

Newsletter No. 7

Workshop in February

“Exercises, Games and Simulations to Activate Intercultural Competence”

Presenter: Tomoko Yoshida (Keio University)

Date: February 27th, 2021 9:00-12:15 (Zoom Meeting)

Abstract:

Culture influences the way we think and behave. In fact, much of what we think of as “common sense” is governed by culture. As a result, to communicate effectively in a foreign language we must understand the target culture. Unfortunately, most foreign language classes do not necessarily address this issue. In this three-hour-workshop, we will begin by learning a theoretical framework for planning a content-based language class on intercultural communication. Participants will then be given an opportunity to experience numerous exercises, games, and simulations that can be used in their own classrooms.



The number of participants: 41

1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- Starting the lecture with everyone drawing a flower was a simple, immediate and effective way to demonstrate how we all view the world differently. Last Christmas I talked with an American and Japanese and discovered how we all viewed Xmas dinner completely differently: Australians eat roast turkey, yet Americans have ham and Japanese KFC fried chicken. The high context/indirect communication versus low context/ direct communication discussion was particularly interesting. It does seem that nations with more diverse (especially ethnically) populations make more use of low context communication. Hence, as Japan becomes more so into the future, it might experience movement away from high-context communication.
- I found the activity in which we are supposed to change the arm in which we wear a bracelet or watch really powerful. It made me better understand how hard it is to change our perspectives even when we have no emotional attachments. I would like to learn more about the activities used to teach how to experience cultural shock and how to teach students to deal with them.

- The activity which is shown the image of something such as breakfast, flowers, and so on. I think it is very useful for teenagers because they tend to think that they think the same way, but they don't. Not only thinking about something, but also other things, too.
- "Common Sense Exercises"... By comparing your own common sense with those in other cultures, students should be able to experience cultural shock.



- "High Context and Low Context"... Speaking in high context is quite common for Japanese people, which often brings them misunderstanding with people from other cultures. Using the method of D.I.E., students will, hopefully, be able to learn to understand the situation objectively, and to avoid feeling offended towards the others.
- I like the activity to share the school culture. It is similar to regional culture such as local food, but much smaller. As I am an ICU alumna, I got excited to hear some familiar jargons that only we could understand. I expect that most people notice they are different from others with this activity, which would be a good start of ICC. This activity can be used in a writing class with peer reading activity. Thank you for introducing it.

2. What you learned from today's workshop

- I realized my own lessons occasionally touch on such issues, but that I should search for ways to better incorporate such non-verbal and cross-cultural communication learning tasks. As Tomoko Sensei suggested, I might try and get students in pairs to choose a country and investigate its unique ways of non-verbal communication, resulting in a presentation to the class. I am sure it would be an interesting and educational way that would benefit students communicative competency to interact with the world around them.
- I learned a lot from this workshop. Especially how simple things can such as expectations and beliefs can cause conflicts in communication and behaviors. I hope to be more open minded when others do things I don't expect and will work at avoid judging their behavior as wrong or weird.
- I learned that I need to be extra careful about the ways to introduce activities to raise awareness and trigger culture shock. Once when I did a simulation of a cocktail party, students were exhausted. 90 minutes was too short for following them up to recover.
- Culture-learning is very beneficial for students to live in 21st century since technology connects people and culture more rapidly than before. Language proficiency is not enough for them to be capable communicator to be part of global citizenship.
- There are four steps in the communication training:
 - 1 Awareness - Through a discussion, we will notice that "common sense" can not be shared by everyone,
 - 2 Knowledge - We know that background information of cultural differences.
 - 3 Emotions - There are emotional aspect in intercultural communication
 - 4 Skills - Teachers can have students experience foreign cultures through games.

3. Questions & Answers

Q (1): I often run into prejudice or resistance concerning teaching IC or CC as the “academics” see it as “games” and “entertainment.” How can we make them see the efficacy/necessity of such, especially in preparation for going abroad?

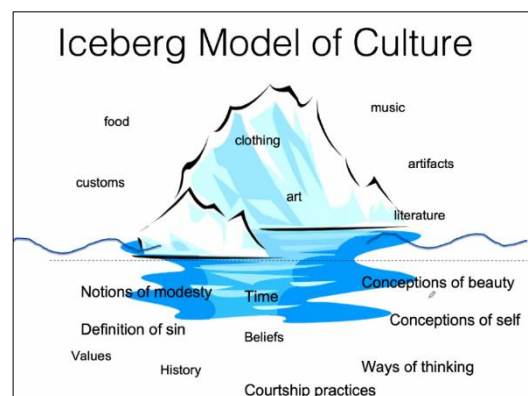
This is such a difficult question since it is an enormous challenge getting scholars to understand and appreciate the relevance of a different field. When trying to convince others about the importance of IC training for study abroad students, I do one of two things. If I am not part of the committee deciding on what the students will study, then I usually weave it into the classes they ask me to teach (e.g., Academic Writing, Presentation, Reading). The other strategy is to offer to do an IC workshop for the group responsible for organizing the student exchange. Once they learn about the importance of Awareness, Knowledge, Emotions, and Skills, they might be more understanding. Another option is to present them with studies that have documented the tremendous cost on companies when their employees are unable to complete their assignments and must return prematurely as well as the effectiveness of intercultural communication training (See Landis & Bhawuk, 2020; McNulty & Tharenou, 2004).

