



ICOPROMO

Intercultural competence for professional mobility
*Compétence interculturelle pour le développement
de la mobilité professionnelle*



Perspective taking

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Rationale

Intercultural interactions may generate misunderstandings. Even though we can translate the most familiar words and actions from our language into a target language, we may lack an understanding of the other's perspective on the way this familiar interaction is understood in the target culture. In order to better cope with culture shock and more quickly feel comfortable in the target culture, we need to be able to make sense of differences in even the most familiar of situations, for example in meeting and greeting, asking simple questions and requesting small services etc.

Learning Outcome

To learn:

- to step back and gain perspective on familiar interactions in our own culture
- to gain experience in questioning the familiar and contrasting the meaning and purpose of the familiar in other cultures
- to deepen a self ethnographic competence and ethnographic skills in general

Competences:

perspective taking

Time

60 minutes

Participants

Up to 25

Materials required

Paper and pen



Procedure

Participants are initially asked to undertake some pre-classroom or workshop research (ethnography and self ethnography).

Ask them to list individually some of the most 'familiar' interactions in their own culture, in their own language. Such familiar interactions might be: situations requiring politeness, greetings, goodbyes, asking for goods in a shop, asking directions. For business students this can be the language and practices used in meetings, how to ask for things etc.

Some suggestions for developing 'perspectivisation' according to Ehn and Lofgren (1982):

1. Try to see such familiar phenomena as 'strange':
 - Ask - What would be the opposite way to do these things?
 - How might we see them as strange?
 - What could be considered strange by people from other cultures?
 - Ask – Why do we do these things in this way?
 - In particular, question the form of language we use and how much language, which body movements, which variety of words, how many words.
 - What is the purpose of the body movements that we make and the language that is used?
 - How formal or informal are these interactions? - Why?
 - Make contrasts – understanding phenomena in terms of what they do not mean. Ask: What does this NOT mean?
 - Observe the social hierarchies in these interactions. – Ask why they might be so.
 - Turn these social hierarchies upside down. – What would that mean in terms of language and movements?

2. Try to observe the same interactions in the target culture. - Try to differentiate your understanding of these observations from your first impressions.
Make the same analysis as you did with your own language and culture as you observe familiar interactions.
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 - How formal or informal are these interactions? - Why?
 - Make contrasts – Understanding phenomena in terms of what they do not mean. Ask: What does this NOT mean?
 - Observe the social hierarchies in these interactions – ask why they exist.
 - Turn these social hierarchies upside down. – What would that mean in terms of language and movements?

3. Participants then bring their self-ethnographic perspectives and their ethnographic perspectives to the workshop. They work with a partner both explaining their reflections on their own situations...the pair then connect with another pair...they share more briefly their reflections and then attempt to make a summary of their reflections.
4. They present the summary to the larger group and the facilitator draws some conclusions on the several small groups presentations.
5. Participants then return to their individual reflective thinking mode and think about the following questions based on the scenario that they have a colleague or friend at college or work who may be experiencing culture shock in their country:
 - What could I do to help?
 - What support could I give?
 - What frameworks might be useful to help the person who is experiencing culture shock to rationalise and make sense of their situation?
6. The participants then work in pairs and then groups of four and summarise their findings.