

Culture-Learning Strategies Inventory

(Paige, Rong, J., Zheng, W., & Kappler, B., 2009)

The purpose of this inventory is to find out more about yourself as a culture learner and to help you discover strategies that can help you understand and adapt to cultures that are different from your own. Culture-learning strategies can be difficult to pinpoint because when we function well in an environment, we are often no longer conscious of the strategies we use. And perhaps more important, we may not always be conscious that we are *not* functioning well in a new environment! This inventory asks you to consider what you do and what you might do to be effective in a new culture. The specific strategies listed here, while not exhaustive, are comprehensive in terms of what research, theory, and experience suggest are important to consider for how you acquire the knowledge and skills to function well in a new environment.

When taking this inventory, check the box that describes your use of each listed strategy. The categories are: **I use this strategy and like it**; **I have tried this strategy and would use it again**; **I've never used this strategy but I am interested in it**; and **this strategy doesn't fit for me**.

1.1 Pre-departure Strategies

		I use this strategy and like it	I have tried this strategy and would use it again	I've never used this strategy but I am interested in it	This strategy doesn't fit for me
Strategies for when I am in surroundings that are culturally different from what I am used to:					
1.	Consider ways in which different cultures might view things in different ways (e.g., how different cultures value „alone time“ or independence).				
2.	Figure out what cultural values might be involved when I encounter a conflict or when something goes wrong.				
3.	Think about different cross-cultural perspectives to examine situations in which I seem to offend someone or do something wrong.				

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4.	Use generalizations instead of stereotypes when I make statements about people who are different from me.				
5.	Counter stereotypes others use about people from my country by using generalizations and cultural values instead.				
6.	Make distinctions between behaviour that is personal (unique to the person), cultural (representative of the person's culture), and universal (shared by humans).				
7.	Look at similarities as well as differences among people of different backgrounds.				

The next portion of the Culture-Learning Strategies Inventory looks at the culture-learning strategies you think you will use once you are in the country of your work placement abroad, referred to in this inventory as your "host country". If you have worked or studied abroad before, you may want to complete this inventory according to what you did last time. Or you can fill it out by indicating which strategies you think you will *likely* use in a variety of situations.

1.2 In-Country Strategies

		I use this strategy and like it	I have tried this strategy and would use it again	I've never used this strategy but I am interested in it	This strategy doesn't fit for me
Strategies I (will likely) use to adjust to a new culture and cope with culture shock:					
8.	Explain my cross-cultural experiences (the good <i>and</i> the difficult) to my family and friends at home.				
9.	Consider what my colleagues and friends living in the host country say about people from my own culture, using what I know about cultural bias.				
10.	Strive to keep myself physically healthy				
11.	Assume that some moments of culture shock are normal culture-learning experiences and not worry about them too much.				
12.	Use a variety of coping strategies when I feel I have "culture shock overload".				
13.	Keep reasonable expectations of my ability to adjust to the new culture, given the length of my stay and my particular work placement abroad.				

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Strategies for dealing with difficult times in the new culture:					
14.	Keep in touch with friends and family back home by writing letters and emails.				
15.	Keep a journal or a diary about my experiences.				
16.	Participate in sports and other activities while abroad.				
17.	Find someone from my own culture to talk to about my cultural experiences.				
18.	Relax when I am stressed out in my host country by doing what I normally do back home to make myself comfortable.				
Strategies for making judgments about another culture:					
19.	Observe the behaviour of people from my host country very carefully.				
20.	Analyse things that happen in my host country that seem strange to me from as many perspectives as I can.				
21.	Consider my own cultural biases when trying to understand another culture.				
22.	Refrain from making quick judgments about another culture.				
Strategies for communicating with people from another culture:					
23.	Don't assume that everyone from the same culture is the same.				
24.	Investigate common areas of miscommunication between people from my host culture and my own culture by reading books and by talking to people who know the two cultures well.				
25.	Read local newspapers to better understand the current political and social issues in my host country.				
26.	Build relations with local people by finding opportunities to spend time with them.				
27.	Help people in my host country understand me by explaining my behaviours and attitudes in terms of my personality and culture.				
Strategies to deal with different communication styles:					
28.	Consider using different types of communication styles.				
29.	Try a different approach when my communication style doesn't seem to be working well.				
30.	Listen to whether my conversation partners are indirect or direct in their communication styles.				
31.	Mirror the communication style of my conversation partners.				
32.	Respect the way people from other cultures express their emotions.				
33.	Refrain from disagreeing right away so that I have a chance to listen to what others are trying to communicate.				

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Strategies to understand nonverbal communication in another culture:					
34.	Learn about the ways in which people in my host country use nonverbal communication.				
35.	Examine how my own nonverbal communication is influenced by my culture.				
36.	Observe which nonverbal communication differences are most difficult for me to adjust to in my host country.				
37.	Practice using a variety of different nonverbal communication patterns				
38.	Figure out how far people stand from each other in my host country and try to keep the "right" distance from others.				
39.	Observe the gestures that people use in my host country.				
40.	Ask friends in my host country to explain the meaning of different gestures to me.				
41.	Try to use eye contact in a way that is appropriate in my host country.				
Strategies to interact with people in the host culture:					
42.	Join clubs or organizations to meet people who have interests like mine.				
43.	Ask people in my host country about their perceptions of my country and culture.				
44.	Go to the market in my host country and interact with people in the shops.				
45.	Hold back on making judgments about other people based on my first impressions.				
Strategies to use with my colleagues					
46.	Find out from my colleagues what I can do to help around the workplace.				
47.	Ask my colleagues about smoking rules at the workplace and observe those rules if I smoke or invite over friends who smoke.				
48.	Get permission before bringing someone to my workplace.				
49.	Share pictures of my own family with my colleague who has been assigned as my cultural informant/buddy.				
50.	Teach games common in my own country to my colleagues.				
51.	Enlist the help of a friend in my host country when I have a conflict with my colleagues to help me understand the situation.				
52.	Figure out the workplace rules for eating, smoking, using the bathroom, dresscode, and helping out by observing and asking questions.				
53.	Ask my colleagues about their views on privacy and being alone rather than assume that we share the same views.				

1.3 Post-study abroad

		I use this strategy and like it	I have tried this strategy and would use it again	I've never used this strategy but I am interested in it	This strategy doesn't fit for me
Strategies to use when I return home					
54.	Find a group of people who have had similar study abroad experiences to talk to and share experiences.				
55.	Participate in activities sponsored by study abroad and international groups back home..				
56.	Take a language class that will help me keep up with the language of the country I studied in (if applicable) and/or take classes on subjects I became interested in during my work placement abroad adventure.				
57.	Volunteer for an international organization or work with international students.				
58.	Share my feelings and experiences with friends and family, without expecting that they will relate to all that I say.				
59.	Try to stay connected with friends I made while working abroad.				
60.	Give myself time to readjust to my own country.				

Literatur:

Paige, R. M., Rong, J., Zheng, W., & Kappler, B. (2009). Culture-Learning Strategies Inventory. In R. M. Paige, A. D. Cohen, B. Kappler, J. C. Chi, & J. P. Lassegard, *Maximizing study abroad (2nd. Ed.)* (S. 29-35.). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.

This inventory has been adapted and translated (Schärli, 2013) for incoming researchers at the ZHAW Institute of Nursing.