

Developing Intercultural Trainings In Organizations

Mainland French Teachers Heading to French Polynesia

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Abstract

In facilitating an organizational training for French Teachers who will be teaching in French Polynesia, Tahiti, we aim to provide and extend a set of various competencies that address potential performance gaps while giving participants the ability to apply what has been learned into their individual work environment.

Pre-training procedures

To assess who are our audience and their specific needs, before the organizational training is conducted we will send out a pre-training questionnaire.

We will ask each participant to also bring a mock lesson plan that they commonly use within their present classrooms.

Our questionnaire is as follows:

Name: _____ Region of origin (transfer): _____

1. How long have you been teaching French? At what level?
1. Have you ever had to deal with a difficult teaching situation? How did you overcome it?
1. Have you ever been transferred to an overseas territory before?
1. Feel free to tell us what you know about Tahiti.
1. What would you like to know about Tahiti by the end of this seminar?
1. How do you interact with members of other cultures, at home and abroad?

Format of the training

The intercultural competency training will be held over the period of 2 days. We have broken up the schedule to reflect the needs of the particular audience. Strategically placing coffee breaks and incorporating a longer lunch break (longer than traditional American lunches), we have tried to match the needs of the French audience in order to make them the most receptive to the training.

Our in-class presentation is to last for 45 minutes. We also took into account leaving five minutes of our time to receive feedback from the audience.

Goals and Learning Objectives

We aim to facilitate the growth of the following intercultural competencies:

- Cultural Self-Awareness
- Personal and Cultural Values Recognition
- External Awareness
- Culture-Specific Knowledge
- Creative Thinking
- Intercultural Interpersonal Skills
- Conflict Resolution
- Adaptability

We aim to fully accomplish the following learning objectives:

L.O 1: To be able to recognize commonalities and differences within ones own culture

L.O 2: To be able to recognize how language shapes a portion of cultural identity

L.O 3: To be able to recognize commonalities and differences due to cultural context within the Francophone world. (Language similarities does not signify cultural similarities)

L.O 4: To be able to develop skills and attitudes that foster understanding and be able to develop multiples perspectives

Schedule

Saturday

9:30-10:30 (P 1) Introductions

- Introduce presenters.
- Expectations of the training: what they should know by the end (how to communicate efficiently with people from the indigenous situation).
- Ice-breakers (“Never Have I Ever”)

10:30-10:45- Coffee

10:45-12 (P 2) Overview of Tahitian Culture

- Geography and History of Tahiti pre-French exploration.
- Differing worldviews in that hemisphere
- Tahiti as center of the Pacific triangle (cultural link: Maohis- French Polynesia, Maolis-Hawa’i, Maoris- NZ & Rapa Nuis- Easter Island)

12-1:30 Lunch

1:30-4 (P 3) Cultural expectations

- Differing notions of ethnicity and power: role of the French in the Polynesian population (dominant population).
- Place of the teacher in the classroom- different perspective towards authority and importance of school in the pupil’s life.
- Discussion of personal experience with Tahiti.

4-4:15 Goûter/Coffee

4:15-5 (P 4) Wrap-up

- Exploring the need to overcome ethnocentric mindset to fit into globalized world.
- Homework: think about what you might want to ask someone who has been through what you are about to go through.

Sunday

9:30-10:30 (P 5) Q&A with 2 guest-speakers

- Personal narratives of 2 guest speakers
- Opportunity to ask questions of guest speakers experience in the new cultural context

10:30-10:45- Coffee

10:45-12 (P 6) Language assumptions and tips for successful integration

- Learn a little bit about the slang that is used in Tahiti (mix of French and Tahitian words) to prepare teachers to communicate efficiently.
- End the session with a group wrap up that talks about different ways of knowing and acquiring information, informally vs. formally.
- Last 15 minutes will be dedicated to final reflections/take aways
- More discussion can be held during lunch if desired.

12-2PM Farewell Lunch \ Reception

Island Buffet

2PM-5 Group Excursion (optional)

Visit of Te Fa'aiti Park.

Schedule Breakdown by Periods

In this next section you will see a breakdown of our schedule. Breaking the schedule into 6 distinct periods, we have provided an in-depth outline illustrating the two-day training program. We have provided a description of each proposed activity and have tied it to a corresponding learning objective.

