

# Hosting an Exchange Student: Instructor Guide

## Title

Hosting an Exchange Student

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## Discipline

Spanish, Foreign Languages and Cultures, English as a Foreign Language, World Cultures and Global Societies

## Target Audience

This activity was originally created for beginning and intermediate Spanish language courses. It can be adapted for any level course related to foreign languages or world cultures. It can be used for a specific target culture such as the Spanish, French or Arabic-speaking world for language classes. It can also be implemented in a general world cultures course in which students can choose any relevant country or region related to the topics covered in the class. The activities can be completed in the target language (Spanish, French, etc.) in upper-division foreign language



courses or in English depending on the level and the type of course. The problem can be modified to incorporate any language or region of the world. The activity may also be limited to different regions of one country if the course only focuses on one particular nation.

## Keywords

Spanish, French, Foreign Languages, English as a Foreign Language, Culture, Society, Diversity, Global, Exchange Programs, Study Abroad, Nations, Stereotypes, Individuality

## Length of Time/Staging

It is recommended to use a minimum of three to four class days for this problem including homework activities and preparation. Additional class days may be used for research and presentation preparation as well as the follow-up activities.

**Day 1:** Set up the problem through the Problem Introduction, complete the discussion questions in small groups and assign the homework

(A gap of one or two class days is recommended for homework and presentation preparation. Likewise, the homework activity can be given before the initial discussion so the problem does not need to be completed with interruption.)

**Day 2 and/or 3:** Complete presentations (one to two days depending on the class size)

**Day 3 and/or 4:** Follow-up, reflection and chat with a student from the target region

Depending on the class schedule and timeline, the activity may be abbreviated to one to two class days with a focus solely on the presentations and relevant discussion. Presentations may be completed individually or in small groups. This problem may also be expanded to be used as a final project or assessment for a course with 1) an added final paper or expanded reflection in which the student examines in more detail what was learned through completing this problem and/or 2) additional online chats with students from the target culture.

## Abstract

Culture and cultural understanding are crucial components of learning foreign languages. Due to classroom time constraints, it is often difficult to cover culture comprehensively while also teaching grammar and vocabulary during the semester. Students will imagine that an exchange student from a Spanish-speaking country is coming to stay with the student's family for a few weeks as part of a cultural exchange program. What would some of the challenges and rewards be? What should they research to be prepared? Students will think critically about cultural norms and stereotypes, research a country or region of their choosing related to the target culture, create a cheat-sheet with relevant information and present it to the class. The class presentations will provide students with a panorama of the various areas of the Spanish-speaking world including common and unique foods and celebrations, taboo behaviors and popular past times. Students research and discover numerous cultural aspects about the target region as well as contemplate



cultural norms and behaviors through this problem. They will learn extensively about Hispanic cultures within a few class days and also have an opportunity to chat with a student from the target region.

## **Date Submitted**

4/24/2018

## **Date Published**

7/20/2018

## **Format of Delivery**

### **Parts 1 and 2**

For the first class day of the activity, the instructor should set-up the problem and activities for students so they understand that they will imagine that they will be hosting an exchange student. It would also be useful to show a video of an exchange student with his/her point of view in order to give students a better perspective of the challenges (Use Instructor Resources for potential videos). Hand out **Part 1** of the Problem Handouts so students understand the nature of the task. Give students **Part 2** (the discussion questions) after the initial explanation of the problem. The discussion questions should be completed in small groups and then the questions should be deliberated and summarized together as a class at the end of the period highlighting the main points students learned. Encourage students to give specific examples from their own experience, to think critically about culture in their encounters with all forms of stereotypes and to be positive in thinking about these differences. Give students the homework activity (**Part 3**) at the end of class and briefly explain that they will need to choose the potential country or region for their presentations as part of their homework.

### **Part 3**

When this homework assignment is collected, the instructor should approve and list all countries or regions to ensure there is a wide-range of represented areas so that students will have a panorama of the target culture. Instructors may also create a list of recommended countries or regions from which students may choose. In preparation for the presentations and cheat-sheets, give students the handouts for **Part 4** including the guidelines and the cheat-sheet format.

### **Part 4**

Ask students to keep the presentations succinct while engaging their fellow classmates in order to ensure all presentations are completed in the allotted class time and so that they maintain their classmates' attention. Depending on the class size, a presentation of five-minutes should be sufficient. Give students the Presentation Notes sheets and require that students take detailed notes during the presentations and that they highlight the most unique or interesting facets from each presentation.



