

Nationalities vs. Stereotypes

Javier Salazar, University of Tsukuba

salazarjavier@gmail.com

1. Overview and Objectives

Activity Overview

Stereotypes are part of human nature ... and this in spite of the fact that they are among the many root causes of social problems such as racism, discrimination, xenophobia and even wars. There is a vast body of research in social psychology that suggests that “cognitive biases” determine how we perceive others that are labeled as the “Other” due to their preferences, interests, affiliations, gender/sexual orientation, ethnicity or nationality. In this sense, although cognitive biases constitute an important mechanism for humans to make sense of their environment (and the people that inhabit it) they inevitably lead to the formation of stereotypes. Even more, these stereotypes tend to be largely unconscious; in the sense that humans are usually unaware of how their own biases shape their perceptions of the “Other”. When it comes to learning a foreign language (and ultimately communicating with the “Other” through it) stereotype awareness becomes an essential element of true intercultural communication. In this activity, student will be “tricked” into making explicit the stereotypes they may (or may not) have of people from other nationalities, as a means to eliciting stereotype awareness.

Learning Objectives

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| General Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To elicit awareness of the stereotypes students may have of people with other nationalities. |
| Specific Objective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify differences in the meaning of words such as “nationality”, “ethnicity” and “affiliation”. To identify the information sources that contribute to the student’s own personal stereotype formation processes. |

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| Keywords | stereotypes, surface culture, deep culture, intercultural awareness, communication-based activity |
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2. Activity Context

This activity was originally designed for an “Intercultural Communication” course for 1st year students at a university in Japan. Regardless, it can be applied to any SLA teaching context in which stereotype awareness would be required/desirable, from Junior/High School level and up. The second part of the activity though is very specifically geared towards SLA in Japan though. If you wish to apply this activity to any other non-Japanese context, some adjustments/adaptations are required.

Students

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| Number of students | 1 Min. 100 Max. |
| Do students need to use a second language? | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |
| What is the second language? | English |
| Level(s) in target language:* * These levels are approximations; use your judgement * For activities related to English, please try to allocate the minimum level within the continuum on the right. | Elementary school or younger Beginner CEFR A1 IELTS 1.0-2.0 TOEIC 120-220 Pre-intermediate CEFR A2 IELTS 2.5-3.0 TOEIC 225-500 √ Intermediate CEFR B1 IELTS 3.5-4.5 TOEIC 500-700 √ Advanced-Intermediate CEFR B2/C1 IELTS 5.0-6.5 TOEIC 700-900 √ Advanced CEFR C1 / C2 IELTS 7.0 + TOEIC 900+ |

Comments

The selection of the above minimum level of required English mastery stems from the fact that in order to carry-out this activity, students will need to hold semi-structured short conversations about their perceptions of people from foreign cultures. The author judges that, for example, in an EFL educational setting, at least a high CEFR A2 level (see Appendix) but better B2 is required in order to being able to carry on this task. However, if this activity is meant to be applied just for stereotype awareness, irrespective of it being in an SLA setting or not, then the above mastery level requirements **do not apply** as the activity can be done in the students’ L1.

3. Activity Materials & Prep

Activity Duration

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| Total duration in minutes: | About 90 minutes, minimum. |
| How many sessions? | 1 session of 90 minutes or 2 of 45 minutes. |
| Any homework? | Yes, optional. To be assigned at the end of the class. |

Materials

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| Material # 1 Title: | Nationalities Slideshow |
| Material Type: | Digital Slideshow |
| Material Access: | https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bAt17lmwhdTi_on0lg8NCP7E3Qi0bcT3/view?usp=sharing |

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| Material #2 Title: | Japanese Modern Day Ninja News Stories |
| Material Type: | Webpage |
| Material Access: | News Story 1: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41750080 News Story 2: https://www.japanawaits.com/chance-to-graduate-with-a-ninja-studies-degree/ |

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| Material #3 Title: | Japanese Modern Day Ninja News Videos |
| Material Type: | Youtube video |
| Material Access: | Video 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlwpZQ0KwmA Video 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wti9578-XSI |

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| Material #4 Title: | A stereotype causes more than 220.000 yen in losses |
| Material Type: | Webpage |
| Material Access: | In English: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46030622 In Japanese: https://www.bbc.com/japanese/46040178 |

Set-Up Instructions

1. For this activity to produce the desired effects, **students must NOT know/be aware that the topic/theme of the class is "Stereotypes"**. It is of utmost importance that the actual content of the class not to figure in any sort of syllabus, class schedule or class handout given before the class. The reason for this is that, as explained in the activity instructions below, students will be "tricked" into saying which stereotypes they have about people from other nationalities. If they know beforehand that the class is about stereotypes, given that the word "stereotype" can have negative connotations, then they might become resistant to explicitly speaking about their stereotypes and thus, hampering the process of becoming aware of their own stereotypes.
2. If for whatever reason, it is required of the instructor to inform/disclose/identify the contents of the class in a syllabus or a similar document, it is recommended to identify it either with its "trick" name: "Nationalities" or to label it with an obscure nomenclature such as "Intercultural Communication Topic # ____".

