

Intercultural Communicative Competence Training Programme_Module 1

Exercises to Improve Intercultural Communication Skills

EXERCISE 5 – Recognizing culture shock



Key objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide clear examples of the various stages associated with culture shock. To provide learners with practice in identifying stages of culture shock.
Time	30 minutes
Materials	"Recognizing culture shock" handout

Background rationale

An important element in dealing with culture shock is recognizing that it is a natural process with a beginning point and a relatively clear set of stages progressing to a point at which it is no longer a problem for the person concerned.

Understanding the nature of these stages, and developing the skills to recognize which stage you have reached, is a useful strategy for managing individual reactions to culture shock. This exercise provides a handy checklist of stages and useful practice in recognizing what comments or perceptions may indicate about the stage of cross-cultural adjustment individuals are in.

Procedure

1. Give a copy of the 'Recognizing culture shock' handout to the learner.
2. Compare these learner's answers with those suggested below and discuss and

differences. Observations and suggestions for discussion

There may be some debate about exactly which stage is likely to be reflected in each comment. This



is a positive point, as it enables learners to discuss the nature of each stage and reflect on how others may understand the phenomenon of culture shock somewhat differently. Recommended answers are as follows:

1. Adaptation
2. Disorientation or shock
3. Honeymoon
4. Adjustment
5. Honeymoon
6. Shock
7. Shock
8. Honeymoon or adaptation or adjustment
9. Adjustment or adaptation
10. Disorientation or shock
11. Shock
12. Adaptation

Recognizing culture shock handout – Handout

Culture shock is the process of adjustment to an unfamiliar culture. It is a more or less sudden immersion into a state of uncertainty - in which you become unsure about what is expected of you and what you can expect from other people. Culture shock can occur in any situation where you are forced to adjust to an unfamiliar system in which many of your previous ways of doing or understanding things no longer apply.

The five stages

Five stages of culture shock can be identified:

1. Honeymoon

This is where the newly arrived individual experiences the curiosity and excitement of a tourist, but where the person's basic identity is rooted back at home.

2. Disorientation

This stage involves the disintegration of almost everything familiar. The individual is overwhelmed by the requirements of the new culture and bombarded by stimuli in the new environment.

3. Shock

This stage is associated with the experience of anger and resentment towards the new culture. Stress, anxiety, irritation and hostility are common.

4. Adaptation

This involves the integration of new cues and an increased ability to function in the new culture. The individual increasingly sees the bad and the good elements in both the new culture and the home culture.

5. Adjustment

In this stage, the individual has become comfortable in both the old and the new culture. There is some controversy about whether anyone can really attain this stage.



Exercise

Below you will see a number of comments likely to be made by individuals in one of the five stages of culture shock. Read each comment and write down what stage of culture shock you think the individual concerned is most likely to be in.

Comment

1. 'We do that too, only in a different way.'	8. 'Aren't they interesting?'
2. 'Why can't they just ...?'	9. 'Actually, I am beginning to like this'
3. 'I can't wait to tell ... about this.'	10. 'Everything here is so difficult!'
4. 'You don't understand them like I do.'	11. 'We would never do that where I come from'
5. 'Isn't this exciting?'	12. 'On the other hand, why shouldn't they do that?'
6. 'These people are so damn ...'	
7. 'Only ...more months before I can go home'	