Period 1

Introductions

- Go over expectations of the training
- Ice breaker - Never have I Ever (L.O1):

Have a circle of chairs, one less than the number of participants. The one extra in the middle states something they haven't done. Everyone else who HAS done the activity gets up and runs and tries to find a new chair. They are not allowed to take the chair directly on either side of them. The one who is without a chair is the new middle person. And repeat. If anyone is stuck in the center more than two times the presenter will stand in and pull “never have I ever” from questionnaires.

LO1: A kinesthetic approach to immediate group engagement and participation. Game designed to illustrate commonalities and differences between the participants within a perceived similar culture (France)

Period 2

Overview of Tahitian Culture

- Geography game:
Using the three white boards in the front, draw three countries, one on each board. Have the group stand by which board they believe has the country that represents the size of French Polynesia. After they are divided up, inform them that the correct answer is if you were to span from the first board to the third. Use it as a time to talk about the importance of viewing French Polynesia as part of the whole island chain, not as an isolated island.
- Open the space up for people to share what they already know about Tahiti.
- Present an overview of Tahitian culture, history, language, geography and current day Tahiti.

Period 3

Cultural Expectations

- Have teachers analyze their teaching methods and how they conduct themselves in a school setting, and place themselves on a scale of where they think they may lie: Task vs. Relationships, valuing Memorization vs. Creative projects
- Provide paper and pencils and have participants list 5 expectations they have for their students in France, example: punctuality, attendance, homework, buying books
- Have participants prioritize their expectations based from most to least important
- Have participants identify within their lesson plan they brought where they can see a dependence on these expectations (Identify how if there was a lack of attendance, homework being done how their lesson plan wouldn't work)
- Identify how some of the cultural realities they learned about in the last period may undermine some of these expectations/priorities - i.e. Teenage pregnancy, lack of resources to buy books, communal nature of learning

By recognizing that their role as a teacher in the Tahitian culture may be perceived differently than in France, participants can start to think about ways they may code-shift (change language used, classroom set up, group vs. individual emphasis) within their classrooms to improve the effectiveness of their methods.

L.O 3: Teaching (task vs. relation), priorities about students/ self-realization about teaching methods.

L.O 4: Teachers will develop multiple perspectives on their own value systems and will analyze how their values are embedded within their teaching methods. They will learn how to develop creative solutions to situations that may arise in and outside of the classroom in order to foster effective learning.

Period 4

Wrap Up

- Summarize all the information and ask about what are the takeaways for the teachers.
- “Homework”: Ask them to think about what they want to ask someone who has been through what they are about to go through.

What is your takeaway from the activity today?

What kind of activities do you recommend us to add in this training?

What do you think we can do to improve this training?

LO 4: Reflection of the day and their own feelings will provide participants the space to recognize alternative cultural norms and develop a frame of reference for interpreting

intercultural situations. By recognizing the potential for ethnocentrism within educational goals, processes, course materials and classroom conduct, participants will learn to display cultural humility and recognize other epistemologies.

Period 5

Guest speaker

· Two teachers who have already taught there are invited to debrief their experiences and answer questions. They will provide PPT about their experience and what should be noticed before departure. All the questions would be provided in the morning for them to get prepared.

LO 3: Participants are provided first hand accounts from guest speakers on the nuanced cultural differences they experienced in general and within the academic setting. They will hear accounts of how lack of cultural awareness can cause tension and possible adverse effects.

Period 6

Language assumptions and tips for successful integration

As far as getting settled down, the teachers will have a couple of tasks to deal with. During this training, we will help the teachers with some of the aspects of their life in French Polynesia- opening a bank account, getting a phone line and internet access.

- Bank account: The teachers should open a bank account at la Banque de Polynésie since it is a partner of la Société Générale (a bank present in France). Choosing this bank will facilitate money transfer, should they need to transfer from/to France.
- Phone line: Vini (<http://www.vini.pf/>) is the only provider available as far as cellphones go. They can choose to have a contract or a payphone. Some of services offered in mainland France, such as unlimited texting and/or data, are not available in French Polynesia. A popular subscription would be 2000 PCF (Pacific Francs, equivalent to 20 USD or 16 euros) for the month, knowing that each text costs 100 PCF.
- Internet access: the teachers can get Internet through Vini too. There is very limited 4G access on the island, but it has recently been activated (2013).

For a successful integration, we thought that teachers should know about some of the social events that take place in Tahiti.

- The Heiva: The Heiva is a two-week long Polynesian dancing & singing competition. It revolves around story-telling- teams (in choirs of 30+ candidates) sing and dance about the mythology of their culture. A brief summary of the story is provided at the beginning

of the number in Maohi, French and English. It is held in the main arena in Papeete, on the Toa'ta plaza.

