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## A Showcase of the ICLE SIG's Activity Initiative (AI)

### Foreword

As mentioned in the preface of these proceedings, the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) Intercultural Communication in Language Education Special Interest Group's (ICLE SIG) main objective is to provide a platform for language teachers to bridge Intercultural Communication (IC) theory with their everyday practice as educators. Under this context, in our 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference (2022) we introduced to the public one of our many efforts to accomplish this end, namely the Activity Initiative (AI). The ICLE SIG AI is intended to be a repository of IC-related practical activities that teachers can access and apply in their classrooms. It can be accessed here:



Given that the publication of these proceedings is also yet another venue for fulfilling the abovementioned ICLE SIG mission, we hereby present you one of the Activity Initiative's entries, but with a twist: we asked its author to write for us a detailed theoretical rationale of it. The activity in question is titled BARNGA, and its author, **Bruno Jactat**, kindly accepted to elaborate upon the theoretical underpinnings of why and how this activity can be used in the classroom to generate *Oz moments*, which are an important part of the intercultural experience. It is our sincere hope that this enhanced, peer-reviewed version of one of our AI entries, titled ***Simulating OZ Moments in the Classroom with the BARNGA Activity***, can constitute a useful example of an actionable strategy for bringing IC learning into the language classroom.

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## Simulating OZ Moments in the Classroom with the BARNGA Activity

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### What is an OZ moment?

As we all know, going abroad obviously elicits intercultural phenomena. Also one might have, within one's own familiar surroundings, equally encountered a situation that feels unusual or even alien. Surely, foreign tourists and sojourners, products from abroad, movies and all sorts of media also reach our homeland and may bewilder us. Shaules (2015) describes this *Oz moment* as "a feeling of disorientation or surprise when encountering novel surroundings or hard-to-interpret phenomena" (p. 49). He derives this expression from the classic movie *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), in which the heroine, Dorothy, whose house on the Kansas grasslands is swept up and away by a tornado into the sky, lands in a fantasy realm. As she opens the front door to peer out, she discovers a completely new place and can hardly believe her eyes, as it is so distant and different from her domestic mid-west home or anything she's seen before. This moment of surprise, when she exclaims to her dog Toto "We're not in Kansas anymore!", is the epitome of that experience when one sets foot in a totally unfamiliar place. Every one of us has certainly experienced *Oz moments* to some degree or another when we leave our habitual surroundings or when unusual situations arise in our home environment.

However, no need to fly over the rainbow to the fantasy land of the Munchkins to experience contrasting cultural landscapes. Even within the Anglo-Saxon world, minor differences might elicit major surprises. Marta Zielinska (2016) describes how moving to London from the USA brought many *Oz moments* such as seeing all the people driving on the left hand side, which made her frown more than once, and thinking: "That's so annoying, why couldn't they just drive on the right side like the rest of Europe? God I almost got hit by a car!". Or, the other way around, the British freelance travel writer Jo Fitzsimons (2017), who upon visiting the USA and being startled by the sheer number of homeless people, comments "(being) one of the richest countries in the world [...] the disparity of wealth and the

resultant number of homeless people in the USA still shocks me even after several visits. The fact that most people blank out their homeless counterparts shocks me more.”

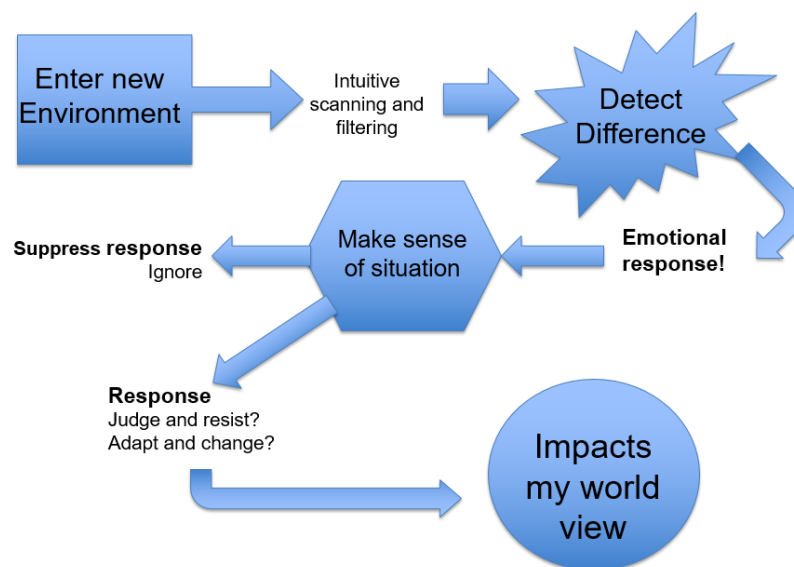
Stark contrasts between what is familiar and what isn't creates some element of shock which in turn induces either positive emotions (Dorothy is awed by the beautiful fairy world she discovers) or negative ones (frustration at people driving on the wrong side of the road...).

