

Culturally Responsive ESOL Lesson: "What's in the Bag"

In this video, you will see an example of a culturally responsive and sustaining ESOL lesson in which the teacher cultivates an inclusive, equitable learning environment and recognizes the student's diverse cultures as assets. Select portions of this lesson can be found in a shorter video on the SABES website.

Welcome to English class, everyone. We're gonna continue to work with this cultural framework, the five dimensions of culture.

So what we're gonna do today, first, we're gonna play, um, a game. We're gonna play "What's in the Bag?" We can practice yes and no questions. And then you're gonna do some storytelling about your object. And then we're gonna write about your object using the five dimensions of culture, and yeah, and that'll be our class today.

So, um, let's get started.

Playing "What's in the Bag?" (Practicing Yes/No Questions)

I have a bag and I have something that is important to me and my culture inside the bag. So your job is to ask yes and no questions to guess what's in the bag.

So a yes and no question, I can only answer yes or no.

"Is it heavy?" No, it's not heavy. So I'm gonna write these in the chat. And yeah, "Is it heavy?" is a good yes, no question. No, it's not heavy.

"It is, it is something, uh, special for you. Uh, personal." It is special for you. Switch it around. Instead of "it is," we want is first.

"Is it... Is, is it, is it special in your life, your personal life?" Yes.

"And can I use it in the living room?" Yes. "Can I use it in the living room?" Good job. I like how you used, um, can the modal verb from our lesson last week?

"Yes, you can. You buy it, you buy it? Or this is, uh, present for someone?" Has to be a yes, no question.

"Did I buy it?" Yes. Mm-hmm. Um, no, I didn't.

"Do you use it in the car?" Oh, "Do you use it in the car?" No.

So here you can see there's a couple different ways that we can make the yes no questions. If you're using the verb to be, you start with is, like: "Is it heavy? Is it special? Is it wood?" Or you can, if you use a different verb, then you have to use do: "Do you use it in the car? Do you use it in the kitchen?" Or you can use a modal verb like can: "Can I use it?"

"Is it decoration?" Yes, it's a decoration.

"Is it metal?" Yes, it is metal. Okay.

So that was about 20 questions and you weren't able to guess it, but you have really good questions. So now that is cute. I'm going to show you what's in the bag.

So a bell? Yeah, this is a bell.

Teacher's Storytelling: The Bell

So now I'm going to tell you a little story about why this is a cultural product for me.

Um, this bell, a friend of my parents gave to me when I became a teacher. And so, um, many times teachers use the bells to get the students' attention or to call them in from recess. So I always had this in my classroom as a teacher. And so that's why it's, it's important. Also, there's, um, many, many different teachers in my family, like my, um, my aunts and uncles and my cousins, and my grandma worked with teachers. So there's a strong connection with teachers in my family for my culture where I come from. And in my family culture, this is a very important product. And, um, and it means a lot to me.

Student Activity: Applying the Game to Their Culture

So this is what you are going to do today. Now it's gonna be your turn. You are going to go in your house, get a bag, find an object in your house that is important to you. Um, something that has meaning, something maybe from your culture. And you're going to ask each other what kind of questions?

"Wh questions or yes and no?" "20 question, uh, questions about, uh, what in we put in the bag."

Yeah. And Aja, what kind of questions are they gonna be? Like, who, where? Yes or yes and no questions?

"It's just yes or no." Yes. And then after you guess, you will tell a little story about the object, what it is, why it's important to you. Um, so it is your turn.

I'm going to put you into breakout rooms so you can play "What's in the Bag" asking yes and no questions.

And what are you going to do after you guess the object?

"Talking about the object." "The object from the five dimensions." Yes. To share a story about... Practice, perspective, communicate.

Yeah. You're just gonna say why it's important to you, uh, why you chose the object.

"How many questions?" Thank you. Do your classmates get before you tell them?

"20. 20. 20." Okay. So I'm going to put you into breakout rooms. You'll have about 15 minutes.

Breakout Room Activity (Playing "What's in the Bag?")

"This is my product. Okay? Okay. Um, is it food?" "No."

"Uh, is it book?" "No. No."

