Icebreakers and energisers in cross-cultural training

Jo Bloxham
Quick bit about me + Kynfolk
Intercultural trainer since 1997

2.5 years working in China - Teacher Training (1995-97)

Youth worker, trainer manager and programme manager of international volunteer exchange programme (VS0), with volunteers from all over the world but in particular UK, Asia and Africa.

15 years with thinkingpeople
www.thinking-people.co.uk working in UK, Ethiopia, Russia and South Africa

And 3 months for Kynfolk!
Kynfolk

Intercultural and Chinese cultural specialists

Primarily working in HE with all staff and students
Introduction to session
aim:

to give us a chance to share our trusted favourites & experience some new short activities we can use to break the ice & energise a tired group!
objectives: by the end of the workshop we will have...

• (If you feel comfortable to) shared trusted favourites (or a new idea) to warm people up and energise them in cross-cultural training
• Reflected on the benefits and potentials downsides of a number of warmer and energiser activities for the purposes of cross-cultural learning
• Thought about how we can tailor these activities to suit our needs
• Shared some sources for getting new ideas
| A | Animal noises                      | N | Name badges ✓       |
| B | Blindfold navigation              | O | Observe the room    |
| C | Cultural form                     | P | Personal Space      |
| D | Derdians etc                      | Q | Quotes on own culture|
| E | Eye contact                       | R | Rule changes        |
| F | Find someone who                  | S | Similarities search |
| G | Global Englishes                  | T | Thumbs/folded arms  |
| H | House drawings                    | U | Use another language|
| I | In their shoes                    | V | Values              |
| J | Jianzi ✓                          | W | What’s in a name    |
| K | The K exercise                    | X | Exchange a cultural greeting |
| L | Line-up activities                | Y | Young/old lady picture |
| M | Map in the room                   |   |                      |
|    |                                    | Z | ?                    |
What types of training are you running?
A few basic questions...
1. How do you feel when someone says "Right! We're going to do an icebreaker!" at the beginning of a session?

2. What's the purpose of an icebreaker? (help people relax, help people get to know each other) an energiser? (wake them up). What's the difference?

3. Do you always use icebreakers/energisers when you are training?

4. What makes a good icebreaker/energiser?
How do we decide what to use?
Making the most of our exercises

- framing
- observation
- support
- debriefing
- linking to real life
Playing with some exercises
Animal noises

useful for checking assumptions, fun things we can learn if connect with other cultures - thanks Ellen O’Brien!
Blindfold buddies
Cultural form

can help people challenge own assumptions about normality, encourage more patience etc

Extract:

Name (please give in the traditional Chinese order):
__________________________________

Date (please use the American form):  ____/____/_______

Start time of the training session (using Ethiopian time):
___________________
Derdians
Albatross
Baffa baffa
Ambassadors Party
Minorians/Majorians etc

can give a real taste of cultural disorientation, make us aware of our assumptions etc
Eye contact

to heighten awareness of our own culture, cultural habits and how much communication preferences can be culturally determined.

1. Pairs
2. One person is A, one person B
3. Both told that A will talk about a favourite subject for 1 minute and that B will actively listen
4. Stop – now A talk for another minute on this or another favourite subject. B should listen but should use 0% eye contact
5. Debrief: How did B feel? How did A feel? What does this tell us?
### Find someone who...

*Dulcie*  
starts people talking, encourages them to do more, find commonalities etc

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Find someone who has experienced culture shock and ask them to tell you in one sentence what it was like.</th>
<th>Find someone who has spent more than 6 months in another country to the one they were born in. Ask them where and talk to them about it at the break-time.</th>
<th>Find someone who has discovered a much-liked food through trying a new type of food. Find out what is was.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Find someone who has talked to someone from another culture in depth this week. Ask if they learned anything.</td>
<td>Find someone who has read a book/novel about cross-cultural working/experiences - ever and ask if they would recommend that text.</td>
<td>Find someone who can speak a second language. Ask if they have learned anything about cultural difference/s from this experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find someone who knows a lot about a cultural or religious celebration that is different to their own religion or culture. Ask them how they learned about it and talk about it at pm break.</td>
<td>Find someone who can explain why the British still have separate taps for hot and cold water rather than mixer taps. get them to explain it.</td>
<td>Find someone who has made a ‘mistake’ in another culture and talk about it at lunchtime.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Global Englishes
to encourage people to enjoy the language diversity on our campuses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singlish</th>
<th>British English</th>
<th>Notes:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrow</td>
<td>To pick on someone</td>
<td>Eg. &quot;Why he arrow me to do this?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Havoc</td>
<td>Wild</td>
<td>Eg. &quot;My son is so havoc he doesn't do his homework and wants to go to clubs!&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Die die</td>
<td>Absolutely</td>
<td>Eg. &quot;Die die I also must pay my rent by today&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gostan</td>
<td>Reverse</td>
<td>Comes from 'to go astern'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whack</td>
<td>Attack</td>
<td>Can be used in the context of attacking a person or a meal (ie. eating ravenously)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BBC, 2015; Bravo-Bhasin, 2012; Milligan, 2004; Jenkins, 2015
Home drawing

to share life experiences
In their shoes
empathy exercise/customer service

not confident = 0
a bit confident = 1
very confident = 2
Jianzi

it can be fun to learn about other cultures
K words

Speak without using any words with K in them
to help people think about the difficulties of communicating in a language that is not your first one
Line-up activities

who is the furthest from home, who has been here the longest, how many siblings you have? etc
Maps in the room
To encourage conversation, curiosity, empathy
Name badges
Decorate your own
to help people try to find commonalities and topics of conversation
Observe the room etc
Do a cultural analysis of beginning of training course (or lunch participants just had)
To increase awareness of how many things in daily life are cultural constructs and different in other parts of the world.

The time the session started?
What was about culture?
Where people sat?
Did they greet and how?
Body language of trainer?
Personal space
to encourage people to think about own physical behaviour in different cultures, heighten awareness of gender issues in cross-cultural working etc
Quotes about our culture
for a more mono-cultural group to think about how they may come across to others and why

Give out quotes of things people have said about eg. British culture and get participants to discuss if these are true, if exaggerated or misunderstood are there are grains of truth?
Rule changes – maths exercise
to help us realise that it is hard for humans to adapt to change


8 - 2 =
12 + 4 =
4 x 3 =
6 ÷ 2 =
9 + 3 =
7 x 4 =
4 - 2 =
8 + 4 =
12 x 2 =
20 + 10 =
- means to multiply
÷ means to add
+ means to divide
x means to subtract
Similarities Search

go and find someone who looks totally different to you
and find 3 things you have in common
Thumbs (or folded arms) to help people remember we often do things because of habit, even when we don’t know why, and that it can feel weird to change!
Use another language

eg. to get into groups
Values

give each person a list of values eg. The future is more important than the past, older people should get more respect etc

In mixed cultural pairs get them to discuss norms in their culture
What’s in a name?

who gave you the name?

a nick name?

what does it mean?

Why were you given it?

do you have any other names?
Exchange greetings

Go round the room and greet other people in a greeting from home or another one you know and teach each other a bit about greeting in that culture. W
Young lady/old lady?
to introduce thinking about perspectives
ball games to work on inter-cultural team-building, learning names, focus on body language etc
Good sources for inspiration
1 word evaluation