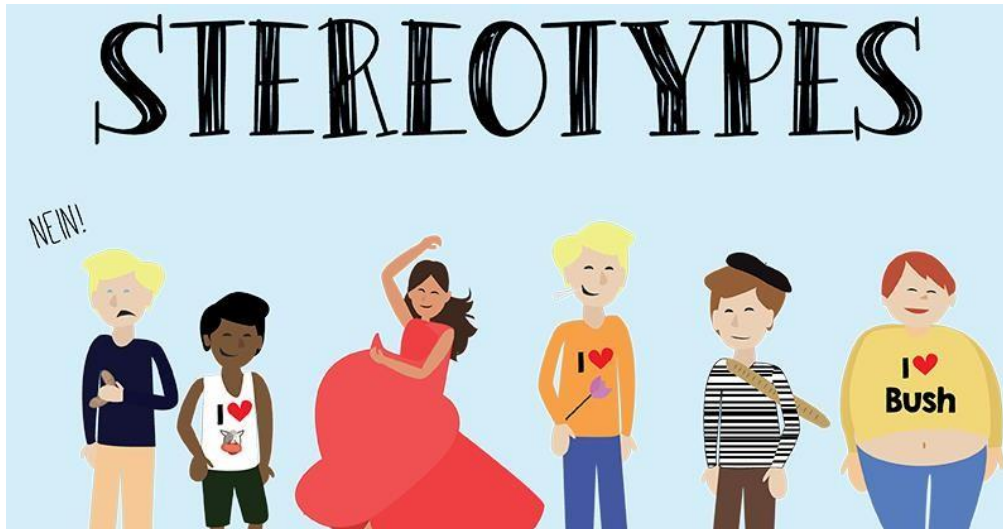


Intercultural Communicative Competence Training Programme_Module 1

Exercises to Improve Intercultural Communication Skills

EXERCISE 3 – What is wrong with stereotypes?



Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable learners to reflect on the fact that stereotypes often say more about the individuals that use them, than about the groups that are stereotyped. To identify particular stereotypes of one culture, and explore how useful they are.
Time	30 minutes
Materials	"Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it" handout

Background rationale

This is a simple but effective activity designed to make clear, in blunt terms, the disadvantages of using stereotypes. Through an exploration of stereotypes held about one of the groups to which learners belong (the example shown below was designed for a British learning group), the process of stereotyping is exposed as prone to producing out-of-date, unbalanced, and prescriptive labels that say more about those who are stereotyping than those being stereotyped.

Procedure

Give the learner a copy of the 'Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it handout'. Suggested answers to the example slide are as follows:

- The British have bad teeth - USA.
 - The British treat their children badly - Italy.
 - The British are insular - Germany.
 - The British do not wash - Australia.



- The British are obsessed by time - Spain.
 - The British are hypocrites - France.
2. Ask the delegates to identify any stereotypes they may hold about people in another country or culture
 3. Lead a discussion about how helpful the learner's stereotypes are, and whether they will aid or detract in communicating effectively with local people.

Discussion points

With regard to the example slide, the learners may wish to reflect on the fact that these value judgements about the British, reflect behaviors and attitudes common in the host country (that is, Spanish attitudes towards time, French attitudes towards the nature of spoken communication, American attitudes towards physical appearance and so on) as much as any real and objective characteristics of British culture. The fact that these perceptions are not necessarily shared by many British people and do not take account of the complexity of a nation of 60 million means that they are likely to be less than helpful in understanding British values and attitudes.

Be sure to emphasize that some valid generalizations can be made about values, attitudes and behaviors commonly held by members of a specific group of people. It is essential that individuals do not get stuck in a loop - not generalizing for fear of stereotyping and, as a result, not coming to any understanding of other cultures at all. What is important is that such an understanding needs to be up to date, shared with others, allow for individual differences, and be backed by research.

Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it – Handout

A British trainer recently asked colleagues from Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the USA to describe a stereotype that is held in that culture about the British.

Match the stereotype with the culture that holds it.

1. The British have bad teeth.
2. The British treat their children badly.
3. The British are insular.
4. The British do not wash.
5. The British are obsessed by time.
6. The British are hypocrites.

How helpful or true are these stereotypes about people in the UK?

What stereotypes do you hold about the people in other cultures or countries? How helpful are these stereotypes?