### Ok, but, how do OZ moments feel?

If we unexpectedly no longer feel insulated by what Pierre Bourdieu terms our *habitus* (1972, p.282), i.e. our acquired habitual social knowledge, we may feel very uneasy all of a sudden. We may even react emotionally if not irrationally. *Figure 1* shows how this automated process takes a regular pattern: stepping into a new environment prompts the brain to scan for similarity vs. novelty and it makes an immediate assessment as to whether or not that environment is safe. The brain actually scans its internal models of *habitus* and, if there is a mismatch, an alarm will go off prompting the notice of: “Oh we're not in Kansas anymore!” So noticing the gap between what is established as normalcy in our mind and the incongruous reality of what is in front of us, will either activate an engaging emotion “Oh, this is wonderful!” or an alarming one “Are they crazy of what?!”. Those reactions are deeply embedded into our interpretive schemas of how we assume the world is supposed to function.

**Figure 1**

*Anatomy of an Oz moment*



Note: The above diagram is a reprint from Shaules, J. (2015). Reproduced with permission

Furthermore, these schemas underlining emotions are culturally learnt. Accordingly, the emotions they trigger are likewise "... biological as well as socio-cultural in nature" (Mesquita, 1992). The schemas forming *habitus* are made of regularities between environment and emotional components which are neurologically hard-wired. That is to say that one given situation quite systematically produces one set of emotions and behaviors. Moreover, specific meaning is attached to these reactions. Indeed, getting *angry* might mean "things are not supposed to be this way: please adopt an acceptable behavior". Or *fear* might mean "I gotta get out of here, I don't belong, I don't know how to handle this, it's dangerous" or yet still, you might feel *frustrated* because you realize that you are completely inadequate in terms of that other culture's norms and cannot figure out what is happening and what to do about it. When this "What's going on?!" pops into one's mind, it is more often a telltale sign that an *Oz moment* has just surfaced.

An emotional reaction does not happen in a void, but inevitably calls for some decision-making and action. Now one might decide to make sense of the situation and take action either by judging and resisting the situation or otherwise by adapting and bringing about some change in one's own habitual reactions to such a situation. Whatever we then choose, will have a cognitive impact that affects us in the long run, either by reinforcing some of our prejudices or, in contrast, by making us more permeable to subsequent intercultural encounters.

What we would like to foster in our students is the latter attitude: taking on a new perspective and understanding of the situation in order to give oneself more options; in other words, to become more flexible with intercultural contact, which is to be able to make the best possible choices when faced with otherness.

***But wait a minute! Isn't an Oz moment the same as culture shock?***

Not exactly. An *Oz moment* is an encounter with a totally new situation, which can turn out to be an *Aha!* moment, like *Eureka! I got it!* or a *What in the world?!* moment. It sparks an immediate reaction. Culture shock is in a sense similar to the *Oz moment* in that it "is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse." Oberg (1954, p.1). However, in contrast to the *Oz moment*, culture shock seems to build up over time until it reaches a threshold where it becomes oppressive. It is a phenomenon more pervasive in time, probably an accumulation of *Oz moments* which generate resistance and anxiety over time. Many writers have designed culture shock models with various stages, usually 4 or 5. Adler's model of transitional experience (1975), for

example, delineates five phases: contact, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, independence). These phases chronicle the way a sojourner experiences his stay in a foreign environment over a certain span of time (from a few months to a few years).

