

# IC-5 Intercultural Simulation

## Greetings and Proxemics

SUBJECT	GRADE	LENGTH
SL Classroom	7-12	~2 hours

### OVERVIEW/RATIONALE

Understanding cultural difference involves developing a critical, interpretive lens to analyze new phenomena. Renowned anthropologist, Edward Hall, once wrote: "The best reason for exposing oneself to foreign ways is to generate a sense of vitality and awareness - an interest in life which can come only when one lives through the shock of contrast and difference."<sup>1</sup> This quote highlights not only the importance of cultural awareness in bringing vitality to life, but also the opportunities for enlightenment brought about by exposure to difference. In order for exposure to cultural difference to be truly meaningful, an interpretive frame must be developed that moves beyond the ethnocentric. This lesson will introduce learners to cultural differences in reference to greetings and proxemics (the study of physical distance, contact, etc. and their influence on communication) and engage them in a simulation in which they will need to suspend their cultural judgment to accurately identify what is going on in an observed culture.

### TEACHER GUIDE

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>Students will be able to develop and apply paralinguistic and greeting norms in the demonstration of an artificial culture.</p> <p>Students will be able to identify cultural norms embedded within an observed cultural display.</p> <p>Students will be able to articulate a course of action to navigate social interactions in different cultural settings.</p>
<b>MATERIAL</b>	<p>Print off the resource IC-5.1 for each group. It is a worksheet for learners to identify the character they are going to play, including the gender and age/status of the individual.</p> <p>Print off the resource IC-5.2 for each group. This worksheet will be used to create the simulated culture that will provide the basis for their skit.</p> <p>Print off copies of resource IC-5.3 for each student in the class. This resource will be used to make notes during the observation of the artificial culture.</p> <p>Print off one copy of resource IC-5.4 for each group. This resource will be used to record the cultural differences between the groups observed.</p>
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<p>Play the clip of the close talker from Seinfeld (see resource list below). Ask students what they thought of the visitor's habit of talking very close to his interlocutor? How would it make them feel if someone addressed them in this way? Would it make a difference who the person was and in what situation it took place?</p>

<sup>1</sup> <a href="http://www.azquotes.com/quote/747093" title="Edward T. Hall quote"></a>

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After engaging learners in a discussion about the Seinfeld clip, ask them if culture would play a role in how the interaction would be interpreted? After receiving several responses, highlight that anthropologists such as Edward Hall have noted differences between cultures in terms of desired personal space when interacting with close relationships, personal acquaintances and strangers (for an interesting simple read about cultural differences with personal space, see the Washington Post article by Amanda Erickson listed below). Explain that in some cultures personal space is highly valued, while in other cultures a sense of closeness and intimacy is more highly valued.

Introduce learners to the term 'proxemics' by providing a definition: "the study of physical distance between people when they are talking to each other, as well as their postures and whether or not there is physical contact during conversation."<sup>2</sup> Highlight how culture doesn't just influence how far away we stand from the people with whom we are conversing, but also how we stand and the type of physical contact that is acceptable. Ask learners how they would stand when interacting with their friends? Then ask them how their body language would differ when interacting with their grandmother or a respected adult? Highlight how culture influences the manner in which we interact with people depending on our relationship with them and differences in status and gender. In some cultures, for example, it is rude to provide eye contact to an older person of status, while in other cultures avoiding eye contact is considered rude. Similarly, in some cultures people will hold hands or touch each other while talking as a sign of attentiveness, while in other cultures touching is restricted to people who have a very close relationship. Ask learners for examples of differences in physical contact and demeanour during interaction in different cultures that they are aware of?

Play the 'Greetings Around the World' video (see resource section) and ask learners to note the differences between cultures. Ask learners what greetings they would be comfortable with and what greetings would make them feel uncomfortable? Ask them how people from other cultures may feel about those same greeting practices?

Inform the class that they are going to create their own culture in class today, including unique greeting and interaction habits incorporating what has already been discussed. Split class into four groups (ideally in a class of 24 students there would be six students in each group). Give each group the worksheet IC-5.1 and have them determine the gender and age/status of the character they are going to play (note: students should be instructed to have an equal number of males and females, young and old).

Provide each group with worksheet IC-5.2 and ask them to create an artificial culture by developing unique greeting and interaction habits. Students must account for gender and status differences when developing the unique interactional patterns associated with their culture. After completing the worksheet, they should practice interacting with each other according to the cultural rules established in preparation for the mini-skits they will perform.

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<sup>2</sup> Richards, J.C., & Schmidt, R. (2002). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition). London: Longman.

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Four separate rooms or spaces should be procured for the next phase of the lesson. Each group will be assigned to a space and informed that they must interact with each other according to their cultural rules for approximately 5-7 minutes. While they are interacting, two observers from other groups will observe their interaction and write notes, but NOT interact with them. At the conclusion of the brief skit, the two observers will have three minutes to confer about their notes before returning to their groups. There will be three skit sessions with each student having the opportunity to observe a different culture once. See the chart below for a description of the schedule of observations in the various groups.

	Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Session 1	B1, C1	C2, D1	D2, A1	A2, B2
Session 2	B3, D3	A3, C3	D4, B4	A4, C4
Session 3	C5, D5	A5, D6	A6, B5	B6, C6

Once all the skit sessions have been concluded, members of each group will come together to discuss their observations of the three different cultures. At the conclusion of the group discussion the group should fill out resource IC-5.4 with the agreed upon characteristics for each group.

Bring all the groups back together for a whole group discussion. Discussion questions could relate to the process of engaging in the simulation. For example, was it difficult to develop a unique culture? Why, why not? What elements of culture were most difficult to observe during the skits? Why do you think that was the case? Were you able to establish agreement with your peers when discussing the cultural characteristics of particular groups? Why, why not? Questions could also be directed to the product of the observations. For example, what culture was the most difficult to comprehend? Why? How did status influence interaction in the different cultures? How did gender influence interaction?

Conclude the lesson by having learners complete an exit slip with the following prompts: 1) What lessons did you derive from participating in this simulation? 2) How would you greet and interact with somebody from a culture you were not familiar with?

### RESOURCES

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGVSIkEi3mM> - Seinfeld Close Talker
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3tINJibk234> - Greetings Around the World
- [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/24/how-close-is-too-close-depends-on-where-you-live/?utm\\_term=.d5f9171b1696](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/04/24/how-close-is-too-close-depends-on-where-you-live/?utm_term=.d5f9171b1696) - Amanda Erickson article

### NOTES

This lesson plan can easily be split up into two sequential lessons.

