

How **Diving** Can Help Students See Other **Perspectives**

Resource :: The O-DIVE Model

The O-DIVE model is a tool you can use to help students of all ages reflect on their interpretations of an observation, event or interaction, as well as explore other perspectives. This model certainly helped me (Anamaria) when I first started teaching in the U.S.

What happened?

The first few weeks I taught at Indiana University in the United States, I was very puzzled by my students' behavior.

They behaved *nothing* like Romanian college students. As their instructor, I could never tell if what they were doing was normal, or not. Was it respectful or disrespectful? Was it appropriate or not?

I just never knew.

One particular instance comes to mind. One day, a student simply got up from his seat and left the room without saying anything. I couldn't believe it! In Romania, students would never do that! If students need to leave the room, they always ask for permission.

I remember standing in front of my students completely panicked about what my reaction should be. Should I stop the student? Should I let him leave? Would he come back?

Panic, panic, panic

If you have ever been abroad – or simply been in situations with people who have work, conflict or learning styles different from you – you know exactly what kind of panic I am talking about. The kind that only goes away after a long, long time of having been immersed in a certain culture. After learning the “rules” of the culture.

But now I know a quicker way to get over the panic.

I often use a tool that helps me stop and reassess an unfamiliar or surprising cross-cultural situation.

It's called **O-DIVE**.

What is the O-DIVE?

Basically, before reacting to a cross-cultural situation that has troubled us (or really any interpersonal situation), we should carefully **Observe** what's going on, then **D-I-V-E** in and figure it out.

DIVE stands for Describe-Interpret-Validate-Explain.

Here's how you use it:

Step 1:

Describe a situation as concretely and objectively as possible, avoiding judgment or personal bias.

Step 2:

Think of several possible *interpretations* of the situation - from your perspective and others'.

Step 3:

Ask several other people for their interpretations of what happened and use them to *validate* yours.

Step 4:

Find an interpretation that most accurately explains what happened and use this to reflect on the situation and *explain* it to yourself.



Only after you have completed all of these steps -- sometimes more than once! -- will you have a good, well rounded understanding of the cross-cultural (or interpersonal) situation that initially troubled you.

And, most importantly, that awful *what is going on* panic goes away.

How does the O-DIVE apply to my story?

When that student suddenly got up and left the room while I was teaching, my first reaction was to stop him.

But then I observed that none of the other students were troubled in the least by this student's behavior. So, I told myself *I must be missing something*, and I decided to reflect on this situation later using the O-DIVE model.

After my class, I went to a U.S. American colleague and objectively described the situation. I said something like, *Sarah, I was in the middle of teaching today and one of my students suddenly stood up and left the room. Is this normal behavior for U.S. college students?*

(Notice how this is different from starting with an interpretation, such as, *Sarah, one of my students was so disrespectful today!*)

Then, after my objective description, I asked Sarah for possible interpretations of my student's behavior from a U.S. American perspective.

She explained that in the U.S., college students are *not* expected to ask for permission to leave the classroom to, for example, use the restroom, and that's probably where the student was going. In fact, it would see awkward if a college student interrupted the class just to ask permission to use the restroom.

I immediately thought back to that situation and realized that the student returned to the classroom a couple of minutes later, which validated my colleague's interpretation.

So, I thought to myself, *the student wasn't being disrespectful; he probably just wanted to use the restroom!* I then realized that he wasn't being intentionally rude; he was just acting in accordance with his "cultural programming."

It would have taken me a lot longer to have come up with this explanation on my own, which is why the O-DIVE model is so valuable. The O-DIVE can spare you that panic, anxiety, and stress that can occur when interacting with people from different cultures.

Using the O-DIVE in the Classroom

In our experience, students sometimes need guidance in appropriately articulating their feelings about, reactions to, and experiences with culture -- and difference in general.

While it's ok if a student reacts with *that's weird!*, it's not ok to leave it there. This is where the O-DIVE model comes in handy.

For example, if students are learning about, let's say, what kids in other countries eat for lunch, and students respond to a meal with a *that's weird!* type of comment, start with the "D" and ask students to *concretely* describe the lunch. If students start making interpretations (it's slimy) rather than descriptions (it's chicken), gently guide them back to concretely describing (there's a clear sauce on the chicken).

Then go to the "I" step, and ask students to talk about their interpretations of what they just described. In this case, you could ask them why they thought the chicken was slimy and why they think it's weird. Ask them how they typically eat chicken, and how people in other parts of the world might react to what the students typically like to eat.

You can also go through the "V" and "E" steps by having students ask several other people for their interpretations, including people from another culture. But even just engaging students in a discussion about their interpretations helps students develop important cross-cultural skills, such as self-reflection and seeing something from another perspective.

Photo Credit

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Note: The O-DIVE model in this document has been adapted from the DIVE model mentioned in this blog post: <http://afsinterculturaleyeyes.spaces.live.com/blog/cns!28199C9415255358!387.entry>.