## Student Learning Objectives

- 1) Discover more about Hispanic cultures and one's own culture
- 2) Imagine the possibility and necessary preparation of hosting an exchange student as well as contemplate its rewards and challenges
- 3) Make connections with people of different cultures
- 4) Develop analytical and research skills through the activities and presentations
- 5) Reflect critically on stereotypes, individuality, cultural norms and cultural differences
- 6) Improve presentation, language and communication competences

## Instructor Resources

### Websites and articles about stereotypes:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypes\\_of\\_Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypes_of_Americans)

<https://www.aauw.org/2014/08/13/why-stereotypes-are-bad/>

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov04/vol62/num03/The-Threat-of-Stereotype.aspx>

<http://www.nomad4ever.com/2007/11/26/55-nations-stereotypes-that-will-ruin-or-make-your-day/>

[youtube.com](http://youtube.com) (YouTube has numerous videos related to slang, dialect and stereotypes. Most students are very familiar with the site and can easily search for relevant videos on it.)

### Website for Cultural Iceberg:

<http://interculturalism.blogspot.com/2011/03/iceberg-model-of-culture.html>

### Websites and articles about hosting exchange students:

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/homa-sabet-tavangar/5-lessons-i-learned-hosting-exchange-students\\_b\\_916347.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/homa-sabet-tavangar/5-lessons-i-learned-hosting-exchange-students_b_916347.html)

<https://www.thehomeschoolmom.com/benefits-of-hosting-an-international-exchange-student/>



<http://exchangestudentworld.com/host-family/info/why-become-a-host-family/>

### **Videos related to exchange student and study abroad perspectives**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mndit06EI8s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSyR2G55jhM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bv2sdrwGwBU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8KjOIBNiAc>

### **Websites and articles about cultural norms and taboo behaviors related to the Hispanic world:**

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/travel/tripideas/25-common-american-customs-that-are-considered-offensive-in-other-countries/ar-BBlrZcW>

<http://www.explore-hispanic-culture.com/hispanic-traditions.html>

<http://www.traveltaboo.com>

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Guatemala/Daily-life-and-social-customs> (Britannica.com will give thorough information about every country including information about social customs, pastimes and language/dialect characteristics. This website is a great source to recommend to students if they struggle to find the appropriate information about the country.)

### **Online sites for chatting with people of other cultures:**

<https://www.italki.com/home>

<https://mylanguageexchange.com/>

<https://talkabroad.com/>

<https://hellotalk.com/> (website for app download)

<http://en.wespeke.com/>

## **Author's Teaching Notes**

Some examples of popular countries selected in the Spanish-speaking world include Costa Rica, Bolivia, Spain and Argentina. The instructor may also want to encourage students to research under-represented countries or regions such as Equatorial Guinea or the Canary Islands. Some students select more specific regions such as the Yucatan or the Basque region. Carefully review the homework activity and guide group discussions to ensure that students are reflecting critically about culture, stereotypes and their own related personal experiences.



The cheat-sheet format may be modified as a pamphlet or handout for the family or any other audience. Students may choose relevant facts as well as incorporate pictures, graphs and other materials. Another alternative for the cheat-sheet format would be to create a potential FAQ website about the target region for the university's Study Abroad page or for a non-profit organization.

The class discussion after the presentations tends to be engaging and fascinating. Every student will develop a new awareness of different areas of the target culture and of cultural norms. Some lively discussion may relate to topics of table manners and etiquette as well as taboo behaviors and gestures. Some cursory information about idiomatic expressions allows students to think about linguistic and dialectic differences among the different regions of the target culture. This will show them concretely that the target language is not standard across all areas in which it is spoken. The discussion may also be directed toward the arbitrariness of cultural norms and how there is not necessarily a universal right or wrong in cultural behaviors. What may be polite in one country could be considered rude in another.

This problem is an excellent method to incorporate a lot of culture into a language class because students will be able to present and discuss many different countries or regions of the target language group in a short period of time. They will be able to follow their own interests and teach others. Given the time constraints and goals of a language course, this activity can incorporate a considerable number of cultural elements in a few class days while working towards the student learning outcomes for the course. The students will learn a lot about the varying cultures within that region through their own research, class discussions and the other students' presentations. Students will also be able to make connections about stereotypes and cultural identities while working through and participating in these activities.

