

# ***Transformative Learning through Intercultural Dialogue***

## ***An Experiential Session***

### **WHO - The People**

Conference participants represent a variety of educational perspectives, although all have an interest in, and many have extensive background in teaching about and promoting transformative learning within their adult learning contexts – both in formal and non-formal institutions. The majority of participants are from North America, although it is hoped that there may be some participants from other countries. Since this is an “experiential session” it is expected that participants are interested in the practical outworking of transformative learning theory as it relates to intercultural contexts.

Rhonda McEwen and Jeanette Romkema will facilitate this interactive session and each bring 25+ years of intercultural teaching experience in the areas of international development, higher education, and organizational training. Both facilitators are committed to the power of Dialogue Education™ to cultivate transformative learning in a wide variety of learning contexts.

### **WHY - The Situation**

The ever-changing global context and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demand transformative thinking. Einstein once said, “A problem cannot be solved with the same type of thinking that created it”. Furthermore, the introduction to this conference states,

*Profound transformations in our world are currently underway on many dimensions — personal, environmental, cultural, societal, and economic. To engage these challenges, we must **collaboratively re-imagine** how we engage individuals, institutions, and societies in learning new capacities and habits of being...(and) strive to envision a more coherent and dynamic praxis for transformative learning in multiple domains and at multiple levels.*

An essential skill to thinking together about global challenges and opportunities is that of intercultural dialogue. The conference itself aims, “to be an embodiment of wise transformative learning praxis” and this session is grounded in both theory and reflective practice as it examines the design of learning encounters that facilitate dialogue within intercultural contexts.

### **SO THAT - The Desired Change**

Participants in this workshop will have considered principles to cultivate effective intercultural dialogue in order to be more thoughtful and intentional in their facilitation and work toward transformative learning in their communities. In this way, we hope they will “collaboratively re-imagine” new possibilities, strategies, and solutions that contribute to just and more sustainable global communities.

### **WHEN - The Time**

This session is from 9:45-10:45 am on Saturday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The total learning time is 60 minutes.

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### **WHERE - The Place**

This session is held in Boardroom IV at the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport Hotel. The room has adequate wall space, flip chart with lots of paper, colored markers, and large colored Post-it notes. Room has moveable chairs.

<b>WHAT ~ The Content</b>	<b>WHAT FOR ~ The Achievement-Based Objectives</b>
Dialogue as a concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined our understanding of dialogue</li> <li>• Considered how dialogue impacts transformative learning</li> </ul>
Dialogue with “strangers”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed the definition of “strangers” and reflected on our interactions with strangers</li> </ul>
Factors that facilitate effective intercultural dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified factors that help to facilitate effective intercultural dialogue</li> <li>• Considered the implications of how effective intercultural dialogue might facilitate transformative learning</li> </ul>
Two core principles of adult learning: respect and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examined two core adult learning principles and compared it with our factors</li> <li>• Determined which factors help to ensure these two core principles within our context of intercultural dialogue</li> </ul>
A model for ensuring effective intercultural dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considered a model which illustrates important factors that ensure safety and respect in diverse contexts</li> <li>• Named 1 factor that you want to implement in your own context for facilitating effective intercultural dialogue</li> <li>• Evaluated the process of “building bridges” in this context and share your insights with a partner</li> </ul>

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### **Welcome!**

#### **Task #1: Introductions, dialogue, and building bridges**

- A. To get to know one another and our ideas about this topic, **consider** the notion of “dialogue”. **Define** it in a short phrase or two and **write** it on a Post-it Note. Please **write** with large print so all can read from a distance.
- B. **Show** your definition to two other group participants you don’t know. **Share** something about yourself, the context of your teaching, and your interest in this topic.
- C. **Post** your definition on the chart and **view** what others have posted.
  - *What do you notice?*
- D. In the large group, **consider** this definition of dialogue and the metaphor of “building bridges”.

The word, “dialogue” derives from two roots: “dia” which means “through” and “logos” which means “the word”, or more particularly, “the meaning of the word.” The image it gives is of a river of meaning flowing around and through the participants.

- From Bohm, Factor, and Garrett (1991), ‘Dialogue – A Proposal’

- *How does this resonate with your own understanding of dialogue?*
- *How does this metaphor connect to your understanding of transformative learning?*



#### **Task #2: Dialogue with “Strangers”**

- A. **Review** this brief definition of “strangers”.

“Strangers” are people who are not members of our own groups and who are different (on the basis of culture, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, social class, or other group memberships).

-- adapted from Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, pp. 3-4

Cf. Hays’ “ADDRESSING Framework on Cultural Influences”, *Connecting across Cultures*, pp. 14-22

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Individually **reflect** on your interactions with strangers, and **consider** the following questions:

- *What do you do when you are interacting with strangers and they are speaking? Thinking about what you're going to say? Listening carefully to strangers? Why?*
- *Do you try to convince strangers of your point of view or try to understand them when you communicate with them? Why?*
- *Are you concerned primarily with yourself, primarily with strangers, or both when you communicate with them? Why?*

-- adapted from Gudykunst, *Bridging Differences*, p. 346

- B. From the insights you've gleaned in your analysis, in pairs **identify** factors that facilitate *effective intercultural dialogue*. **Write** these factors on Post-it Notes, one per note (please write in large print).
- C. **Listen** to this brief explanation of two core principles of adult learning which maximize the possibility of purposeful dialogue.

**Respect:** Teachers demonstrate respect through honoring and inviting the experience and knowledge that adults bring, and those actions are observed and felt by the learners. Learners also need to feel valued and respected by one another, offering a meaningful contribution to the dialogue.

**Safety:** Adults show that they are not only willing but also ready and eager to learn when they feel safe in the learning environment. Safety is ensured not through words but through the behavior of the teachers. Learners can be safe with one another only when they are safe with the teacher and in the learning environment.

- Adapted from the work of Vella

- D. **Examine** your factors again and **determine** which factors help to ensure these two core principles within your context of intercultural dialogue.
- Post** your factors and **read** them to the large group.
- E. **Watch** this short presentation of a possible model which illustrates important factors that ensure safety and respect and contribute to effective intercultural dialogue.
- F. **Compare** this model with our group research on factors for effective intercultural dialogue.
- *What connections do you see between your factors and our proposed model?*

Let's **hear** some of your thoughts.

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### **Task #3: Building bridges toward effective intercultural dialogue**

- A. **Reflect** on a situation or concern within your own intercultural teaching context. On your own, **circle** the one factor that you know will be critical to *facilitate* effective intercultural dialogue in this context and *cultivate* an environment that is conducive to transformative learning.
- B. **Evaluate** the process of “building bridges” in this context and **share** your insights. We’ll **hear** a sample in the large group.



***Thank you for coming!***

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