"Uh, is it...?"

"Can I wear it?" "Can I wear it? Um, no."

"Uh, do you use it in the kitchen?" "No. No?"

"Uh, can I use it in the living?"

"Is it for decoration?" "Something? No, it's not. Mm-hmm. No."

"It's, it's something that you can, you bought." "Not me, but somebody buy from me."

"Okay. Can I use it in the kitchen?" "No. Mm-hmm."

"Uh, can, can you use it for a go outside?" "Yeah, I can use it for outside."

"Um, do you need to put it in electricity and plug in?" "No, no. No, I can't."

"Can where? Wear something?" "No, no, no. It's a bottle."

"Excuse me. Bottle."

"Yes. This is equipment. This is a..." "Uh, bottle. Yes. But this is not exactly bottles, right? This, uh, this is very thin. It's a small, Yeah. This is a small. Not exactly bottle."

"Small bottle, but not the, not exactly bottle. Like normally bottle."

"Can you use in a wall?" "Wall? Not, not, not wall."

"Is it picture?" "Yes."

"Yes. Is it picture, but, uh, more decoration?"

"Is it a portrait?"

"Uh, warm. Warm. Warm. Okay. Um, this is the same with me. Album, photo album." "This is the same."

"Uh, what you present my album?" "My album, uh, from my childhood." "Wow. Wow. Wow."

"I have the same in my country. Native. And, uh, every time to back in my country, I list this album."

"Uhhuh. Okay. Okay."

"And, uh, what, uh, I want, uh, to say about these things. This, um, very dear things for me, uh, because, um, it is old album, uh, but it's memory, uh, for my, uh, my childhood and my dear people who, uh, pass away this world."

"Uh, can you see the WhatsApp chat? Uh, please."

"Yeah, I send the picture. Okay."

...

"Is it comfortable?" "No. This is small. Is it small?"

"Um, a little bit. This, this is, um, is like, look, uh, coach, no."

"Do you use it, uh, at home?" "Yes. Um, is it decoration? Do you use this in home?" "Mm. Uh, in this country now, but in my country, use every day."

"Is it something, is it something, uh, you can eat, eat?" "No. No. Yeah, I like to, to have, um, little bit of nature on my di, on my dining table. Yeah, I love it."

"They gave, he take, he gave it to you and they express, or all the time, usually they gave it to you? Flowers." "Usually give, give to me on Saturdays. All Saturday."

"Oh, yeah, because I love, I love flowers." "Yeah. Laura in my country, Brazil, uh, have, uh, which series have it? Lot of stores that, uh, sell, sell flowers."

"Yeah. Uh, the people, many people u usually, um, bought, buy flowers for mothers. Mothers' Day, for, uh, anniversary and many things." "For special dates. Yeah." "Yeah, yeah. Special dates or, or, uh, girlfriend give for, uh, for other people and, well, I, I think it is nice."

"Okay. There are flowers, Um, that represent, uh, our, my culture because Colombians is a, a, flowers is part of Colombian culture,"

"But, um, the flowers, I remember me, my grandmother. My grandmother usually have a lot of flowers in our dining table, uh, because she love it. And she, the flowers, flowers, um, make me remembered her. And in this, in that time, my husband gave it to me. My husband give, give me flowers every Saturday. And I love it because I love, um, the colors. I love, uh, have a part of nature in my table, and I just love it."

"This one is in Spanish. The name is... and my language is the..."

"In my country, all the womens use it, but is a different colors in my country. My mom, my grandma use is the just the red color. But, um, eh, if they use the red one, they, the people, uh, knows the, where did she come or be? Um, I don't know how to say."

"Okay. Like, like, but like, with which region you, you are, Mm-hmm." "Yeah. Uh, when, when I use in this, where you from? It mean where you from? Oh yeah. Where I from? If it is the red one, where I from, so we use them this color. I got, I have something we use the way this, you know this one? Oh yeah, yeah. We use this one like this. After that, you, we use this one too, you know. Oh, okay. The, okay. Like this is different. Yes. Yeah. Okay. Like this one, like this. But I don't know where is another thing?"

