

**Overview:**

This lesson plan will challenge participants to reflect on the relationship between communication and problem-solving and recognize the importance of dialogue and precise language. In this activity, participants will work in pairs, and they will attempt to complete a task with limitations on the way that they can communicate with each other.

**Background and Information:**

The original source of this activity is unknown. The oldest source located was from Rich Artman in 1976, who modified this activity for the Miami Intercultural Communication Workshop. It was then published in *Readings in Intercultural Communication, Volume 5* (see citation below). Then, it was included in Margaret D. Pusch's (1979) *Multicultural Education: A Cross-Cultural Training Approach* (see citation below). A version of the activity, called Diagrams, is also available from North Carolina State Extension (link available on the following page).

**Objectives:**

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Experience how one-way communication, while more efficient, is less accurate than two-way communication.
2. Analyze the imprecision of language and the difficulty in describing one's experiences that leads to identical understanding.

**Time:**

45 minutes

**Group Size:**

Pairs

**Materials:**

Six pieces of letter-sized paper for each team/pair, a writing utensil for each person

*Note:* If doing the activity from Pusch (1979), you will need task sheets for the facilitator and scoring sheets for participants (available in the book).

**Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:**

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

## AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

### Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences

### Other Skills:

Teamwork, Mentorship & Leadership

### Link to Activity Instructions:

- [A version of this activity, called Diagrams, from North Carolina State Extension \(pp. 10-11\)](#)

### Related Tools:

#### *Similar tools:*

- [Be Specific! \(Snowflake\)](#)
- [Building a Tower](#)
- [Hollow Square](#)