Beispiel für einen *critical incident*

Fabian, a German teenager, has an Indian exchange partner at his house. To teach him something about the German culture and German food Mrs Meyer, Fabian’s mother, makes a traditional German Rindergulasch for his welcome dinner and spends a lot of time working in the kitchen. Then the whole family and Rajit sit down at the dinner table and Mrs Meyer serves rice and Gulasch to all of them. Although the family knows that Rajit is not a vegetarian, he doesn’t touch the food at all and looks down at his hands during the whole meal. He just occasionally takes a quick glance at his plate and the family members. Mrs Meyer is pretty worried and a little offended, too, particularly because Rajit doesn’t offer an explanation for his behaviour and doesn’t even eat the rice after she has told him that he needn’t eat the meat, if he doesn’t want to. What has gone wrong?

- Rajit is disturbed by the presence of Mrs Meyer as men and women don’t usually eat together in Indian families.
- Due to his religious beliefs, Rajit may only eat some types of meat. As he doesn’t want the Meyers to feel uneducated, he doesn’t tell them.
- Rajit feels offended to have been given food without being asked as Indians only accept food when they have been asked more than once.
- Rajit never eats before the whole family has spoken the usual prayer. As he doesn’t want to offend the Meyers, he doesn’t tell them.
In many Indian families women take their food separately in the kitchen. However, it is not uncommon that women are present during meals, as the wives of foreign guests or business partners take their food with the men. So the first statement doesn’t fully explain Rajit’s behaviour.

This statement is the most likely explanation for Rajit’s behaviour as many Indian people are Hindus (about 80%) and therefore don’t eat any beef. As the sauce of the Gulasch will most likely have touched the rice on the plate as well, Rajit has to refuse the food due to religious beliefs but obviously doesn’t want the Meyers to feel ignorant of his culture.

Although this may not be a likely explanation for Rajit’s behaviour, this could happen with a person from an Arab country, where it is common only to accept food after having been asked three times. Declining food shows good manners and prevents a person from appearing greedy.

Rajit is most likely a Hindu so he wouldn’t usually say prayers at the kitchen table. However, he could maybe refuse eating as it is quite common to offer a small part of the food at the house altar saying prayers and then eating the blessed food before starting a meal. So if he is a really strict Hindu this could be a reason for his behaviour as well.