"So, eh, my culture use this, uh, I use here just for the church."

"Okay. I, this kind of collier [necklace], I couldn't buy in my country because it was so expensive for me."

"Oh yeah. Um, here, but normally, but normally this is from the true town, like, uh, uh, pearl or diamond or true, you know, the, uh, gems, gems, gem, gems, gems. I don't know. What is the gems?"

"Gem is like a, like diamond. Yes."

"Yeah. So I don't, I don't think we have the, the just is the more the rock and the glass."

"So, like the crystals." "The crystals. Or the crystals. Okay. Yeah."

"Okay. It's, this one's expensive for Ecuador."

Debriefing and Transition to Writing

I heard some really good stories, and I also heard you guys helping each other with language a lot, which I'm always so happy to hear. Um, I heard people asking questions like, "How do I say this?" Those are all excellent things to do when you don't, um, understand, and you can help your classmates. So, um, great job.

Uh, anyone want to share something interesting you learned about one of your classmates? You can raise your hand.

Okay. Maybe I... Okay. Claudia.

"The interesting is that Lu's body, say the necklace, who, uh, the new wear there is, uh, in York, in her culture, when you use the red, there is, uh, everybody knows where you, where she live, which Reagan or which countries, and yeah. And there is very expensive, and there is every woman where is this in her country? Yeah."

Thank you. Yeah, that is really interesting.

Anyone else? Oja?

"Yes. Uh, for me, interesting is that, um, uh, we with Mariana, uh, have the same things, uh, photo album in, uh, our break room. We have the same things, uh, and, uh, very interesting that, um, she's, uh, photo album. Uh, this was photo album from her school. And, uh, when I was a child, we have, um, the same photo album with our classmates, with our teacher, uh, director. Mm. And it's what it was surprised for me. We call that from Moldova. I'm from Ukraine. And, uh, the same album, photo album, I would say..."

"What a coincidence!" You know, you guys both brought the same object to the breakout room.

"What a coincidence!" Yeah.

"Yeah. When you say coincidence, coincidence, right?" "Is this similar with my call Brazil in Portuguese? Uh, I say coincide. You like the same?" "Romanian the same? No way."

"In Spanish..." "Is the theist." "That is completely different."

Yes. Oh, there's your, there's your doggy. Yeah.

Okay. So, um, so great job, um, asking yes and no questions and great stories you were telling about your cultural objects.

So now we're gonna switch gears, and we're gonna go into some writing about the cultural object. Okay? So I'm gonna share my screen.

Planning the Writing: The Five Dimensions of Culture

There's a lot of different aspects of culture, or what we call the five dimensions of culture. And this is just a way that we can reflect and analyze culture and talk about it.

1. The product is what you have. Um, it's an object. It can be food, um, something from your culture.
2. And then practice is the, is the, the action that you do. You know, "What do you do with the necklace? You, you wear that every day." So we do all these actions with our products.
3. And then the people who are the people in the culture that use these products? Laura remembered her grandmother when she had her flowers on the dining room table. Um, so the important people, people that are important to us in our culture.
4. And over here we have communities. So communities is the group of people in our culture. We belong to many different groups. It can be your religious group, um, like Lu said with her necklace. This was an object that's worn by women. So the community of women. Um, and, um, the photo album from the school of Oja and Mariana, that's talking about their school community. So we can have these cultures that run certain to whatever communities that we belong to, like school, family, et cetera.
5. In perspectives. This one's a little bit more difficult to describe, but very important. The perspective is gonna be your attitudes. What you believe um, is important in your culture, your values. Um, for example, I chose to talk about this bell, and the value that it has for me is that it stands for education. So I value education. It also makes me think of my family, and I think family is very important. I learn a lot about what you hold important, like Ol'ha's wanting to take her photo album with her when she left Ukraine, um, to remember her mother. So her, her family is very important. Her memories are very important when she left her country.

So I have some questions you can use to help you make a plan for your writing. So you're going to go into breakout rooms and talk about these questions.

Here we go. Just like we do whenever we write using Burlington English. First, we're gonna make a plan. The plan is like your outline. You're gonna answer these questions.