The *Oz moment* usually arises from a specific event. Although culture shock can also be caused by a sudden encounter, it is most likely the result of an aggregation of situations where one feels cut off from one's *habitus* (one's habitual cultural cues), when one constantly comes up against situations dealt with in estranged ways, and endures a steady check upon one's own cultural values. To top it all, the saying "In Rome, do as the Romans do", implies that one is expected to follow the rules like the locals do albeit the fact that the rules of the hosting environment are never explicitly clarified to the newcomer. Such a situation produces frustration; sometimes exasperation. Losing one's bearings leads to many disappointments, often times to homesickness and in extreme cases to depression; the undeniable signs of severe culture shock.

In contrast, an *Oz moment* allows for an opportunity to actually review some of our own cultural givens, those we take for granted, and with the right tools, we could try to suspend judgment for a moment in order to figure out what is going on. Getting help, asking for explanations, explaining one's dilemma, doing a bit of introspection can all be constructive ways to attempt to be more flexible with the novel situation. This attitude can alleviate some of the forthcoming, yet unavoidable culture shock.

### ***Ok, but can I really simulate an OZ moment in a classroom?***

So how can we educate students to become more aware of the mechanisms underlying intercultural phenomena and, more specifically in this case, an *Oz moment*? Abdallah-Pretceille (2017, p.96) believes that teachers should help foster intercultural skills that develop the "... ability to orient oneself in a strange and foreign culture in order to understand culture 'in-action' and not culture as an object" (author's translation). A well-thought-out simulation game makes an ideal tool to put students 'in-action' in order for them to experience the feelings and behaviors that arise spontaneously from such odd encounters.

Abdallah-Pretceille (2017, p.96) adds that "It is less a question of learning the culture of the Other than of learning the relationship to the Other in its universality and singularity". Therefore, intercultural competence is not so much about learning facts about a particular group of people, but rather learning more about how to interact with them, as a way to manage one's own identity while taming stereotypes and circumventing the compelling

reactions triggered by *habitus*. The goal of such activities should be two-fold: first to become aware of ingrained behaviors that might prove ill-suited when in a foreign context, and secondly, to experience how to encounter the Other. It is definitively not about learning the culture of the Other.

A parallel can be found in Hall's (1976) iceberg analogy of culture in which he distinguishes surface culture (tangible things related to a group of people such as objects, monuments, food, history, etc.) and deep culture (the feelings, ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that are intangible and at first invisible). Surface culture can be learned. Deep culture needs to be experienced.

How can instructors help learners of a foreign language experience aspects of deep culture? One way is by having them actively participate in well-designed simulation games which move them out of their usual comfort zone and which bring about unexpected situations they will have to deal with. This entails transformative learning while actively participating in the activity. Puren (2002) calls this *co-cultural learning*; a dimension in which students develop new models of understanding through cooperative activities leading toward intercultural competence. *Co-cultural* simulation games provide a pedagogical transposition of these phenomena by putting the students in a situation where they will experience firsthand, and often unknowingly, the phenomena the instructor is trying to have them perceive. The debriefing after the activity allows for insight into what happened and new understanding of the mechanics of the specific intercultural phenomena. Finally, strategies can be elicited from the participants directly as to how to manage these situations, and the instructor can supply tips and tools that can further enhance their intercultural skills to alleviate some of the stressful impact such encounters can create.

In the following pages, I will describe the BARNGA activity, which is an example of an in-class simulation that can potentially elicit the array of reactions that are representative of *Oz moments*. The central idea is to provide an experiential framework where students can realize, in a split second, that something, based on one's normative assumptions, is not right. Participants will display a smorgasbord of reactions: some will resist the *Oz moment*, others will try to blend with it, yet still others will be simply puzzled or continue as if nothing was happening. Whatever their reactions, those behaviors are what you, as the facilitator, are looking for: becoming conscious of our unconscious motives is indeed the first step to handle an *Oz moment*.



# The BARNGA Activity

## 1. Overview and Objectives

### Activity Overview

In this classic simulation activity, participants play a simple card game in silence. They do not know that they are all playing with slightly different rules. Since they are only allowed to communicate through gestures and pictures, at some point they have to solve the discrepancies they observe in the other players' way of playing the game.

