



Inductive Method of Culture Learning

Look and learn

We learn about culture through observation, interpretation, and application (OIA).

Observe – Look, listen, reflect on and experience the text and context. Observe people, environments, interactions, behaviors, language, etc.

Interpret – Develop testable hypotheses of the meaning of your observations. Ask questions of “insiders.” Those inside the culture, not us, are the authority on their own culture and are able to help us interpret what we observe.

Apply – Take specific action based on those interpretations of your observations. Experiences in another culture have the power to transform our thinking, our values, and our behaviors.

Go and do

Culture learning, like all learning, is cyclical, not linear. Ongoing learning requires humility, discipline, skill development, commitment, and perseverance. If you choose to face and embrace the learning experience, you’ll find yourself passing through exhaustion to exhilaration, moving into new places of transformation, freedom, and relationship. But to get to that point, you have to move through the learning process. You have to observe and experience how something is done or believed differently; embrace new and different ways of thinking and doing; accept the reasoning behind this culture’s customs, ways, and decisions, and grow more dependent on God and people.

Think and pray

How did you cycle through the OIA process in this cross-cultural experience? Share your observations. Discuss possible interpretations.

What application do you have for your next experience or conversation?

As good learners, as we cycle back through the OIA process, we remain open to receive correction. What did you learn about yourself that may need to change or be transformed?

Spend a few minutes praying about these things.