



## Creating Multicultural Language Based Activities



By

Robyn Merkel-Piccini, M.A., CCC-SLP

The purpose of this newsletter is to get you to think about the different ways people speak in different cultures, and to share lessons which take these factors into account.

The first part of this handout is a quiz to test yourself on cultural language diversity. Then you will find bulletin board ideas and lessons.

### **MULTICULTURALISM: What Do You Really Think?**

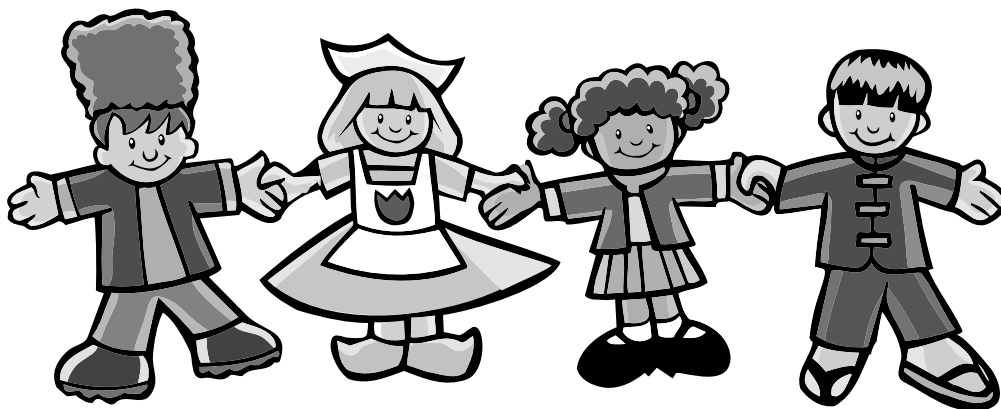
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. People in some countries emphasize tactile contact; others do not.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. We are in the business of teaching language; therefore, we should emphasize basic linguistic training and leave the culture learning to our students/clients.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Confrontation may be an effective and appropriate strategy in intercultural communication.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The Japanese suppress personal feelings.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Smiling is a universal human fact, so a smile is a smile wherever you are.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The teacher/clinician should emphasize only the universal (ie: important) features of language and culture. After all, we are all human beings and that is all that counts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Values and beliefs are the most important elements in assessing cross-cultural differences and similarities.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Methods and techniques, used by anthropologists, may be useful in second language and cultural learners.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. To enhance the development of cultural competence in our second language learners studying in the U.S., we must explicitly teach American social values, norms, and rules.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Cross-cultural interaction is synonymous with cultural understanding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Teachers should set cultural learning goals and objectives for their students, just as they must set linguistic goals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Biculturalism and bilingualism differ in content rather than nature.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. In intercultural communication, words speak louder than actions.

## ANSWERS

1. **TRUE** Rules for tactile contact exist in every culture, but those rules vary cross-culturally.
2. **FALSE** We cannot teach language without culture.
3. **FALSE** In some cultures confrontation is accepted. In others it is not.
4. **FALSE** This statement reflects a generalization.
5. **FALSE** A smile is not the same in all cultures, and is sometimes disrespectful.
6. **FALSE** Similarities shared are not necessarily more important than differences between cultures: we must recognize both.
7. **FALSE** Since values and beliefs vary, assessing them does not always lead to cross-cultural understanding.
8. **TRUE** They have studied multiculturalism extensively.
9. **FALSE** This is an ethnocentric belief that our culture is superior.
10. **FALSE** To interact is not to understand. You may speak with people every day and not understand their culture.
11. **FALSE** Learning a language is not a similar process as learning a culture.
12. **FALSE** They differ in both.
13. **FALSE** Nonverbal communication carries a greater load than verbal.

### ADAPTED FROM:

Culture Learning: The Fifth Dimension in The Language Classroom, Louise Damen  
(Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, U.S.A., 1987.)



## **BULLETIN BOARD #1 "FREE YOUR MIND"**

**This lesson targets the following goals:**

1. To follow directions.
2. To attend to task.
3. To sequence events.
4. To form complete sentences.
5. To encode attribution & existence.
6. To express personal feelings.
7. To recognize literal meaning.
8. To recognize figurative meaning.
9. To increase receptive/expressive vocabulary: prejudice, race, unity, culture, discrimination, friends, hate, bias, color, ethnic background.



### **LESSON:**

To start the lesson, separate the class into groups based on color, or ethnic background. Define these terms. Start a discussion on these issues i.e.: have the children state their race, color, ethnic background.

Next talk about friendship. Have the children describe their best friend. Highlight inter-racial friendships; friendship is not based on color.

Start to bring up various points of discrimination: "Would you like it if Joe wasn't your friend because you are white?", "Do you think Mary is bad because she comes from a different place than you?" (This part of the conversation usually brings emotional responses. The children begin to realize that prejudice is wrong.)

Introduce and define prejudice and racial unity. Have the children write or talk about their thoughts on prejudice, and how people can get along.



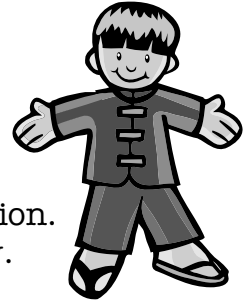
Call Toll Free 1-800-277-8737  
Fax Toll Free 1-800-978-7379

**Home of Free Shipping!**

Online!  
[www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com)

## **BULLETIN BOARD #2: "OSCAR THE GROUCH® "**

This activity is appropriate for young children who are familiar with the characters of Sesame Street®.



### **This activity targets the following goals:**

1. To decode/encode emotions.
2. To attend to task until completion.
3. To follow simple directions.
4. To increase general vocabulary.
5. To encode a complete sentence.
6. To encode attribution.

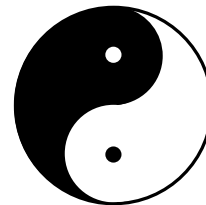
### **LESSON:**

Introduce Oscar the Grouch and pretend to be Oscar talking: "Hey kids I'm Oscar the Grouch!! I don't like it when people make fun of me because I'm green. I don't like it when people say bad words about other people!! I don't like prejudice!!"

**Define Prejudice:** Help the children express their own definition of prejudice. Model attributes and complete sentences. Use semantic and phonemic cues when needed.

## **BULLETIN BOARD #3: "THE YING YANG"**

"The Ying-Yang symbol suggests the two opposite principles of forces that make up all the aspects of life."



This activity is very rewarding for older children. The children can find this definition in an Encyclopedia. Encourage the children to research the symbol and relate it's link to multiculturalism. (ex: black/white concept, opposites are needed to balance, we all make the world one.)

Have the children create a ying-yang out of clay, construction paper or cardboard. Jewelry clay is very popular, since a necklace can be made.

After the lesson is complete, have the children make their own symbol that represents peace and unity.



Call Toll Free 1-800-277-8737  
Fax Toll Free 1-800-978-7379

**Home of Free Shipping!**

Online!  
[www.superduperinc.com](http://www.superduperinc.com)