Q (2): I would like to know how to do self-reflection after activities.

Thank you for this wonderful question! With activities, games, and simulations, the true learning occurs afterwards and so it is critical that they take the time to reflect on what they have learned.

There are many ways I do this. For example, if I have an extra 15 minutes left at the end of class, I will ask students to stand in a circle and think of what they learned from that activity. Then,

I will throw a ball (I always carry one around) to a student who looks ready to share and ask him/her what he/she learned. When that person is done, he/she throws the ball to the next person. This continues until the bell rings. In addition to this, for homework, I often ask my students to write a reflection paper about what they learned in class. When teaching face-to-face, my students have an attendance sheet which also serves as their name plate. At the beginning of class, they must pick up the attendance sheet from me and use it as a name plate during class. At the end of class, I give them five minutes to write what they found most interesting. (I learned this from Jeff Fryckman who was at our workshop.)



Q (3): I have played Barnga once. I know it is frustrating because players cannot make an oral communication during the game. However, I believe that experiencing the frustration caused by cultural differences is the essence of the game, so teachers should explain that after the game. What do you think?

I think this is true for any intercultural simulation. The goal is to make the participants frustrated! So yes, addressing this in the debriefing is of vital importance. Ideally, you should have plenty of time –30 minutes to an hour— for debriefing. If you do not have that much time in class, you can have them do the reflection after class through an essay. In terms of simulations, however, I prefer Rafa Rafa, Bafa Bafa, or Ecotonos over BARNGA.

Q (4): I want to try the activities to my students. I think even high school students could realize the difference. My students often misunderstand each other via SNS app. I want them to realize their "common sense" could be different with others. It happens not only foreigners, but also other Japanese. What do you think?

Thank you so much for this! Yes, I agree that high school students should have no problem understanding this and I also feel that there are so many differences within Japan. In intercultural communication training, we often focus too much on national culture when, in fact, there are so many differences within Japan. You might be interested in reading an article I wrote with my colleagues (Yoshida, Yashiro & Suzuki, 2013).

Q (5): I am curious on how Tomoko sensei made the transition from training in the business world to training in the academic world. What were some of the pleasant parts of the transition and some of the challenges?

In terms of teaching techniques, I think that my background in training has really helped me come up with new and innovative ways to make my classes more fun and interactive for students. The difficulty I experienced was adjusting to the silent rules within Japanese academia. In the beginning, I really did not know what to do because everyone used high-context communication and I did not share this same context.

Q (6): When you were talking about rafa-rafa I was thinking that in a junior high school or high school setting, you could have 2 different classes under different teachers as two different cultures for the exchange.

Yes, that is an amazing idea! Depending on how long your periods are, you can split up the simulation into two or three classes. For example, on the first day, they can learn to be a member of a culture (i.e., alpha or beta). On the second day, they can visit each other's cultures and on the third day, they can do the debriefing together. You will just have to make sure that the students from the two classes do not share information about their cultures to each other outside of class. You can do the simulation in English or Japanese. As I mentioned before, simulations are very tricky so it's always best to participate in it once and serve as an assistant to an experienced facilitator once before running it yourself. I love Rafa

Rafa because the students not only experience culture shock but they experience the process of cultural learning.

References:

Landis, D., & Bhawuk, D.P.S. (2020). *The Cambridge handbook of intercultural training*. Cambridge University Press.

McNulty, Y., & Tharenou, P. (2004). Expatriate return on investment. *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings* (1)F1-F6. DOI: [10.5465/AMBPP.2004.13863168](https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2004.13863168)

Yoshida, T., Yashiro, K., & Suzuki, Y. (2013). Intercultural communication skills: What Japanese businesses today need. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 37 (1), 72-85.

Workshop in February (AR Discussion)

Date: February 27, 2021, 13:00-15:00 (Zoom meeting)

Title: Group discussion on action research

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

The number of participants: 15



***Thank you for your cooperation to NUFS Workshops in AY 2020.
We are looking forward to seeing you again in AY 2021.***