

TUTORIAL
6.15

Becoming equipped to communicate 5

This tutorial continues to look at the *Becoming Equipped to Communicate* program, focusing on *Level 3: Relating through Sharing Life Stories*.

Introduction

In this tutorial we will look at the next stage of the BEC program, Level 3. At this level, learners are moving from being involved only in the outward behaviour of people, to beginning to try to see and understand the underlying motivations for people's actions, what they appreciate and prioritise in life and what their beliefs are about.

Level 3: Relating through Sharing Life Stories

Read: *BEC* Pages 149-161

These pages give an introduction to the learning activities used during level 3:

- Participant Observation,
- Sharing Life Stories.

Participant Observation continues to be a part of the learning process during Level 3, but less time is spent on it during this stage. Because learners at Level 3 have already spent many hours participating in activities in the community, they should now be looking for new things to do that they have not taken part in before, so that they can continue to learn and broaden their understanding, and ability to engage in community life.

Sharing life stories

This new activity is based on the increased cultural and linguistic ability of a learner at Level 3. They are now able to relate culturally with people and to talk about more complex things with them, using sentences and questions. This allows them to participate with people on a deeper level, and the *Sharing Life Stories* activity gives them a helpful framework to do that and to continue learning at the same time. The focus during the first part of Level 3 is on hearing stories from local people and learning to understand them. During the

second half of Level 3, the learner will tell life stories themselves, both from their own experience and also experiences they have heard told to them by others. This stage follows a natural progression in the learning process, culturally, linguistically and relationally.

Language and culture helpers

You will notice that the time schedule for Level 3 includes four hours per day in the Sharing Life Stories activity. The BEC (p159-160) says, *“This is because at this point in your learning, you want to spend most of your time listening to others as they share stories with you about their lives. But, four hours is a lot of time each day. It is unreasonable to expect that you will be able to spend four hours with a single person every day in your Sharing Life Stories learning exercise. You should try to include lots of others in helping you to learn at this level. This is a great way to get to know them. The daily learning plans for Level 3 will be divided into parts to help you involve more than one person each day.”*

This point is a key one that sometimes gets lost in practice when learners are in a cross-cultural situation. It isn't a simple task to find people in the community with regular time to spend with you, and it is something you will have to actively and continually pursue in order to see it happen. There are often people in the community who *do* have time on their hands and would be very happy to have someone sit and spend time with them and listen to their life stories; older retired people, bored shopkeepers, mothers at a play group, a work mate or colleague, a neighbour during their recreational time, someone wanting to learn some English as an exchange, a person you are helping with garden work or voluntary work, people in hospital, etc. - if you think actively and creatively you will find people to spend time with. The key is to keep challenging yourself and don't settle for one language helper or tutor as your main conversation partner.



Read: BEC Pages 185-186

Look at the Self-evaluation for Level 3 (page 185) noting the numbers of people mentioned in the questions that the learner must have spent time with, hearing and telling life stories. This feature of getting to know and spending time with a number of people in the community is an integral part of the program, based on the eventual goal of speaking into that community with truth.



DISCUSSION POINTS

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1. Imagine you are a Level 3 learner in your own community. Think of some areas of community life that you have never taken part in that would be “gaps” in your understanding if you were trying to understand fully the culture and life of the people in your community.
2. Are there some cultural areas and activities in your community that you would not want to take part in or even to observe? Do you think you would find out about those kinds of activities in a cross-cultural situation, and if so, how?



ACTIVITIES

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1. The activity below is adapted from the website <http://www.lifelearner.org/culture>, *Recreation And Leisure Activities*. This activity will help you to learn more about recreation in your local neighborhood or town by taking part in a recreational activity.

Your goal for this activity is to get into a situation where you are a participant observer in some community activity related to recreation and leisure. This might mean attending a sporting event, a social event, getting into a conversation with someone engaged in a leisure activity, or finding out more about a club or group in your area by talking to its members. As you take part in the activity, follow the instructions for Participant Observation and *observe, listen, respond* and *note*.

Engage with people and be a part of what they are doing, listening to how they talk and being interested in what interests them. Remember, participant observation is not a detached research activity, but it is an engagement with the

activity and the people in a real way. Try to enjoy yourself. Note anything you learn or observe, and gather any research, notes, photos or recordings from the activity.

Below are some of the things you could eventually come to understand about this area by taking part in recreational activities and talking to people about them. You shouldn't go into this activity thinking that you have to answer all of the questions below, these are simply an example of some of the things you would eventually learn about recreation activities in a community if you continued to be a participant observer over a long period of time.

- During which times of the day do people have more leisure? During which times of the year? What do people do in their leisure time? Do they sing, carve, sew, visit, tell stories, travel, go to a movie, watch TV, gamble, etc.? How much time is taken up with these activities? Are they done individually or as a group?
- What do people do when they go to town or to the main shopping or recreation areas? Do people eat out, and if so, how often would they do this? Are there places to just sit and talk? Are there parks and do many people enjoy them? What kind of facilities are available in public places (entertainment, rest rooms, eating)?
- What games do children play? Are any similar to ones played in your own country? What toys do children have? Who makes the toys? Or are they bought commercially? Sketch and describe the production and use of one or more local toys.
- Do adults play games? If so, what and when? What kind of clothing is worn? by men? by women? Is this only appropriate for games and sports? Are any sports gender specific? Is this changing?
- Do any games have a ritualistic significance? Are any used in courting? during the wedding activities? What games do adults play with children? Are these just for amusement, or for teaching?
- What sports are played? By whom? Are these played by people in the neighborhood or only by professionals? Are uniforms worn? Are certain sports played at particular times of the year? What is the general interest level for participation? for cheering?

- What amusements have been introduced as a result of contact with outsiders? Do people enjoy learning a new game? Describe the rules for playing one or more games.
- In which recreational activities would it be appropriate for you to participate? What linguistic or physical skills do you need to develop in order to participate acceptably? How do people try to teach you the rules for participating?