

Developing Awareness: An Intercultural Communication Lesson Plan

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Lesson Objectives:

Increase student's ability to interact with and understand aspects of other cultures such as body language, discourse patterns, male and female roles. The students use English during the whole process.

Student Levels:

This activity is appropriate for intermediate and advanced level students. Teachers can vary the difficulty of the language and tasks involved to fit their classes.

Prior to this lesson:

It is necessary to have pretaught the concept of body language, especially regarding greetings, leave takings, personal space. Of course, students must know vocabulary such as bowing, shaking hands, hugging, kissing touching palms together, etc...

For teaching these, it is useful to use sections from videos which show people from many cultures greeting, eating, starting conversations etc.. Students watch with the task of observing and recording how Italian, Saudi Arabian and Thai males and females interact with each other.

The Lesson:

Divide your class in half. Tell the students that each group is a new culture and each culture must create its own body language for greetings, leave takings, etc.. They must also decide what questions are asked and what topics are discussed when meeting strangers. They must also decide if and in what ways men and women in their cultures differ communicatively. Less imaginative students may require some funny or strange examples to inspire their creativity.

Place the students in two different rooms, so the groups cannot look at or overhear each other. In each room, they create their body language and other rules of social interaction. Then students within each group practice with each other, following their rules.

In the next stage, explorers from each culture travel to the other culture with instructions to interact and observe the foreign group's body language, conversation rules, sex roles, etc.. During this stage each group has foreign guests. Give them three to five minutes to interact. Then the foreigners return to their home cultures and report their observations to their partners. After this, a new group of explorers leaves for the foreign culture and the process is repeated until all students have spent time exploring and observing the foreign culture. Each group discusses how the two cultures differ and what they share in common.

In the last step, all members of the two cultures come together in one class. Representatives from each culture express their assumptions about the other culture. Each group tells the other group if the assumptions are correct. If the assumptions are incorrect, the groups teach their rules of social interaction.

