

Overview:

The *I DIVE* exercise (Schaerli, 2012) is an extension of the classic *DIE-exercise* – description-interpretation-evaluation (Bennett, 2009). This exercise may be used to approach intercultural learning more systematically and strategically. According to Bennett (2009) it “helps learners suspend judgment long enough to examine multiple perspectives. The exercise differentiates what individuals actually see (description) from what they think it might mean (interpretation) and directs differential judgments” (p. 103). It aids in analyzing intercultural interactions. It is ideal for use in the *minimization* stage of the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* and in the ethnorelative stages (Bennett, 1998). The exercise aims to increase intercultural communication competence by addressing two of the main components of intercultural communication competence: intercultural sensitivity and intercultural awareness. Intercultural adroitness, the third component of intercultural communication competence, is not addressed using this tool (Chen & Starosta, 2008).

One important aspect for the development of intercultural sensitivity is the focus on personal emotions (Chen & Starosta, 2008). Negative emotions may be aroused in ineffective intercultural interaction situations. The process of intercultural sensitivity development requires positive emotional responses, which will eventually lead to acknowledgement of and respect for cultural difference. The emotions are addressed using the **I-Impact**. Often participants find it difficult to describe their emotions, so a list of different emotions helps participants to verbalize how they feel. Four personal attitudes are necessary for the process of becoming interculturally sensitive: positive self-concept, open-mindedness, nonjudgmental attitudes, and social relaxation.

The **D**-description is an important element used in this tool. The aim is to describe the phenomena of the situation as objectively as possible, using all our senses. Often the participants will interpret instead of objectively describing the situation. When introducing this tool, it is important that the trainer distinguishes what objective descriptions are and what interpretations are.

The process of becoming interculturally aware, involves “the changing of personal thinking about the environment through the understanding of the distinct characteristics of one’s own and others’ cultures” (Triandis as cited in Chen & Starosta, 2008, p. 223). Intercultural awareness consists of self-awareness and cultural awareness of one’s own and others’ cultural conventions. Intercultural awareness is integrated in the **I**-Interpretation and the **V**- Values in the *I DIVE* tool. Values can be discussed at varying depths, depending on the developmental stage of intercultural sensitivity. If there are participants who are in the stage of defense, one can look at existing commonalities within the in-group and the out-group—for example the universality of interpreting which may not be based on all objective facts, whilst avoiding cultural contrasts. General values of the group can be discussed, such as the usefulness of the object. Cultural value dimensions can be discussed at a developmental stage where it is more appropriate, for example in minimization.

The **E**-evaluation is the final step. This is where all the information analyzed in the previous steps is considered including the initial evaluation of the situation before the analysis. What new knowledge has this tool illuminated? And how can I implement this knowledge in the future?

The Framework:

I – Impact: Describe the emotions you felt.

D – Description: Describe the phenomena that you sensed objectively. Pay attention that you describe objectively and that your description is free of interpretations.

I – Interpretation: What I think (about what I see). Formulate at least one positive and one negative interpretation.

V – Values: Consider both cultural value orientations and personal values from the perspectives of all involved including your perspective.

E – Evaluation after analysis. Did anything change?

Purpose:

To become familiar with an analysis tool for intercultural communication. To become aware of how quick the interpretation process is. To show the personal and cultural relativity of interpretations and evaluations.

Objectives:

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

1. Suspend their judgment in order to examine multiple perspectives.

Time:

1 hour

Group Size:

Small group

Materials:

Flipchart, markers, copies of the I DIVE Worksheet for all participants (in [Downloads](#)), two ambiguous objects & one ambiguous photograph (from a culture that is different from the participants)

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Minimization

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Openness:

- To initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others.
- To suspend judgment in valuing interactions with culturally different others.

Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Other Skills:

Emotional resilience

Instructions:

1. On a flip chart, create five columns for I DIVE without naming them. When the participants start answering, fill in the columns with the appropriate answer. Start with the ambiguous object. Ask the large group to tell you something about it. The phrasing of this question is very important, otherwise it skews the answers. Say "tell me something about this" (DO NOT ask them what they see or to *describe* it.). Pass the object around and keep it moving quickly. Continue with "what else can you say" until the answers are exhausted. This step should take approximately 3-5 minutes
2. Ask the participants if they can guess what the title of each column/category might be. If there are empty columns, could they come up with a possible category for that column?
3. Explain the impact, description, interpretation, values and evaluation. Show how their answers fit into the respective columns.
4. Use the second object, and ask the participants to describe how it makes them feel, and document their answers in the respective column. Then, ask them to describe it objectively. Continue this with all the steps of the tool.
5. Give each individual a photograph and ask them to complete the I DIVE Worksheet according to the steps of the tool. Share the outcomes in small groups to show the multiple interpretations.
6. Reassemble the group, and ask participants to share the most difficult aspect of the exercise. Usually, the response is that it is difficult to keep the original description free of evaluative terminology, and that it taxes the worldview of the individual to create alternative frames of reference. The value of heightened awareness in describing before interpreting and evaluating should be stressed as an essential prerequisite to intercultural communication. It helps to stop the automatic evaluation processes. The facilitator should note that the processes we use to I DIVE are culture bound and limit our ability to understand other cultures.

References:

Bennett, J. M. (2009). Transformative training: Designing programs for culture learning. In M. A. Moodian (Ed.), *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Exploring the cross-cultural dynamics within organizations*. Sage.

Bennett, J. M., & Bennett, M. J. (2004). Description, interpretation and evaluation. In J. M. Bennett, & M. J. Bennett (Eds.), *Developing intercultural competence: a reader*. The Intercultural Communication Institute.

Bennett, M. J. (1998). Intercultural communication: A current perspective. In M. J. Bennett (Ed.), *Basic concepts of intercultural communication* (pp. 1-34). Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Chen, G., & Starosta, W. (2008). Intercultural Communication Competence. In M. Asante, Y. Miike, & J. Yin (Eds.), *The global intercultural communication reader* (pp. 215-238). Routledge.

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Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [D-I-E](#)
- [D.I.V.E. Model](#)
- [Describe-Analyze-Evaluate \(D-A-E\)](#)

Related assessment tools:

- [Intercultural ASKS-2](#)
- [Openness to Diversity and Challenge Scale](#)