And so we will do this with my bell as a model.

So first we'll describe the object. So I'm gonna say what it is, right? It's a bell.

What other words can I use to describe it? "It's metal." Uh-huh. Yeah. Some of the words we used. Uh-huh, it's metal. Great.

And where did I get it? "Uh, the friends. Your parents give you a gift? No, the parents. The parents." Yep. A friend of my parents, uh-huh, gave it to me as a gift when I started teaching.

Yeah. So these are just my notes. This is my plan, and then I'll write it into a paragraph. But this just tells me the important things I need to include in my writing.

You're gonna answer these questions, and I want you to work in small groups. I'm gonna put you in groups with your, um, of people who speak similar languages, and you can help each other as you write out your questions. Um, as you write out your answers, you can help each other with the language to describe your object. I really want you to help each other with number six, about the perspectives. What does it mean to you? What, what do you believe?

And then after you have your plan, and you talk in your groups, and you can write a paragraph.

Teacher's Model Paragraph

So I took all of those sentences, and then I wrote a paragraph. And this is my paragraph. So I'm telling a story with the things that I wrote down.

So for example, I say, "This is a bell. It's metal, it's decorative, and it's small. A friend of my parents gave it to me when I became a teacher. I ring it at school when it's time for a break or when I want my student's attention. This is important to me because it's a memory from my career as a teacher. And many women in my family were teachers. Also, my friend gave it to me who was like a family member. Many teachers use bells in the classroom. I believe education is important and family. This bell represents that."

Do you have any questions?

I have some words here underlined, because like always when we write, we want to use these connecting words, like and or because, but so that we can make our sentences longer. And then these phrases, these sentence starters. I also underlined, "This is important to me because..."

"So the question we write, uh, a story and, uh, we share it with, um, classmate in the group. And, uh, uh, just, uh, we, uh, uh, we are reading, uh, for, uh, in, in the group classmates, or we need to take a picture and they send you?"

Good question. Thank you. Yes. I want you to take a picture and send it to me. You are going to work in small groups to help each other writing. And then when we come back in whole groups, then you can share your writing to the group if you want to. It's your choice. But yes, I do want you to send a picture of it.

And then what am I looking for? For your writing? I want to see if you can answer the questions about your object using the five dimensions of culture. I wanna see if you can organize your writing into a paragraph and if you can use the connecting words and, but, or so, and because to make your sentences longer.

So that's a lot of directions. Let's review them, and I will write them in the chat. What are you going to do in breakout rooms?

We help... Oh, help each other, each other, each other write a paragraph about... I think it's important for us.

So what do you write first? Your plan or your paragraph?

Plan. Plan. Plan. Plan. Uh-huh. Yep. So your plan. After the plan, organization, paragraph. Right. And did you answer the questions in your plan?

Yeah. Yep. And then you're going to write a paragraph. Mm-hmm. And then number three? Take a picture and send to me on WhatsApp.

So I'm going to put you in some breakout rooms so that you can speak with each other. Yeah. You're using all of your language knowledge to help you describe your object and talk about the cultural perspective.

Sharing Objects and Cultural Beliefs

My object is a book. The name is... it's a book. Um, is it Christian books? The Imitation of Christ by Thomas à Kempis. It is important to me because my mom gave me 25 years ago, and I try to read every day.

It's my... uh... object. It's a necklace. What is that? It's a necklace. Necklace. Necklace. Oh, yes. Silver. Yes, silver. But originally it's... its... its must be silver. And um... uh... gems.

What values or beliefs does that necklace represent for you about your culture?

Uh, right now in my country, um, some young, um, women wear this necklace because it's important for my culture, for Kazakh culture. We... it's very beautiful, and it's elegant. When you see your eyes, it's... uh... how do you say, your eyes is happy.

So is there a belief in your culture that the women need to wear beautiful, elegant things?

Yes. Only women or people in general? Do the men wear something similar?

No, no, no. Just women. Just women. Because it's... it's meaningful. Some special. In a very old time ago, this necklace was in... in... uh... church, early childhood. Is it a talisman against the evil eye?

