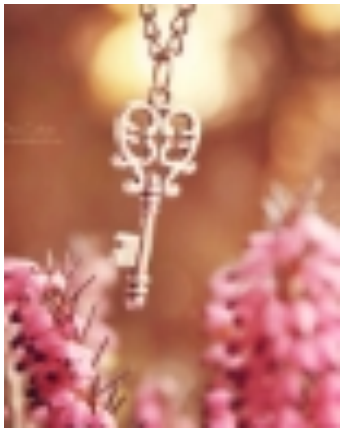
Interactive Methods for Teaching about Cultural Differences



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The 3 Keys to Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence refers to a set of cognitive (thinking), affective (feeling), and behavioral (doing) skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.

The three Keys to Intercultural Competence are:

Curiosity: Exploring what we don't understand

Cognitive complexity: Seeing through many perspectives

Empathy: Understanding and adapting to different cultural styles

Three Core Intercultural Competencies

Cognitive Complexity

Cognitive complexity refers to the characteristic that indicates to what degree a person has complex constructs for making meaning and interpreting an event. Someone who is cognitively complex usually sees more degrees of subtle differences than a person who has more limited constructs.

> Example: A wine connoisseur sees many more subtleties in a glass of wine than someone who knows only the distinction between red and white wines.

Empathy or Perspective Taking

Empathy refers to the skill of being able to take another person's perspective, and understand without judgment, that person's frame of reference. (It is not "walking in their shoes" with your own perspective, merely changing position.)

> Example: The American young man carefully thanked his father for his generosity in taking him and his Pakistani friend out for dinner. The father accepted the thank you, smiling and saying "My pleasure." Later that evening, the Pakistani asked: "How could you insult your father like that?"
> Empathy might have led him to understand that in Pakistan it sometimes seen as distancing , not endearing, to thank a near relative for generosity but in the U.S., this is often considered a responsible acknowledgment.

Curiosity

Curiosity refers to the attitude of "unbridled inquisitiveness," or " sense of wonder" that accompanies the experience of recognizing that we have reached the limits of our comprehension. We can flee the situation either physically or psychologically, or become culturally curious.

> Example: A visitor to Beijing was surprised at the large number of dishes ordered at dinner for a small number of guests, especially when the guests barely nibbled at them. A large amount of food was left over, and the visitor felt they should at least get takeout bags so as not to waste food. The visitor has many choices: he can complain that the food should be saved, offer to take it back to his home, or note that next time, he should suggest that fewer dishes should be ordered.
> Or—he can wait for a private moment and ask about dinner customs in China.

Activities
For Inspiring Cognitive Complexity, Empathy, and Curiosity

1. PhotoVoice (for teaching empathy and curiosity)

Photo Voice began as a method for doing action research in communities where there was a commitment to hearing from those who often were not heard or seen. Through a carefully designed, step-by-step process, PhotoVoice gathers data in a familiar way, through the use of a camera or cellphone to record places, persons and processes in order to raise awareness, advocate for change, and engage in dialogue about significant aspects of community interaction. It can be readily adapted to engage learners in intercultural team projects.

http://www.pwhce.ca/photovoice/pdf/Photovoice_Manual

This site contains a free practical guide for using PhotoVoice, for "sharing pictures, telling stories, and changing communities." It contains complete and thorough guidelines for using PhotoVoice to do community research and give voice to concerns that otherwise may not be seen. From the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence.

http://www.photovoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PV_Manual.pdf

This site offers a free manual from the co-founders of the PhotoVoice community, Anne Blackman and Tiffany Fairey.

2. Teaching Code-Switching (For teaching cognitive complexity, curiosity, empathy)

Andrew Molinsky, a professor at Brandeis University and author of *Global Dexterity*, has developed an in-class activity that is readily adaptable to preparing students for study abroad, or for international students arriving in the US. Entitled "Switching Cultural Codes," this article describes the process used for providing an in-depth experience for learning how to adapt to other cultures.

http://www.brandeis.net/globalbrandeis/documents/mar2009_ibsnews.pdf

3. Transformative Culture-Learning Journal (For teaching cognitive complexity, curiosity and empathy)

While many intercultural learning opportunities suggest journal writing, this journaling is different. It requires the students to record an incident, analyze the incident, interview someone about the culture about the incident, and then rewrite the journal from a new perspective. (In the packet)

