

MUM CTL Teaching Initiative
Fall 2006-2007
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SIETAR (Society for Intercultural Education Training and Research) USA Conference 2006
Interculturalists in the World: Ahead of the Curve or Behind the Times?
Albuquerque, New Mexico November 1-4, 2006

I attended the SIETAR USA Conference 2006 where I participated in a number of sessions. My goals for attending this conference were 1. to experience intercultural communication techniques so that I could adapt them to use in my computing classroom and 2. to place myself in a situation outside my comfort zone. I was wildly successful in placing myself outside my comfort zone since most participants were experienced in some type of intercultural communication training. I chose to place myself into this situation because I want to be reminded of how many of my students feel when they walk into my classroom. Also, Information Technology has no true geographical or cultural boundaries so knowledge of intercultural aspects will become increasingly more important in the IT field.

The topic of many of the sessions revolved around “frame shifting” where the exercises are designed to help the participants view a situation from another perspective. I found the frame shifting exercises to be the most useful for adaptation to the classroom.

Frame Shifting: Thought Bubbles

In Thought Bubbles, participants are given a written description of a situation. The participants are then asked to first create a spoken dialogue between the characters. Then, the participants are asked to create the unspoken thoughts of the characters.

Frame Shifting: My Rule, Your Rule

Participants are asked to create rules at the opposite end of the spectrum on a particular topic. Both rules must be stated in a positive way. For example, when describing a respectful colleague, My Rule might be “tells it like it is” and Your Rule might be “preserves harmony by selecting what to tell.”

Frame Shifting: All Possible Questions

Participants are given a scenario. Participants are broken into two groups with opposing viewpoints. Each group is asked to create a list of questions that they wish the other group would ask them. The lists are exchanged and the groups ask and answer the questions.

In addition to this report, I also prepared a poster for the 2006-2007 MUM CTL Open House and I presented Thought Bubbles at the Part-Time Faculty Orientation in August 2007. The Thought Bubbles exercise was well received and I had one new part-time faculty member tell me that she never realized that you could teach in any other way than the traditional lecture. She was so pleased to learn that she could be creative in her approach.