Oh. So do people believe it protects children from the evil eye?

Yes, because in more... um... very... how, how do you say, very last, very, very age ago, um, when the child is born, it's a very high death rate, uh, for children. And almost Kazakh women wore this talisman and the belief that my child will be healthy, will live.

Ah, okay. That's a great example of a belief or attitude that's represented by your object.

Veda, I saw you have a Turkish coffee pot. Yes. Can you explain what values or beliefs that holds for you?

Um, in my culture, um... uh... before the wedding, uh, the girl... the girl, uh, makes a Turkish coffee, uh, for the boy, uh, before the wedding. Um, the boy and his family, uh, come, uh, to the girl, uh, for introduction. And the girl, um, makes a Turkish coffee, uh, for everybody. Uh, just, uh, for everybody with sugar. With sugar. Uh, just, uh, we... uh... salty, salty coffee. Makes... makes salty coffee for the boy. The girl, uh, makes, uh, salty coffee, uh, for the boy, uh, because, uh, the girl... the girl, uh, wants to test, uh, the boy's love to her. Mm-hmm. Uh, if, uh, if the boy, uh, the boy can, uh, salty coffee, can drink salty coffee, uh, the boy, uh, really loves, uh, the girl. So the girl... uh...

Yes. That's a great story. Thank you so much for sharing that.

Oh, fantastic. You look beautiful. Thank you. Okay. Okay. Uh, my rosary is a symbol of my religion when they want to pray. And I think the function is the wish, uh, with each stone. They... they can keep praying without... without losing. I think the person in communities, uh, that used that.

Reading Shared Paragraphs

Welcome back everyone. Would anyone like to read the paragraph they wrote to the class? Any volunteers? You can raise your hand. I'm looking for like two people, two volunteers to read their paragraph. Okay. Claudia.

Okay. Claudia, can you read yours?

My object. This is a flask. It's metal covered in leather. It's decorative leather with a picture of Manheim. My object is small. My son gave it to me for Christmas. I use this during winter hikes. This is important to me because it's a gift from my son and helps to keep warm when I go to the mountain hikes. Now me and my husband use this every time when we go to the winter mountain hikes. I think that sometimes it helps to keep the body heat at times for many winter climbers. That's it.

Great. Thank you so much. Welcome.

Okay. And then I need one more volunteer. Who would like to share their paragraph? Okay. Oksana.

Okay. Thank you. It's a little photo album with a donkey outside. I got it from my mother, uh, who passed away eight years ago. I was, uh, six years old, uh, when she, uh, presented it to me. I use a photo album when I miss my mother and my happy childhood with her. Uh, when the war in Ukraine started, the first thing, uh, I wanted to take with me was the photo album. I was, uh, afraid that if a bomb hit, uh, my house, uh, all the memory would be burned, uh, because of it, it's very important for me. Uh, everyone can have it in their own home, uh, like a good memory. I think that a photo album is very important for us and the next generation. Uh, for example, I want that my children know, uh, know who was their grandmother and what their mother, uh, was like when she was a child. Thank you. Uh-huh. Thank you. Thank you.

Reviewing Shared Objects

Great. Well, I'm really looking forward to reading all of your paragraphs. Um, thank you so much for your participation. I learned so much about you and your cultures, and I would like to show you guys the objects that you brought, 'cause they are really fantastic. So let me share, um, my screen.

Here's the bell. Here are some of your other ones. Um, um, as I go through, um, can you just say what your object is? Like, I'd be like, "Oh, this is a bell." Mariana, what's this?

This is my class photo and it's so precious for me because, uh, I lived in the country. And this album photo, including photos of my school, and I see the other child in the kindergarten. These... these classmates with the kindergarten and the high school. Great. The same age. Thank you.

So we're going to go through a little quickly and just if you can just tell us what your object is.

Er... Oh, uh, sadly, sorry. Uh, I had one problem with my internet, but it is good now. Great. Can you repeat your question? What is this? What, what's your object that I'm showing here in WhatsApp?

It is sk... a vinyl disc. Yeah, vinyl. Vinyl, sorry. Vinyl disc. Yeah. And my culture, they, they name, uh, this is similar to, uh, but they, uh, they call... Thank you, Laura.