- The Hawaiki Nui Va'a race: the Hawaiki Nui Va'a is the equivalent of Le Tour de France in French Polynesia. It is executed on dugout canoes around French Polynesia, beginning in Tahiti and ending in Bora Bora. As Va'a is deeply rooted within the Polynesian culture, we will invite the participants to learn more about it.
- The Billabong Pro Tahiti competition : The Billabong Pro Tahiti competition is a world-recognized surfing event. It takes place in Teahupoo (in Tahiti, about two hours from Papeete). Waves at the competition average a 5-meter height (about 16 ft). Surfers fly over from all over the world to participate in this competition.

Definition game: Tahitian common words

Three participants will come to the front of the room. One person is given the real definition of the Tahitian (colloquial) word and the other two people have to make up the meaning. Each of the 3 participants will have to use the word in a sentence to convince others that it is the correct definition. The rest of the group is the audience, who has to vote on what the real meaning might be. At the end of the game, we will discuss as a group what made people vote for certain definitions over the other, what swayed them. We will talk about reference points and different ways of knowing.

LO 2: Activity designed so participants recognize differences within the francophone world, “francophone world”- does not equal 100% language similarities. They will see how culture not only affects language but how language helps define culture.

List of Tahitian Words

Typically Tahitian: **Va'a** (pirogue), **Fiu** (tired, can't be bothered), **Fenua** (dirt, ground, homeland), **Fare** (typical Tahitian house), **Vini** (literally bird, used as phone in slang bcs phone company emblem),

People: **Popaa** (someone from France), **Tane** (man), **Vahine** (woman), **Taote** (doctor).

Sentences

Va'a: je fais du va'a toutes les semaines avec mon équipe

(I do va'a every week with my team)

Fiu: Je reviens tout juste de cours et je suis trop fiu

(I just came back from class and I am so fiu)

Fenua: Il faut préserver le fenua de la pollution

(We have to preserve the fenua from pollution)

Fare: Ce voisinage a beaucoup de fare typique de Tahiti

(This neighborhood is full of typical fares)

Popa'a: Il y a beaucoup de Popa'as qui viennent ici.

(There are a lot of Popa'as who come here)

Tane: Mate le tane là-bas

(Check out that tane over there)

Vahine: Regarde-la la vahine là-bas

(Look at the Vahine over there)

Taote: Il faut que j'aille voir le Taote cette semaine.

(I need to go see my Taote this week)

Vini: File-moi ton Vini !

(Give me your vini)

These are the definitions we used for our activity:

Va'a = Dugout canoe

va'a = meeting

va'a = basketball

Fiu = Tired

fiu = excited

fiu = scared

Fenua = Homeland

fenua = dolphins

fenua = world

Fare = Tahitian House

fare = gardens

fare = families

Popaa = Someone from France

popaa = surfers

popaa = students

Tane = Man

tane = police officer

tane = girl

Vahine = Woman

vahine = statue
vahine = palmtree

Taote = doctor
taote = grandparents
taote = teacher

Vini = Bird
vini = opinion
Vini = Phone

Lunch

The island buffet will help the trainees relate to the facilitators but also connect with the other trainees. The latter can also approach the guest speakers to ask any questions that they might have, but also just to talk about their lives and the transition they are making. We are hoping that this will give our trainees a support network.

Group Excursion

We have scheduled a visit of Te Fa'aiti Park. It is located in Papenoo, which is 35 minutes away from the university in Punaauia (near Papeete). The group will have 4 hours to explore the park, which will leave plenty of time to experience everything. The park reflects the Polynesia view on the afterlife, as it is considered as one of the places that a warrior's soul would pass through (and undergo challenges).

Content about culture

To discuss the depth of culture, our group will introduce the principle of the culture tree:



We decided to adhere to this model, since we found it to be quite relevant to culture. Indeed, Roots allude to what is the deepest about the person's identity, but also what cannot be seen through the naked eye (e.g core values, standards, vision, mission, ...). The trunk makes up the most important conscious features of a person when he or she interacts with others (leadership, clinical integration, ...). Finally, the branches evoke beliefs the person may develop over time (loyalty, philanthropy, accountability, ...). The image of culture as a tree is especially useful, since the tree classifies the rank of the influencers upon a person, but also their source (in this case, water).