### Learning Objectives

General Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To explore cross-cultural communication styles.</li></ul>
Specific Objectives (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To gain an awareness of cross-cultural communication styles</li><li>• To briefly experience dissonance regarding assumptions and judgments about other groups based on one's own norms</li><li>• To develop strategies to deal with an Oz moment.</li></ul>

Keywords	Oz moment, communication styles, surface culture, norms, printable, card game
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## 2. Activity Context

This activity can be applied in any Intercultural Communication training or SLA training in which communication style awareness is desirable or needed. Since it requires a minimum awareness on one's own communication style, I suggest it should be applied to participants of Junior High School level and up.

Students

Number of students	16 Min. 50 Max.
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Do students need to use a second language?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
What is the second language?	The material instructions are written in English, but any other L2 is possible if the teachers translates rules to the target language.
Level(s) in target language:* * <i>These levels are approximations; use your judgement</i> * For activities related to English, please try to allocate the minimum level within the continuum on the right. * See <i>Appendix A</i> at the end for reference about these mastery levels.	<p>√ Intermediate   CEFR B1   IELTS 3.5-4.5   TOEIC 500-700</p> <p>√ Advanced-Intermediate   CEFR B2/C1   IELTS 5.0-6.5   TOEIC 700-900</p> <p>√ Advanced   CEFR C1 / C2   IELTS 7.0 +   TOEIC 900+</p>

Comments

If used under a SLA context, the above minimum level requirements are relevant (see Appendix). However, this activity can also be carried out on L1 when the objective of the activity is to trigger reflections on ethnocentrism, judgements and assumptions. In the latter case, all activity instructions and handouts should be translated into the target language.

### 3. Activity Materials & Prep

#### Activity Duration

Total duration in minutes:	75-90 minutes
How many sessions?	1
Any homework?	No

#### Materials

Material # 1 Title:	1 deck of cards per table
Material Type:	Stationary
Material Access:	Teachers can purchase locally

Material #2 Title:	1 identical guide sheet for all tables, in one color
Material Type:	Printed handout
Material Access:	<a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IHZekmOwnOrzM26e9Byazz5WiYuk6tFC/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IHZekmOwnOrzM26e9Byazz5WiYuk6tFC/view?usp=sharing</a>

Material #3 Title:	1 different rule sheet per table, in another color
Material Type:	Printed handout
Material Access:	<a href="https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IHZekmOwnOrzM26e9Byazz5WiYuk6tFC/view?usp=sharing">https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IHZekmOwnOrzM26e9Byazz5WiYuk6tFC/view?usp=sharing</a>

#### Set-Up Instructions

1. Arrange tables into 5 to 6 islands
2. Set 1 deck of cards per table (Material #1) Use only Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, & 7 and discard other cards

3. Put one guide sheet on each table (Material #2). The guide sheets should be printed on a color A4 so that you can recognize them immediately from a distance.
4. Put one game rule sheet on each table (Material #3). The game rule sheet should be printed on another color A4 so that you can distinguish it from the guide sheet.
5. Seat 4-6 students / table (island)
Estimated Set Up Time (min.): 5

## 4. Activity Description

Suggested Time	Activity Instructions
5 min	Introduce BARNGA The goal for this activity is to learn to communicate effectively but in silence.
10 min	Practice - Participants read rules and practice BARNGA (Material #1+2)
20 min	Tournament - Facilitator collects rules. - Tournament: Remind students not to talk, write or sign words during the tournament - Every 5 minutes have them decide silently on the winner & loser and have them move up or down one table as stated on the guide sheet.
5 min	Debrief (Getting Started) - Ask everyone to hold their comments so the whole class can hear what they have to say.
10 min	Debrief (Descriptive - you can put these questions up on a ppt) - What was going through your mind when...? A) BARNGA was introduced B) you first began the card game

	<p>C) the rules were taken away</p> <p>D) you had to move to another table</p> <p>E) you played with those from other tables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Did your thoughts and feelings change during the game?</li> <li>- What were your greatest successes and frustrations?</li> </ul>
20 min	<p>Debrief (Applied - you can put these questions up on a ppt)</p> <p>In groups (10min) then all together (10min)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What specific "real-life" situations does BARNGA simulate?</li> <li>- What does the simulation suggest about what to do when you are in this situation in the "real world?"</li> <li>- What were the underlying causes of the problems that arose in this session?</li> <li>- Have you ever had an experience where there was a rule difference that you didn't know about?</li> <li>- When are you likely to encounter situations in the real world like BARNGA?</li> </ul>
5 min	<p>Closing Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Synthesize the main points of the discussion</li> </ul>

