

Role Plays for Challenging Discussions

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Bennett & Bennett¹

Describe, Interpret, Evaluate

Or, for a friendlier acronym:
Describe, Analyze, Evaluate (D.A.E.)

¹ Landis, D., Bennett, J. M., & Bennett, M. J. (2004). Handbook of intercultural training. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Photo

- dialogues

REACTIONS

How did you feel?

- Attacked
- Need to defend (even if agree)/defensive
- Caught off guard
- unsure how to reply
- Awkward/uncomfortable

REACTIONS

How did you feel?

- Flustered
- Would rather avoid subject/withdrawn
- Don't want to offend/timid
- Felt like a spokesperson or press secretary
- Found it refreshing/engaged

Today's sample

- Family & Friendship – Americans superficial with friends? Deep commitment to family?
- US military intervention
- Energy consumption in US
- Gun violence and racism

What did you hear?

Today's sample

- Family & Friendship – Americans superficial with friends? Deep commitment to family?
- *“You know, some of my other friends don't really like the Americans who come here because they think they are superficial, not like real or true friends.”*

Today's sample

- US military intervention
- *“I think your government is hypocritical; they don't want to listen to anybody else and don't like to be criticized. They are always saying they are fighting against terror but they use drones and kill civilians too.”*

Have you had similar
experiences?

Share with the people next to you

Prepared for Communication?



Back to the photo . . .

Objective vs. Subjective descriptors

C

B

A

**Objective
sensory input**

**Subjective
interpretation**

**Awareness
of B**



When do we most need to enlist
track C?

Not with bewildering objects or
images, but when encountering
deeper communication differences
and value hierarchies.

Three mental tracks

A

*“There’s all
this racism
from your
past . . .*

B

*“Who is this
person to lecture
me about my
country’s past?
The nerve!”*

C

**“Wait a sec. I
wouldn’t talk
about their
country that way,
but maybe they
are just curious
and want to hear
my perspective.”**

Suspending Judgment/Shifting Perspective

- Suspending Judgment ≠ an absence of subjective interpretation (that would be impossible)
- Awareness of one's judgments and according them provisional status
- Good news is that sojourner has ability to foster this mental trait, especially with guidance.

Shifting Perspective

Perspective Shift often requires:

- a) speculation** (you're making guesses about the others' mindsets), which means you need
- b) inquiry** (maybe it's better to ask than guess),
and
- c) cultural knowledge** (reduces wrong assumptions –but only somewhat!)

Guiding Student Approaches to Dialogue and Inquiry

- Liberal education's mission of fostering the tools/skills to engage with difference and learn from it.
- Post-dialogue next steps: exploring response alternatives

Guiding Student Approaches to Dialogue and Inquiry

A) Discuss the range of ways students might respond to the kind of statements in these dialogues/encounters.

B) Which response options/approach would you advise students to take?

Response Options

- Defend
- Criticize/attack host culture on same or different issue
- *Ad hominem* jabs in anger/frustration
 - Deflect/change subject
 - Agree
- Inject humor (will sarcasm work?)

Better Response Options

Inquire – and listen

Inform

Distinguish between personal/complex experiences and perspectives versus generalities.

Power and Privilege

Deeper issues may underlie discussions

Are students (and are we):

- Even aware of this?
- Have the means to discuss?

If not, this underlies importance of inquiry and listening to foster the ability to see multiple perspectives and uncover deeper issues.

For lessons using Describe, Interpret,
Evaluate, see CIEE's *Tool Kit for
Teaching and Learning Abroad*

www.ciee.org