4. The Intercultural Notebook (For teaching curiosity)

As a classroom assignment, this notebook asks the students at the beginning of the term to begin to collect material from the Internet and other media that illustrates the course concepts. Each case study requires the application of two or three ideas. One primary benefit of this notebook is that from the first day of class, students start viewing the world through intercultural eyes, in order to find the case studies. (In the packet)

5. A Life Without Questions, Please (for teaching curiosity, empathy)

This activity was designed by Nagesh Rao, president of the Mudra Institute of Communication in Ahmedabad, India, to provide practice in code-switching. It teaches how to be curious in non-intrusive ways. (In the packet)

6. Fascinating and Fun Framegames

This packet includes several framegames, for your training pleasure. Framegames can be used to teach a variety of topics—you get to choose, since they are "empty frames" that you can fill as you need them. Included here are Match and Mix, R.S.V.P., and "35".
If you would enjoy more framegames, see <thiagi.com> .

Transformative Culture-Learning Journal

Helping participants reflect on their experiences during the time those experiences are taking place has proven to be supportive of increased development of intercultural competence. (Vande Berg, M., R. M. Paige, and K. H. Lou, eds. *Student Learning Abroad: What Our Students Are Learning, What They're Not, and What We Can Do About It*. Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2012.)

Psychologist George Kelly suggests that "A person can be a witness to a tremendous parade of episodes and yet, if he fails to keep making something out of them…he gains little in the way of experience from having been around when they happened. It is not what happens around him that makes a man experienced; it is the successive construing and reconstruing of what happens, as it happens, that enriches the experience of his life. (p. 73, 1963). (From *A theory of personality: The psychology of personal constructs.* New York: Norton.)

In order to facilitate learning, rather than merely being in the vicinity of events, this journal stimulates curiosity, empathy, and cognitive complexity, the core characteristics of intercultural competence.

The guided journal process asks the traveler to write four entries for each incident.

1. The first entry should describe an incident that occurred either between the traveler and the host culture, or between two members of another culture, without judgment.

2. The participant should then analyze what happened in the interaction for the second entry, speculating on the reasons why the individuals did what they did and said what they said.

3. After locating a trusted cultural mentor, the traveler should discuss the incident and develop a more culturally informed perspective. (Ideally, this might involve more than one cultural mentor.) The third entry should report on the results of this discussion.

4. The final entry should revisit the previous three, developing a tentative perspective on the incident that includes the perspective of the host culture.

5. Optional: the journal writer can also be asked to do a Description, Interpretation and Evaluation analysis of the incident. See the guidelines at www.intercultural.org/die.php

THE INTERCULTURAL NOTEBOOK

Suggested Length: Length may be adapted to the context by the number of cases required.

The Task: Collect eight intercultural incidents from the internet or clippings from magazines or newspapers which illustrate primary concepts discussed in class. (Two or three of them may be incidents you write up as case studies.) This project will be on-going throughout the semester. It will be too difficult to find useful items all at once, at the last minute. Pace yourself so that you enjoy the process.

The clippings you collect should provide you with an opportunity to analyze the situations described in terms of course concepts such as:

- cultural value differences
- misunderstandings which have occurred as a result of different world views
- stereotypes which have caused serious consequences
- conflicts which could be resolved through intercultural skills
- creative uses of cultural differences to enhance a particular context or situation
- communication style differences that have affected a situation
- ethnic identity development and cultural marginality
- patterns of acculturation, or culture shock
- developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity

The Goals of this assignment include demonstrating your ability to:

- understand the impact of culture in everyday contexts
- analyze intercultural situations using theory and concepts from the class
- develop resolutions and insights about intercultural issues

The Method: Please include a copy of the internet material, article or clipping, preferably a clean photocopy, with the relevant sections highlighted. Attach to it a 2-3 page double-spaced analysis using ideas from the course and readings.

It is very important that you first put a title of the topic you will be discussing (e.g. race) followed by a complete definition of the topic (as we have discussed in class, or as you find in the texts), then mention the culture that this article is about and how that is important to your topic, and then fully discuss what the clipping has to do with this topic. Do not retell what is in the article. Your task is to relate the article to what we have learned in this course. Each article should have at least three or four references to the texts, and the work from class.

Please enclose your eight clippings/case studies in a plain ordinary file folder with your name written on the tab of the folder.

The Evaluation: Your efforts will be reviewed with attention to:

- the complexity and sophistication of your analysis
- the selection of appropriately complex incidents
- your use of a wide range of concepts, e.g., each incident should ideally illustrate two or three ideas. Among the eight cases, there should be a wide range of concepts applied.