Uh, there are flowers. Veda? Coffee pot.

It's my necklace. Mm. Oh, welcome. In my language. How do you say necklace in English? Anyone?

Necklace. Necklace. Yeah. Necklace. Thank you.

Luis Munoz. And this is a flashlight.

This is, uh, rosary. Mm-hmm.

Are you there, Nar? Or you're muted?

Oh, uh, it's candle holder.

Homework and Reflection

Great. So I will take a picture of the, um, the assessment, the list of things that you can do, and for the next class. Can you see this where it says Assessment? Yes. Yes. Great. So I will take a picture of this and put it on WhatsApp. And for next class, I want you to review your writing and look at these areas:

- Did you answer the questions using the framework?
- Did you organize it into a paragraph?
- And did you use the connecting words so you can try to make your sentences longer?

So, and then, so if you can edit this for next class, that would be great. I'm posting it now on WhatsApp and I will use this also when you send me your work. I will use it to give you some feedback on your writing. And it looks like I already have a lot of your writings, so thank you very much.

So what did we do today in English class? What did we do? The game. Yeah, what did we do that helped you learn English?

Today is more practice. Did playing the game help you practice English, Mariana?

Yeah, the games help and, uh, uh, I still, the memory in the past for use this object. Give me the my class album. And I think this lesson is so good for practice speaking English and understand who classmate, uh, say...

We learned about another culture. It's important for us because we live in the US and here we... we see a, a more, uh, different nationalities. Something I... I can, I can learn something. Uh, people right here have, uh, something special for her life. It was interesting. It is really interesting.

Yes. And the place game, uh, what is your in, uh, what is in your bag? I think. Yeah, funny. Can you say that again, Nar?

The place name. What, what is in your bag?

What did you like about it?

Yeah, I like about the, uh, I learned, um, different some, uh, culture, uh, to and, uh, Mariana, and I like it.

Thank you. Thank you. Now we can play in the home with family and practice the idea in the writing, and writing, uh, the practice. Different, uh, letters, like but, so, then, and we can use it for writing. That's also interesting.

Yeah, the class today, uh, very interesting. Uh, I learned too much, uh, about the other cultures or other cultures from my classmates and yeah. Very interesting.

Why do you like learning about, um, the culture of your classmates?

Uh, I like it, Mariana. And this is, um, the... your country is, I think it is close to Ukraine and Moldova. Yeah. Yeah, it's the neighbor country. Oh, okay. Yet at the same time, Moldova seems to have a lot of language similarities to Spanish, and they're very far from each other.

Because, uh, anytime I go in the store, I see the Spanish and I think, oh, the same Romanian. Yeah.

Great. So the reason, one of the reasons why we spend so much time in class reflecting on our culture and talking about things that are important to our culture is because that helps us get an understanding of how to talk about culture and what is culture. And then we can start talking about, um, other cultures like American culture. And, um, so it's, it's really going to help for making that leap into to observing practices that, um, people in the United States do and the products that people in the States use and, and what they mean, what kind of values are... are in them. So, um, it's very important to first reflect on, on your own culture and, um, yeah, it's a really interesting, um, topic. Your stories were so interesting and I'm very happy that you guys also think it is interesting to learn about culture and you enjoy it.

Yes. So we will, um, continue in the future. Um, and, um, in our next class, we're going to jump back into our next unit. We're going to begin a new unit in Burlington English, and we will, um, incorporate some more cultural reflections into that.

Any other questions or comments about class tonight?

We can enjoy? We can continue. Enjoy the rest of the class.

You know, when, when we finish the class, I remember some stuff in my mind. I say, "Wow, that's interesting. She said something interesting." So I wanted to remember.

Yeah, what are you going to remember from today's class?

I want to remember the, the talking about the... the playing music because her, his father gave in the game and he, and he stayed with him in the United States. And, uh, some of them like the coffee pot and uh, flowers. That's interesting. And I want to... I want to say my husband gave me the flowers every Saturday.

That's really amazing, Laura.

Alright, well have a good night.