4. Activity Description

| Suggested Time | Activity Instructions |
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| Part 1 | |
| 1 min | Introduce the class by informing students that today's topic is "Nationalities of the World". You may show Slide #1 of Material #1. |
| 4 min | <p>Put students in pairs or trios. Instruct students that you are about to show them a few slides of people from other countries. They are to discuss with their peers what they know/what they have heard/what image do they have of people from the nationalities shown. If necessary, you may introduce target language such as:</p> <p>"Q: What image do you have of people from _____?" "A: I think that people from _____ are _____."</p> |
| 20 min | <p>Show slide #2. Give students 2 minutes to discuss. Then show slide #3 and ask them to do the same. You may ask them to change conversation partners every 2 or 3 slides, so students have the chance to speak with more than one or two of their classmates.</p> <p>At this point in the activity, you must be very careful of the national background composition of your class. Refrain from showing a slide from a nationality of one of your students, as it might produce a situation in which a student expresses negative stereotypes about another student's nationality. If you need to vary the slides in the</p> |

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| | <p>attached material, you may use other nationality(ies) taken directly from the creator of the slides at: https://www.mes-english.com/flashcards/files/nationalities_flash.pdf</p> |
| Part 2 | |
| 2 min | <p>Here is where you disclose to your students that you have been tricking them all along so they could make explicit the stereotypes they (consciously or unconsciously) hold of people from other countries. You may do so by asking the class:</p> <p>T: What is today's class topic? Ss: Nationalities!</p> <p>T: No, that is not what you have been talking about for the last 20 minutes. I did tell you that the topic was "Nationalities", but what you have actually been speaking about is the STEREOTYPES you have about the people from those countries!</p> <p>You may show slides 11-13 for this effect.</p> |
| 3 min | <p>Explain the definition of "stereotype". Stress that it is completely normal and human to have them (so students do not feel that you are accusing them of stereotyping others). Explain the basics of stereotype formation. Stress that, even if a particular stereotype might be based in <u>some</u> element of truth, it is usually an exaggerated/selective/unrepresentative version of "truth". Hence the offensive/demeaning/discriminatory/mistaken nature of certain stereotypes.</p> <p>You may show slides 14-16 for this effect.</p> |
| 10 min | <p>Here you should introduce how stereotypes are not only formed on the basis of "nationality" but, also on locality, affiliation, ethnicity, gender/sexual orientation, etc.</p> <p><u>If you are using this activity in a Japan-centric context</u>, you may use slide #17 to elicit responses from your students (either by you asking them directly or putting them in pairs/trios so they can discuss it) about which other stereotypes they have of other non-nationality based groups.</p> <p><u>If you are not using this activity in a Japan-centric context</u>, then you may adapt the slides for discussing groups that are relevant to your context.</p> |

Part 3

(This part is entirely Japan-centric. If you are using this activity in another context then you may either adapt this part or skip it and go directly to Part 4)

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| 5 minutes | <p>It's time to turn the tables. Here you use an example of a stereotype some foreigners have about the Japanese to elicit the discussion of the origin of stereotypes.</p> <p>Show slide #19. Then ask students to wonder why some foreigners might have that stereotype of the Japanese (either by discussing it in groups or by asking them directly).</p> |
| 10 minutes | <p>Either have students read the news stories from Material #2 (if they have the English mastery level to do so) and/or show the videos of Material #3.</p> <p>Use these materials to make students realize the role that media (news stories, movies, manga, anime) have on the formation of stereotypes. Have them discuss what other sources might influence the stereotypes some foreigners have about the Japanese.</p> |
| 10 minutes | <p>Now let's examine more stereotypes about the Japanese. Show, slides #20-25 and have them discuss in pairs or trios these stereotypes. Have them wonder to what extent these stereotypes have an element of truth or not. Likewise, keep compelling them to identify the reasons/sources by which foreigners might have this image about the Japanese.</p> |
| 5 minutes | <p>Stress that not all stereotypes are necessarily negative. Show slides # 27 & 28 for this effect. Do the same as the step before, in terms of having them discuss the "truth" and source of these stereotypes.</p> |
| 5 minutes | <p>It's time to turn the tables one more time. Put students in pairs or trios. Ask them to discuss the stereotypes they uttered at the beginning of the class when the "nationality" slides were shown. Ask them to address:</p> <p>"Now that you know what stereotypes some foreigners might have about you, how do you think they feel about the stereotypes you have about them?"</p> |

Part 4

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| 5 minutes | <p>Have students read the news story of Material #4. In English if they have the required mastery level, in Japanese if they don't.</p> |
| 5 minutes | <p>Put them in pairs or trios. Have them discuss the questions on slide # 29.</p> <p>The idea is to highlight the fact that stereotypes have REAL consequences...they are not just an interesting topic to be discussed in a class. This is essential for the last step.</p> |
| 5 minutes (Optional) | <p>For homework, ask students to write a short essay (3 paragraphs, number of words to be decided by you) about how they think the stereotypes they have about foreigners might hamper their ability to effectively communicate with them in the future. Tell them to write about:</p> <p>1st Paragraph: A stereotype(s) they've identified they had about a particular culture,</p> |

nationality, ethnicity, affiliation. Etc.

2nd Paragraph: Ask them to write about a hypothetical/imaginary situation in which they graduate from University, and on their first job they happen to have work colleagues who belong to the group(s) they have stereotypes about (the ones they wrote in the 1st paragraph). How do they think this will affect their ability to communicate/work with such colleagues?

3rd Paragraph: Ask them to write about what possible solutions they can think of to what they wrote in the 2nd paragraph.

5. Additional Information



Post-activity suggestions:

After students hand in their essays, it's a good idea to do a follow-up discussion about what they wrote. Put them in pairs or trios and ask them to verbally share with their groupmates their reflections from the essay.

Acknowledgements:

All of the nationality slides were taken from MES English (<https://www.mes-english.com/>) . The author of this activity has no link nor affiliation with the author of the slides but would like to acknowledge and send words of gratitude to the author. MES English specifies on its website that their resources can be used freely as long as they are credited to them. It is in this spirit that this resource is being used.

Appendix

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

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