

BARNGA

An Intercultural Communication Game

It is very difficult to understand what a person arriving in a new culture experiences. Faced with a whole new cultural reality, certain things may not be understood or may seem inappropriate, shocking or even insulting. What can we do, for example, when we realize that the “message” received by another person is not the “message” we originally communicated? What can we do when we don’t speak the same language as others nor share the same cultural references? How can we reconcile our differences and adapt to different situations?

Barnga is a simulation game that can help address some of these questions. Each group involved in the game starts with a different set of instructions. Because the simulation places them in a situation that is awkward and frustrating, participants are forced to resolve communication problems with people who don’t share their understanding of the rules of the game.

Total Time: 60 - 90 minutes

Explanation and Practice Time: 20 minutes

Game Time: 20 - 30 minutes

Analysis of Game: 20 - 30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Copies of the “Instructions for the tournament” for all participants.
- Some pencils and blank sheets of paper.
- A bell
- A deck of cards for each table. Each deck must be modified so that it includes only the following cards: cards 2 – 7 in each suit as well as all four aces.
- The instructions to play “Five Tricks” (Appendix 1, all ten versions of the game).
- A copy of the “Discussion Guidesheet” (Appendix 3) for the facilitator.

1- Intercultural communication skills that can be learned through the activity:

- How to recognize culture shock.
- Ability to see others has equal partners in problem solving.
- Ability to reject definite truths and to question oneself.
- Ability to understand and reconcile differences in order to facilitate the work of the group.
- How to adapt to different situations.

2-How to organize the simulation:

At least 15 participants are needed to play the game. 5 tables with 3 participants playing at each table is the minimum.

A) Game preparation

Prepare the different versions of the instructions to play « Five Tricks » (see Appendix 1).

Set up tables throughout the room to facilitate the card playing. Number the tables from 1 to 10 (the number of tables will depend on the number of players). Display the table number on each table. Invite the participants to sit at the tables in groups of three or four.

Distribute one pencil, one blank piece of paper, and one deck of cards per table.

The decks of cards should have been modified before the game. Each deck should contain cards 2 – 7 in each suit as well as aces in each suit. There should be 28 cards per deck.

A bell will be needed to start and stop the game.

B) Present the game

Explain the game to participants as follows:

This game is a simulation that focuses on non-verbal communication. The objective of the game is to play cards and to win the game. The winning team will be the first team to reach the table with the highest number.

C) Play the game

1. Give a copy of the “Instructions for the tournament” (see Appendix 2) to each participant. Read the instructions aloud to participants. Emphasize the following two points: the game must be played **in silence** and the objective is to reach the **table with the highest number**.
2. After having read the instructions, collect the “Instructions for the tournament” sheets. It is at this point that **silence** should begin.
3. Distribute the rules of the game as they are explained on the instruction sheets for “Five Tricks” (see Appendix 1). Each group of participants should receive a different version of the game. Make sure that all of the instruction sheets are copied on the same colour of paper so that participants think they are getting the same rules. There are ten versions of the game in all.
4. Start playing. Ring the bell to close a round of play once it is clear that most participants have finished playing. At this point, players should change tables. Give the signal to start a new round of play.
5. Throughout the game, facilitators should observe participants and take note of their reactions. Bring the game to a close when most players have changed tables and they have started to develop common rules at each table.

D) Discuss the game:

Use the “Discussion Guidesheet” (Appendix 3) to start a discussion about the game. This analysis should open up a discussion on how some of the skills and abilities used in the game can be applied in real life situations.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the weakest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Spades are trump. If a player does not have a card in the requested suit, (s)he can play a spade. This is called “trumping”. The strongest spade played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the weakest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	There is no trump in this game.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the strongest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Spades are trump. If a player does not have a card in the requested suit, (s)he can play a spade. This is called “trumping”. The strongest spade played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the strongest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Spades are trump. When it is his/her turn, a player can decide to play a spade, even if (s)he has a card in the requested suit. This is called "trumping". The strongest spade played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the weakest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Spades are trump. When it is his/her turn, a player can decide to play a spade, even if (s)he has a card in the requested suit. This is called "trumping". The strongest spade played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the weakest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Diamonds are trump. When it is his/her turn, a player can decide to play a diamond, even if (s)he has a card in the requested suit. This is called “trumping”. The strongest diamond played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the strongest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Diamonds are trump. When it is his/her turn, a player can decide to play a diamond, even if (s)he has a card in the requested suit. This is called “trumping”. The strongest diamond played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the strongest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Diamonds are trump. If a player does not have a card in the requested suit, (s)he can play a diamond. This is called “trumping”. The strongest diamond played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the weakest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	There is no trump in this game.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