To be more specific about the content on culture in this case, Angie will draw from her personal experience to compare both cultures, as a French person who lived in French Polynesia. She will also draw from Hofstede's work on cultural dimensions as a tool to compare the metropolitan French culture against the culture of French Polynesia.

One of those tools is Power Distance. This cultural dimension shows the importance of having a hierarchy and how people fit in it. Cultures with a higher power distance put an emphasis on titles and interactions will differ depending on the position of the receiver. This difference in interaction can be shown through linguistic tools, such as different pronouns. In France, a teacher should always be address using "vous" (formal second person pronoun), such a distinction does not exist in Tahiti, since people do not have this word in their native language. To show respect, students will call the teacher "Madame" or "Monsieur", but not use the "vous" pronoun when address him or her. As a teacher, one should not be offended, as this does not show a lack of respect. This cultural dimension should be understood by teachers, who represent figures of authority in their home culture of France. In that aspect, France and Tahiti are quite different.

Another cultural dimension that is should be explored before French teachers start their mission in Tahiti is Individualism versus collectivism. From personal experience, Tahiti seems to belong to a collectivistic society, when France is more individualistic. In Tahiti, several generations live in the same house and the family is involved as a whole in all of the decisions. For instance, when a baby is born, the task of naming it goes to its maternal great-grandmother,

who should be inspired. She will pick a name from someone who has done great things in their family tree, as part of her responsibility being to know her family's history well.

Group Reflection:

Going through the process of designing this workshop each member of our group gained valuable experience. While we learned a lot about the intricacies of culture and cultural communication from the exercises in class, being a multicultural group, we learned just as much though the process of working in a multicultural group dynamic. We each learned a lot about diverse learning styles and personal preferences, and were able to reflect on the challenges of multicultural group dynamics in the future.

Angie's lovely and accurate explanations of French and Tahiti cultural backgrounds are fantastic. And her preparation of all the words for the second activity are so meaningful and funny! She tried to instill some of the cultural aspects through reaching the language. She had the experience of living in Tahiti, which was helpful to her for that end.

Lynn is good at planning and facilitating all the activities. Her instructions and explanations are very meaningful and detailed. I love these two activities she chosen for our team. Lynn as very good at starting what needed to be done and delegating. She knew the American school system and what was expected for the deliverables (i.e. what they should include) which helped the group navigate this assignment. She also made sure that the important aspects of the paper were incorporated in the presentation.

Coming from a cultural background that varied so much from the rest of the group, Chang was integral to the group dynamic. Not only was she able to analyze parts of the project through a different lens, but she also allowed us to step outside of ourselves and give us perspective on our own role in group dynamics. The important lessons and (ah-ha! moments) learned through designing our intercultural training derived just as much from the learning of intercultural techniques from class as from the intercultural experiential learning we had in our communication and miscommunications working together as a group.

Together through this experience we each have started to identify parts of our own personality. We have started to see the space of contention, between how we see ourselves and how we are perceived by others. We also have started to see how those perceptions differ based upon the cultural lens we are viewed through.

Lynn, being very enthusiastic and coming from a very critical theory thinking base has started to realize that her enthusiasm causes her to be perceived as very confident, and that overconfidence may make it harder for others to feel comfortable including their voice.

Angie felt unsure about what the expectations for the presentation would be when it came to the presentation. It was harder for her to tell what should be included and what should not, as the presentation was to be a meaningful sample of the work done by the group. That is why she hesitated to advance ideas. However, she has learnt that bonding outside of the group might help make for smoother group meetings. Indeed, team members would familiarize themselves with each other's communication styles. She will try to apply that concept in her future collaborations.

Being Chang's first time being in higher education in the United States, she has had to deal with not only adapting to daily life in a new culture but adapt to new cultural norms within the academic sphere. She has learned that her respectful deference to other people's ideas can come across as being disengaged or not putting in work. She has seen that in the United States, contributing something, whether it be a half formed idea that someone else can work off of or an entire concept, is valued highly when working in groups. Due to the nature of Americans, she has also learned that it may take more self-initiative to participate, because the gaps in conversation may not present themselves. Chang may try to be more open and active and get involved with others a little bit more in future group projects. Where in the private group atmosphere it was challenging for Chang, she was very good at leading the discussion as she could summarize what people had said and then tie it into the learning outcomes of the training, but also of the presentation. This cooperation will definitely lead us to a new level of mutual understanding.

To sum up, we are very happy to have the chance to work together and know each other. The resources in class allowed us to reflect deeper on the interactions that took place in our daily life. We all felt a positive shift in our interactions with each other since having this experience.