

Four Corners

THEME:	CULTURAL CONTEXTS			
LANGUAGE:	ANY			
STANDARD(S):	COMMUNICATION	CULTURES	COMPARISONS	
	1.1	1.3	2.1	4.2

Time Frame:

30 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Signs or posters for each of the four corners of the room
- Markers in each of the four corners

Description of Task:

Context:

This task might be used to introduce a new unit or as a culminating activity (Denny). It asks students to make a choice and defend that choice. To set up the activity, the teacher asks a question or makes a statement about the target culture and offers four choices. For example, “If you were sixteen and lived in Hamburg, how would you get to school?” (Possible choices: walking, moped, train, bus) or “What should the legal driving age be?” (Possible choices: 14, 16, 18, or 20 years). (Eventually the teacher can elicit questions and/or choices from the students.)

Four signs or posters labeled with the possible choices should be placed in the four corners of the classroom. Students move to the corner of their choice. Students find a partner in their corner and using the target language describe to the partner the reasons for their choice. Students will be given 3-4 minutes to explain the reason(s) for their decision. Each pair then chooses the top two reasons for making the choice that they did. Finally, students will write their reasons on the group poster and sign their initials.

Students at each of the four corners form a large group and choose a spokesperson. The spokesperson is responsible for presenting a brief summary of their choice and the rationale behind the decisions to the whole class.

Level:

Intermediate Low-Mid

Purpose:

To express and explain preference about a topic

Communicative Function(s):

Personal: Expressing and supporting opinions

Language Structure(s):

Conditional, modals

Cultural Aspects:

Will vary depending on the topic chosen

Modalities:

Listening

Speaking

Debriefing:

The teacher guides a follow up discussion with class members. Sample questions might include:

- Why did you make the choice that you did?
- What influenced your decision?
- Did another student influence you in your decision making?
- Did you have difficulty making a choice from the four corners? Why?
- Did you have a different choice in mind that was not available?

Assessment:

The teacher informally assesses student contributions in partner and group work. Students should be able to explain their reasons and those of their partners. The teacher will later check the poster for students' initials and examine the reasons listed.

Extensions:

Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:

Questions posed and choices offered can be simple or complex depending on the students' proficiency levels.

For beginning levels: Beginning students can practice the necessary vocabulary before they make their choices or the activity can be presented in English with an emphasis on cultural aspects.

For advanced levels: All portions of the activity can be conducted in the target language. Different topics can be posed to emphasize particular grammatical structures or cultural issues.

Other extensions:

As a journal entry or a short essay, students can write their reflections on the cultural topic such as; why they think a particular mode of transportation is expected or what is an appropriate legal driving age.

Cultural extensions

- The choices for the four corners can be four historical figures from the target culture. Students can decide which of the four people had the greatest influence on some aspect of daily life. Students need to research the life of one of these people and prepare an oral presentation or a written biography.
- The teacher asks the same question of the students two times. First, students are to answer as Americans. Second, students are to imagine they are members of the target culture and answer from that perspective. During the debriefing, students compare and contrast their responses.

References and Resources:

Denny, J. W. (1995, October). "Using cooperative strategies to strengthen foreign language achievement." Presentation given at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Council on the Teaching of Languages and Cultures, Bloomington, MN.

Reflections:

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