



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION & COMPETENCE

Ethnographic Exercise 1

- **Goal:** To introduce participants to a learning tool they can use in cross-cultural settings to help them analyze cultural behaviour.
- **Materials:** A notebook in which pages are divided vertically into three columns.

Procedure

Think of an intercultural interaction you have had recently. This may have been either a pleasant or an unpleasant experience, perhaps a minor (or a major) misunderstanding. Recall the experience as accurately as you can, and note down **as exactly** and **as neutrally as possible** what happened (column 1). In the second column, interpret what you have observed by **ascribing meaning** to it (use first the meanings from your own culture, then think of other possible meanings, such as those from the other person's culture). In the third column, record your emotional reactions during this experience and try to evaluate the experience as a whole (good or bad, right or wrong).

The following is a sample illustrating how the journal should be set up.

Date:

Location:

Observation / Description / Behaviour	Interpretation / Attribution / Analysis	Opinion / Evaluation
On this side of the journal, describe what you saw or what happened. Anything that strikes you as different, funny, weird, sad, etc. is appropriate. Feelings, emotions, judgments should not be expressed on this side. Just stick to the facts.	Now try to analyze or interpret what you have observed. Which basic assumptions or values are behind the behaviour? (For variation 1: How does your observation help you to describe the culture using Hall's Map of Culture?)	On this side of the journal, describe your thoughts, feelings, etc. about the event. What in your cultural makeup may be affecting how you feel? How is that different from whatever values or assumptions may be at work in this culture?

Yarmouth: Intercultural Press, 1994. Pp.67 – 69.