There are numerous possibilities for the delivery of the follow-up chat activity. It can be done as an exchange from an entire class in a different country (representing only one of the countries or regions) or through an online chat program. An additional option would be to have the students complete a language exchange in English and the target language so both students can benefit and practice their language skills. It would also be acceptable to have the student complete the chat with a person from a different region of the target culture if one from the area of the presentation cannot be found, even if it isn't the specific country discussed in the individual student's presentation. The instructor may also recommend students reach out to Spanish-speakers in their own community or incorporate the problem as part of a larger service-learning project. Some free websites and apps include My Language Exchange and iTalki. One paid website option is talkabroad.com (See Instructor Resources). The instructor can explain to the students the expectations for the assignment, what questions to ask and how to use the particular websites or apps. It is recommended to require the chat to have a minimum time requirement such as 20 minutes. It may also be incorporated into the class as a recurring activity as part of a longer project.

This final portion of the activity is highly recommended so that students can have direct communication with an individual from the target culture and so they can test their hypotheses about what they learned about the target culture. Encourage students to ask questions, make connections and contemplate the similarities they share with the individual. Tell students who



may be shy that they can start off the conversation by discussing their class project and research as well as talk about their own interests and studies.

This problem can also be used to discuss and encourage study abroad and travel. Through this project, students may become more interested in these opportunities and the end of the project may be an appropriate time to discuss the study abroad programs, internships and other offerings of the instructor's institution.

## **Assessment Strategies**

Students should be assessed based on the depth of their research and the quality of their presentations as well as their participation and contribution to class and group discussion. A holistic grade for the problem is recommended incorporating how much students discovered and how they expanded their own awareness of culture through individual and group activities.

### **A recommended grade breakdown for the project would be:**

30% Presentation

25% Cheat-Sheet

15% Class Activities and Participation

15% Homework Activities

15% Chat with Student and Reflection

The following rubric may be used for grading or be modified based on which activities are used and emphasized in the class. You may give students a copy of the rubric so they know exactly how the problem will be graded.

### **Project Rubric (100 Points Total)**

**Use the following scale to score each of the follow questions for each student. Each of the 20 questions is worth up to five points.**



<b>Strong</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>	<b>None</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

**Class Activities**

**Score**

- 1) The student worked actively and participated in class and group discussion. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) The student completed the activities thoughtfully and with elaboration. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) The student listened attentively and respectfully to others. \_\_\_\_\_

**Homework Assignment**

- 4) The homework assignment was completed fully and in a timely manner. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) The homework answers were researched well. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) The student reflected deeply and thoughtfully on the assigned tasks. \_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation**

- 7) The student stayed on task during the presentation and adhered to the minimum time requirement. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8) The information in the presentation was relevant, useful and organized. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) The student provided many clear and unique examples for the class. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10) The student communicated well and clearly. \_\_\_\_\_
- 11) The student made eye contact and engaged with the audience. \_\_\_\_\_
- 12) The student completed the class presentation notes thoroughly. \_\_\_\_\_

**Cheat-Sheet**

- 13) The cheat-sheet was on task. \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) The cheat-sheet was well written and easy to follow. \_\_\_\_\_



- 15) The student addressed all or most of the topics required in the instructions. \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) The cheat-sheet offered numerous examples. \_\_\_\_\_
- 17) The cheat-sheet provided unique and informative aspects of the target culture. \_\_\_\_\_

### Online Chat with Student

- 18) The student completed the online chat with a student from the target culture. \_\_\_\_\_
- 19) The student asked and learned about the relevant information related to the task. \_\_\_\_\_
- 20) The student reflected on the conversation and made new cultural connections. \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus Points** (outstanding participation, positive attitude, unique examples, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** \_\_\_\_\_ /100

### Solution Notes

There is no specific solution to this problem but students should, at a minimum, gain a better understanding of the target culture and their own culture. They should develop a deeper interest in cultural understanding and contemplate the possibility of participating in cultural exchanges or study abroad.

Other key observations students should discover as they grapple with the problem may include:

- Cultural differences vary greatly among different countries and regions of the world. Even within one particular society all of its individuals have unique characteristics, preferences and behaviors.
- The interactions between people of different cultures and backgrounds expand one's perceptions of identities, tolerance and respect for humanity.
- The experience of knowing and living with people of different cultures and nationalities allows one to understand and appreciate other societies more acutely as well as develop a more open-minded attitude.