  For instance, all cases should not be focused on culture shock, or racism, or any one or two areas.

A Life Without Questions or No Questions, Please

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to explore how and what we learn when we do not ask questions. What happens to listening, power and relationship-building with and without questions? The activity does not suggest that we stop asking questions, but to understand the pros and cons of asking/not asking questions.

Learning Outcomes:
Skills – Learning how to seek information, share self, and interact with others without asking questions.

Concepts – Ways of knowing, direct versus indirect communication styles, agenda-setting and power

Time: 60 minutes (5 minutes for set-up, 10 minutes for playing, 20 to 60 minutes for debrief)

Players: No fewer than 10 and no upper limit. The players will work in pairs. If there is an odd number of participants, one group can work in three.

Materials: A bell to call time and a black board/flip chart to write down the answers.

Room Arrangement: Enough space for the participants to work in pairs.

Flow of the Activity:

Step 1: Ask one person in the pair to play the role of a physician and the other the role of a patient. Once they choose, ask the patient to think of an illness that brought the person to this physician who is a general practitioner or internal medicine doctor. Tell the physician that s/he has to diagnose the patient's illness and prescribe medication. S/he can talk to the patient (no drawings allowed), but is not allowed to ask a single question. Let the participants talk for about five minutes; walk around and observe strategies used to communicate.

Step 2: Ring the bell and stop the interaction. Switch the roles. Ask the person who played the patient's role to take on the role of an architect. Tell the person who played the physician role to be a client who is meeting the architect to design a new home. The architect talks to her client to design the home, but is not allowed to ask a single question. After five minutes, ring the bell to stop the communication.

Debrief:

Phase 1: Feelings

- Using one word, describe what it felt like to be talking to each other without asking questions.
- If most of the responses are negative (awkward, incompetent, etc.), ask if anyone felt positive talking to each other without questions.

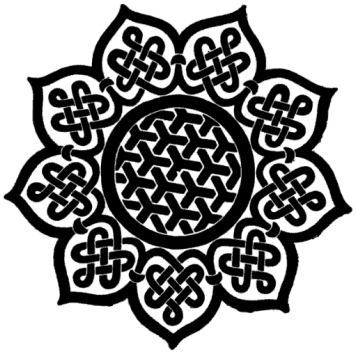
Phase 2: Key learning - Put the participants in groups of four and have them answer the following.

- Why do we ask questions?
- What are the strengths and limits of asking questions?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of not asking questions?

Ask each group to put their answers on a flip-chart and share with the class. Each group takes around five minutes.

Phase 3: Relationship to the real world

- How does this activity reflect what happens in the real world?
- What impact does our asking questions have on intercultural interactions?



What is a Framegame?

Lecture games are a special kind o*f framegrame*.

A *framegame* is a generic game shell or a template. It allows you to plug in new content and create a new game—instantaneously!

All games have some procedures and some content; a framegame is deliberately designed so that you can unload the content from the procedure and load new content.

Why use a Framegame?

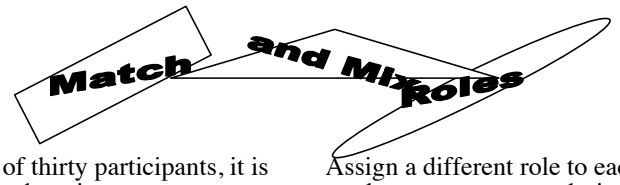
- **New content.** Existing games rarely provide the exact content you need. With the framegame approach, you can plug in your unique content.

- **Guarantee.** Designing a new game is unpredictable. With a framegame, you have a field-tested procedure and you can be certain of the outcomes.

- **Involvement.** Participants can load their own content into a framegame. This provides them with an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of the content.

- **Learning Task.** Most training objectives can be classified into such specific types as concepts or procedures. Several framegames exist for each type of learning and can be chosen to ensure the right teaching technique will be used.

From: Thiagarajan, Sivasailam. *Lecture Games: From Passive Presentations to Interactive Instruction*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press in association with Workshops by Thiagi. 1994.



If you have a group of thirty participants, it is a good idea to divide them into teams to ensure increased participation. Instead of organizing static teams, make it interesting and prevent premature groupthink by rearranging them occasionally.