## 5. Additional Information

Tips during the activity:

<p>Facilitator tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Go over the instructions above on how to facilitate this activity.</li> <li>- Print out the necessary material to hand out to the players. Be careful when printing logistics: guidelines and rules need to be duplicated onto different colored papers for best effect.</li> <li>- The only thing not provided here are the decks of playing cards you will need in order to get this simulation going.</li> <li>- Before starting the tournament, ensure that participants have figured out the rules and help them if necessary. Some tables understand the rules faster than others.</li> <li>- Remind participants to keep score as explained on the guide sheet</li> <li>- After each round, players should change tables as explained on the guide sheet</li> </ul>
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- Remind participants to play in silence
- End round one after 5 minutes
- Hold 3 or 4 rounds, but don't tell participants – just end after they have played about 20 minutes and then announce the end of the tournament

#### Post-activity suggestions

##### Debrief (Take-Aways)

- On an index or debriefing sheet, write one important thing you learned from BARNGA today.
- Collect index sheet and re-distribute them randomly.
- Ask a few people to read aloud the card they now have.

#### Additional application scenarios (optional):

##### Classroom praxis

We have found that mixing foreign students with Japanese students has had the most illuminating effects on the group dynamics.



When participants notice that others may not be playing by the same rules, they might internally respond with thoughts such as: Why are they not playing by the same rules? Is he trying to cheat us? She shouldn't be playing that way! Wait a minute, give me that card back, it's mine! We could observe how a group of Japanese players managed to avoid conflict by negotiating new rules together in order to preserve the harmony and keep the game going. On the other hand, a table that had two Frenchmen and two Japanese players saw the game come to a standstill as the French participants got into a silent but animated discussion with many annoyed gestures and facial expressions, drawing nervously to try to get one another to follow what was thought to be the correct rules. They were obviously trying to show each other that the other was wrong or cheating and that he should follow the rules. This was happening while the two Japanese players watched bemused.

These reactions provide the visible material to discuss reactions, assumptions, expectations, communication styles and feelings. Your role as a facilitator is to help the participants draw from this rich pool of data that they have created throughout the game. Enjoy the fun with your students!

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## Appendix A

TOEFL	IELTS	TOEIC	Cambridge exam	CEFR Level	Skill level
 Comparison chart of English certificates to European levels					HigherEd 
118-120	9		CPE	C2	
<b>115-117</b>	<b>8.5</b>		<b>CPE</b>	<b>C2</b>	Mastery or proficiency
110-114	8	975-990	CAE / CPE	C2/C1	
102-109	7.5	966-974	CAE	C1	
<b>94-101</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>945-965</b>	<b>CAE</b>	<b>C1</b>	Effective operational proficiency
79-93	6.5	900-960	FCE	C1/B2	
<b>65-78</b>	<b>5.5-6.0</b>	<b>785-940</b>	<b>FCE</b>	<b>B2</b>	Vantage or upper intermediate
53-64	4.5-5	785-795	FCE	B2/B1	
41-52	4	670-780	PET	B1	
<b>35-40</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>550-665</b>	<b>PET</b>	<b>B1</b>	Threshold or intermediate
<b>30-34</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>225-545</b>	<b>KET</b>	<b>A2</b>	Waystage or elementary
19-29	2.0-2.5	171 -220		A1	
<b>0-18</b>	<b>1.0 - 1.5</b>	<b>120 -170</b>		<b>A1</b>	Breakthrough or beginner

Source: <http://www.higheredme.com/2017/04/11/english-test-comparison/>

### Author's Biography

Bruno Jactat is specialized in Second Language Acquisition, Communication Strategies and Listening Competence Skills. He currently teaches French as a second language, English academic writing and French linguistics. He provides teacher training in Japan and abroad on the Immediate Method and topics bridging neuroscience and education. Correspondence should be sent to: [jactat@gmail.com](mailto:jactat@gmail.com)