

Making the Familiar Strange

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1. Overview and Objectives

Activity Overview

In this activity, students read and enter questions about a text purportedly written by an anthropological observer of a foreign culture. In fact, the practices described in the text are very familiar to the students: they are part of Japanese lifeways and all students in the class are intimately familiar with life in Japan. The intention is to make the familiar strange.

Learning Objectives

General Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To understand that the way outsiders see us is different from the ways we see ourselves.
Specific Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To see a place you know well through the eyes of a professional observer.To understand how professionals observe

Keywords	intercultural awareness, culture self-awareness, identity, study abroad, ethnographic observation
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2. Activity Context

This activity was conducted as part of a pre-departure course for a group of students who were planning to study abroad. The whole course was about how to be a reflective observer of your host country. This particular activity was intended to sensitize the students to the techniques and shortcomings of observation.

Students

Number of students	2 Min. 18 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. * See appendix at the end of this document for reference about these mastery levels.	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 text itself is in English, as is the worksheet (though that can be used in a translated version). The discussion could be in L1 or in English.

3. Activity Materials & Prep

Activity Duration

Total duration in minutes:	50
How many sessions?	2
Any homework?	Yes

Materials

Material # 1 Title:	Text "Colour Symbolism in Esenapaj Self-Decoration"
Material Type:	Printed handout
Material Access:	https://drive.google.com/file/d/14OSO2-dFHR0hrS9tREku2U3PV9GJLLdZ/view?usp=sharing

Material #2 Title:	Worksheet "Colour Symbolism in Esenapaj Self-Decoration"
Material Type:	Printed handout
Material Access:	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kDH5ybJ4UKANBwKzAH9kqT0gJJeakXyl/view?usp=sharing

Set-Up Instructions

1. Prepare as many copies of the text and worksheet as there are students in the class.
Estimated Set Up Time (min.): 5

4. Activity Description

Suggested Time	Activity Instructions
2m	Teacher introduces the text briefly as a report written by a professional observer (an anthropologist) about the customs of the Esenapaj people. The introduction should be brief and neutral, with little effort to connect it to the flow of the course so far.
1m	Distribute to students the texts and worksheets. As far as possible, it should be presented as a standard "Read the text and answer the questions" assignment.
1m	Teacher assigns the reading of the text, with as much support as the students desire (dictionaries, online translation, etc.), and the answering of the worksheet questions as homework.

	Students read the text and answer the questions as homework.
20m	Students share, compare, and correct their answers to the comprehension questions on the worksheet. Teacher intervenes where appropriate.
25m	Students and teacher discuss the "Interpretation" part of the worksheet. At some point somebody will realize that the customs being described are practiced in Japan. The discussion then focuses on: 1) why the customs described in the text seemed so strange though they are familiar; and 2) the differences between internal and external observation.

5. Additional Information



Post-activity suggestions:

Originally, this activity led to an activity in which students observed an aspect of life around them as though it was happening in a foreign country.

Acknowledgements:

Inspired by Horace Miner's "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema."
<https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.3.02a00080>

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/>