Assume that you are facilitating a group of thirty participants who are brainstorming ideas for increasing sales in your organization. Here is a technique for profiting from convergent and divergent thinking:

Give each participant a 3" by 5" index card with one of the letter-number combinations below. Ask participants to find the other participants with the same *letter* and form themselves into five teams of six members, as shown:

A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5, B6
C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6
D1, D2, D3, D4, D5, D6
E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6

Assign a different role to each team (*example:* marketers, customers, designers, producers, and engineers) and ask team members to brainstorm ideas from the perspective of that role.

After a suitable amount of time, stop the activity and ask the participants to find others with the same *number* and form themselves into six teams of five members, as shown:

A1, B1, C1, D1, E1
A2, B2, C2, D2, E2
A3, B3, C3, D3, E3
A4, B4, C4, D4, E4
A5, B5, C5, D5, E5
A6, B6, C6, D6, E6

Point out that each team now represents five different roles. Ask the teams to continue brainstorming, with its members maintaining their individual role perspectives. Encourage the participants to "cheat" by recycling ideas from the earlier session.

EXAMPLE

TOPIC: Culture shock during study abroad in Ecuador

Round One:
Four Teams: Team A, B, C, D
Team A: What are the typical psychological symptoms of culture shock?
Team B: What are the typical physical symptoms of culture shock?
Team C: What are the causes of culture shock?
Team D: What specific cultural differences in Ecuador may contribute to culture shock?

Round Two: Team 1, 2, 3, 4
All Teams: Each team considers possible strategies for managing culture shock, and develops a culture shock action plan.

R.S.V.P.

Possible Uses: Way to elicit problems or solutions in a group with common concerns or expertise

Participants: Any number of small groups formed into circles (5 persons in each is a workable number)

Time: 20-40 minutes

Materials: Index cards (4 per participant), letter envelopes (1 each)

Rules:

1. Pass out blank envelope and 4 index cards to each person.
2. Form groups of five. The groups should be of equal size.
3. Say, "On the front of the envelope, write a question or pose a problem for which you want an answer or solution." (Of course, the question or problem should lie within the training topic selected—the content of this Framegame.)
4. Instruct them to pass the envelopes to the right.
5. Say, "Read the envelope, write an answer or solution on an index card, and insert the card in the envelope."
6. Instruct them to pass envelopes to the right again and without looking at the card in the envelope, repeat step 5.
7. Continue the process (Steps 5 and 6) for several turns.
8. When each person gets his or her own envelope back, they can begin reviewing the contents.
9. Ask them to read and prioritize the cards.
10. Ask them to take turns sharing favorite responses, adding new thoughts, posing additional questions.

From H. Hutson and D. Dormant, "The Name of the Game Is Frame." *Training*, April 1981, pp. 75-76.

"Thirty-Five"

One of Thiagi's favorite games is "35." As he described it, given a 50-person class of managers:

The principle behind this game is that people learn best when *they* create the content. Give each class member an index card, and tell each to write one strategy or one suggestion on a task relevant to the topic you are training. Give them an example.

Step one: Everyone writes a strategy on an index card.

Step two: Tell everybody to look at the card, to note how brilliant the idea is, then emotionally detach themselves from the idea because they are going to send the idea out into the real world, and let the best idea rise to the top and the worst sink to the bottom.

Step three: Everybody turns the card face down and gives it to somebody. They keep doing this, rapidly, until all of the cards are mixed up.

Step four: Stop the exchange and have people find a partner. These pairs of people compare the two ideas on their cards and distribute 7 points between these two ideas to reflect how practical and useful the idea is. We do this in a matter of 30-45 seconds. Put the point values on the back of the cards. Swap cards as before. Stop and form partners again. So we compare two ideas at a time for a total of five different times. At the end of the fifth round, each card will have five numbers on the back.

Have class members add up the numbers and start counting down from 35 -- the maximum score an idea can get. You keep counting down until someone has a card with that number of points, say 23 -- and that's the top idea generated and evaluated by the group of people. Keep counting down until you have identified the top 10 ideas, and briefly comment on all of the ideas.

This activity lasts for about 20 minutes. You can use this as an icebreaker, as a closer activity, any time during your workshop.

Based on an activity from www.thiagi.com

Selected Training Activity Books

Fowler, S. M., and M. G. Mumford, eds. *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods*. Vol. 1. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1995.

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Kappler Mikk, B., A. D. Cohen, and R. M. Paige. *Maximizing Study Abroad: An Instructional Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use.* Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, 2009.

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Paige, R. M., A. D. Cohen, B. Kappler, J. C. Chi, and J. P. Lassegard. *Maximizing Study Abroad: A Students' Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use.* Minneapolis, MN: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition, University of Minnesota, 2002.

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