FIVE TRICKS

A card game that is easy to learn and easy to play

Cards	You need 28 cards to play the game: cards from each suit between 2 and 7, and the ace. The ace is the weakest card.
Players	There are generally 3 to 4 players per table.
Dealing the cards	One player shuffles the cards and deals them out one at a time. Each player receives between 4 and 7 cards, depending on how many players there are.
Starting the game	The person who is at the left of the dealer plays first. The others take turns laying down one card each. These cards together make what is called a trick. It is possible that some players may not have any cards left to play for the last trick.
Taking a trick	The person who has played the strongest card takes the trick and sets it aside.
The next round	The person who took the trick starts the next round. This is repeated until all cards have been played.
Following suit	The person who starts the round can play a card of any suit. The other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit if they have one). If a player does not have a card of the same suit, (s)he plays any other card. The trick is taken by the strongest card of the correct suit.
Trump	Diamonds are trump. If a player does not have a card in the requested suit, (s)he can play a diamond. This is called “trumping”. The strongest diamond played takes the trick.
The end of the game	The game ends when all cards have been played. The player with the most tricks wins the game. The player with the least tricks loses.

Appendix 2

Instructions for the tournament

You will have approximately five minutes to study the rules of the card game and to practice in silence. Throughout the practice period and the game, all verbal and written communication is forbidden. You may draw or use gestures, but you may not speak or write.

You must learn the rules of the game by heart because once the five minutes are up, you must hand in your copy of the rules. Once all copies have been gathered, the tournament will begin.

The tournament will consist of several rounds. For each round, there will be a winner and a loser.

The winner of a hand is the person who has taken the most tricks. If there are players who have not finished their hand at the end of the round, the winner is the person who has taken the most tricks until that point. The person who won the most hands during a round is the winner of the round. A round consists of several hands.

Each round will be a few minutes long.

At the end of the round, players will change tables. The player who has won the most hands moves up to the next highest table. (For example, the winner at table 1 moves to table 2.) Look at the table numbers carefully.

The player with the lowest number of hands goes to the next lowest table. (For example, the loser from table 3 moves to table 2.)

The other players stay where they are.

The tables with the highest and lowest numbers (tables 1 and 10) are the exception. The player from the last table who loses stays at that table as does the winner from the last table.

The outcome of a tie will be decided based on the alphabetical order of the players' first names.

Appendix 3

“Discussion Guidesheet”

Phase 1: Description

You can start by saying: “Before we start the analysis of the experience, we will start by learning what you have felt during the game: frustration, happiness, sadness, proudness, etc.”

- What did you think or felt during play?
- What were your greatest frustrations and / or successes during play?

The question of whether or not different groups received different versions of “Five Tricks” will come up. If it comes up early, acknowledge it but do not make an issue out of it; press for other frustrations, successes, etc. But after a while ask how many think there were different versions. Then ask those who do not think so (or who are not sure) what else might have been going on. Eventually confirm the truth but not before there has been ample opportunity for alternate explanations to emerge. Help them understand that each person interpreted the few discrepancies very differently, and that this caused a great deal of consternation, frustration, uncertainty, suspicion, etc.

Phase 2: Analysis

Several major problems arose during Barnga. You can summarize these quickly.

- During the game, all did their best, but each group was operating out of a different set of circumstances and ground rules.
- Many discovered or suspected that the rules were different, but didn’t always know what to do to bridge the differences.
- Even if people knew how the rules were different, they didn’t always know what to do to bridge the differences
- Communicating with the others is difficult; it demands sensitivity and creativity.
- The above statements are true even when almost everything is the same and the differences are very few or hidden. In fact, when the differences are very few or hidden, it may be even more difficult to bridge them than when they are many and obvious.
- In spite of many similarities, people have differences in the way they do things. You have to understand and reconcile these differences to function effectively in a group.

Questions to ask to participants:

- What specific real-life situations does Barnga simulate?
- Have you ever had an experience where there was a “rule difference” you didn’t know about?
- How did your view of things change once you became aware of the difference? In retrospect, how could you have handled the situation differently?
- Are there any similarities between the Tournament rules in Barnga and real-life “movement rules”?
- Choose a couple of the situations. What are the underlying causes of the problems which they raise?

- What does the game experience suggest about what to do when you are in the situation in the real world? (Try to remember what you did during the game which “worked”)
- What is the most important thing you have learned after playing Barnaga?