Lesson Plan: Stereotyping
By Sarah Sahr

One of the biggest perks of being a TESOL professional is getting to know people from all around the world. In doing so, whether we like it or not, we sometimes start to generalize characteristics of a certain group of people. If we are not careful, these generalizations can turn into unjustified stereotypes. In creating a classroom dialogue around stereotypes, this lesson helps students look at both the positive and negative connotations found in stereotypes.

Objective: Students will be able to differentiate between positive and negative stereotypes. Students will be able to discuss cultural differences based on classroom stereotypes.
Outcome: Students will write adjectives describing various regional people. Students will build a list of positive and negative stereotypes.
Audience: Intermediate adult or secondary students
Duration: 50–65 minutes
Teaching Materials: Plastic containers, labels, blank paper, blue tack, worksheet

Introduction (15 minutes)
At the front of the room, have some open plastic containers labeled with regions of the world: Africa, Asia, Antarctica, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America. (For this lesson plan, I'll be dealing with regions of the world. If you are able and/or comfortable, feel free to use ethnic groups, races, or the like.) Review the locations of these continents. Also, ask for a show of hands so that students can share which continent they are from.

Ask students to get out a piece of blank paper and tear it up into eight pieces. On each piece of paper, students must write a single adjective describing the type of people who live in these areas. Try not to give examples. Each student needs to give at least one adjective per continent. Students can use the eighth piece of paper to put an extra adjective in the plastic container of their homeland. As students finish, have them place their adjectives in the proper container.

Before the next step, make sure you have supplied each container with at least three adjectives. It is important to have a hearty collection of adjectives in each container.

Unwrapping (10 minutes)

Step 1: Collect the pieces of paper in each container and paperclip them together, putting the container labels at the top of each stack. While doing this, review what students know about the meaning of *stereotype*. Ask if anyone wants to share a story dealing with stereotypes. Use conversation like this to activate students' prior knowledge.

Step 2: Randomly, choose a paper-clipped set of paper. Post the slips of paper to the board or a wall and read the words aloud as you do so. Do not put up the geographical label. Ask students what continent they think this list represents. If students don't know, don't worry. Simply move on to the next continent.

When complete, there should be seven lists of adjectives posted. If you haven't done so by now, label each list with the proper continent. It is important that students help you do this. As the teacher, you already know the identity of each list. Let students figure it out themselves.

Differentiating (10 minutes)
Pair students together and give each couple a handout. As a pair, students should visit each list around the room and organize the words into two lists on their paper, dividing the words into positive and negative columns.

Divide and Conquer! (10 minutes)
Having students stay with their partners, divide the class into seven groups (or as many groups as you have containers). Assign each group a continent. In their groups, students need to build consensus of the positive list and negative lists.

Closing (10 minutes)
Step 1: Once the groups have completed their positive and negative lists, they must go to the original list on the wall or board and organize the lists based on what the group decided. Each group should recreate their positive and negative lists on the wall or board.

Step 2:
Allow 2 minutes for all students to wander around the room to look at the lists. Once everyone has seen everything, facilitate a class discussion on stereotypes. Some questions you might ask:
- Do you agree with these lists?
- What makes one adjective negative or positive?
- What words on which list surprised you?
- What are some things you agree with? Disagree with?
- Are their adjectives that might be missing?
- Should some adjectives be removed?
- What emotions do you feel when reading your continents adjectives?

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