



Brief description	Participants apply their newly acquired knowledge of intercultural communication and creating common ground with conversation partners in a case study.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The participants analyze the influence of different communication styles on the course of conversations.• The participants reflect on the perception of their communication behavior by others through a change of perspective.• The participants develop individual approaches that enable them to communicate purposefully and authentically with conversation partners from different backgrounds.
Time	n/a
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culturally unspecific• Distributive / instructive
Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worksheet
Implementation	n/a
Notes	n/a
Source	Hoffman, Edwin / Verdooren, Arjan (2019): Diversity Competence – Cultures Don’t Meet, People Do. Boston: CABI Adjustment: Andrea Voigt



Task

Learning Review: “Hi, could you help me?”

Please read the case study and answer the questions below.

‘My situation has to do with the perception of what is friendly and polite in a work environment from the perspective of different cultures, and how to find out whether you’re doing the right thing when people don’t give you any (negative) feedback directly. I had several interactions with two local colleagues, which involved me coming to them and ask them to do something for me in the laboratory. For example, I would approach them while they were working and ask, “Hi, could you help me find a protocol for this kind of experiment?” or “Hi, could you help me today with a particular part of my experiment?”

My colleagues usually reacted fine, although sometimes with a bit of reluctance, and agreed to help; but later I found out that they perceived my questions as too direct. To them I came off as unfriendly or even mean, and they would have preferred it if I had asked them first how they were doing and did a bit of small talk. However, the way I was brought up makes me think that you don’t really care about them if you only ask them how they are doing so as to move on to a work-related question, which comes off as “fake niceness” and is frowned upon.

I was wondering whether this is something culture-specific or more person-specific, and how to find the balance between being direct and friendly when working in an environment with a mix of people from different cultures. In addition, I would like to find out if there are ways to understand you might be doing something wrong without people openly expressing it.

- Assess the differences in communication styles and find indicators for this in the text and conversation.
- Put yourself into the shoes of the person recalling the incidence and develop a communication scenario which shows your knowledge of different communication preferences and at the same time considers that you want to stay ‘truthful’ to yourself.
- What is friendly and polite in a work environment from your perspective? Consider for example when something doesn’t work out, when you have a request? Consider culture, personality and context and give examples.
- How to find out whether you’re doing the right thing when people don’t directly give you any negative feedback? Or how can you find out if there are ways to understand you might be doing something wrong without people openly expressing so?
- Is small talk ‘fake niceness’? Is it something culture-specific, context-specific, person-specific?
- How can you find the balance between getting your point across and being friendly when working in an environment with people from different backgrounds?

Source: Hoffman, Edwin and Arjan Verdooren (2019): Diversity Competence – Cultures Don’t Meet, People Do. Boston: CABI

Adjustment: Andrea Voigt