

Las Jóvenes Maquiladoras

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| THEME: | RESPONSIBILITIES (WORK/JOB) | | | | | | | | | | |
| LANGUAGE: | SPANISH | | | | | | | | | | |
| STANDARDS: | COMMUNICATION | | | CULTURES | | CONNECTIONS | | COMPARISONS | | COMMUNITIES | |
| | 1.1 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 3.1 | 3.2 | 4.2 | | 5.1 | |

Time Frame:

Two or three 50-minute periods

Materials Needed:

- Written descriptions of roles (provided)
- Paper and pencils
- Rubric for assessment (provided)
- Video “Zona de esclavitud: La niña detrás de la marca” (see resources)

Description of Task:

Task Overview:

The aim of the activity is to help students better understand the various perspectives within the *maquila* situation while communicating in the target language with peers. The activity is based on a number of resources: a simulation/role play exercise, the video “Zona de esclavitud: La niña detrás de la marca,” and articles taken from magazines, newspapers, and the Internet.

Pre-task:

The teacher will ask students to discuss in small groups of three to four students youth employment in the U.S.

Possible questions:

- Where do you and your peers typically find employment?
- What kind of work do you do?
- How much money do you earn in these jobs?

Level:

Intermediate-High/Advanced

Purpose:

To present an argument; to persuade others

Communicative Functions:

Personal: Expressing feelings and thoughts

Interpersonal: Indicating agreement/disagreement; interrupting; sharing problems

Directive: Persuading

Referential: Discussing possibilities; reporting facts

Imaginative: Solving problems

Language Structures:

Present, past, and conditional (subjunctive mood)

Cultural Aspects:

Use of appropriate register; la maquila industry; youth employment and its impact

Modalities:

Speaking

Listening

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- What might you spend your earned money on?
- What hours do you work?
- How many hours a week might be typical?
- How old must a minor be to work legally in the U.S.?

After a short discussion with peers, students share their ideas with the whole class. Using this discussion as a springboard, the teacher asks students to offer any information they have about youth employment practices in other countries. The teacher will show appropriate segments from the video “*Zona de esclavitud: La niña detrás de la marca.*” After viewing the video, students participate in a role play.

Role play:

This is a role play, an extended version of Strategic Interaction (DiPietro, 1987, see description in the *Handbook*) in which all class members participate. The instructor divides the class into six groups and hands each group a description of one character’s role.

There are six roles (see role descriptions provided):

- 1) a young worker
- 2) the director of the National Labor Committee in the U.S.
- 3) the Minister of the Economy in Honduras
- 4) a manager in a plant in Honduras
- 5) a U.S. worker
- 6) a U.S. company representative.

Students will attempt to reach an agreement regarding what to do about labor and human rights conditions within the *maquila* factories. They will do so by making persuasive presentations representing the various points of view and then engaging in a discussion.

Rehearsal:

In role groups, the participants will do the following:

1. Read the description of the character and decide who will play the role.

2. Think of strategies to persuasively present the character's argument to the class. Students may jot down notes which they can refer to during their presentations.

Performance:

It is useful to videotape the performance for use later during the debriefing stage. As a large group, the class does the following:

1. The group member playing the character's role joins the other role players in front of the class. Students present their argument, trying to persuade the others to protect their interests.
2. Each student observer should keep notes on the role play about the views presented, paying particular attention to the use of the conditional or the subjunctive. These notes will be used during the debriefing stage.
3. The characters attempt to reach an agreement. While they are interacting, they may receive or ask for information from their small group. Also, role players may change with other members of their small group, if they tire before reaching an agreement or if another group member would like to take on the role.
4. After an agreement is reached or after a sufficient time has lapsed, and no agreement seems likely, the teacher will interrupt the interaction to begin the debriefing.

Debriefing:

After the role play, it is extremely important that the instructor lead the class through a debriefing activity so that participants can best benefit and learn from the activity and process what occurred. Depending upon the proficiency level of the students, the debriefing (or portions of it) may occur in English. Students will form small groups of six persons with one person from each of the six role groups. This debriefing should begin with content-based questions which focus on the meaning of the interactions and allow role players to report back to the group about how it felt to play the character's role and what was achieved.

Debriefing questions/activities could include the following:

- What happened? Paraphrase the various positions expressed.

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- What was the outcome of the role play?
- Did participants reach their agendas?
- Could there have been other resolutions to the situation?
- How did the participants feel within their roles?
- What was the easiest aspect of the role play?
- What was the most difficult?
- What are the reactions of the participants to this situation?
- Will this information/role play have an effect on their daily lives? Why or why not?
- Should U.S. companies have the right to work within Central America and the Caribbean? If they do have the right to be there, are there conditions which they should meet?
- What should the role of U.S. citizens be regarding this situation?

After the instructor feels fairly confident that the class understood what happened during the role play and has discussed related aspects, s/he can bring the whole class back together and focus on structural aspects related to target language use, such as vocabulary, grammar, and use of register.

Whole class questions could include the following:

- Regarding vocabulary and grammar, what were some concerns students had? Discuss as a class structural aspects of the role play, focusing on ways students could improve their performances using specific target language vocabulary and grammar.

The debriefing stage should end with a discussion of the following question.

- What are the most important things students learned from this exercise?

Assessment:

Through observation and note taking, the teacher informally assesses student use of register, the use of the conditional and the subjunctive, and student ability to present an organized and persuasive argument which demonstrates an understanding of the issues discussed during the role

play. During the debriefing phase, the teacher shares with the class areas of strength and weakness, focusing on the above activity.

During the role play and throughout the class discussion, the instructor assesses student understanding of the *maquila* industry and its impact on young people. If students are familiar with role playing, the teacher may use a more formal means of assessment, such as a rubric to measure student performance (see sample rubric provided). In particular, the teacher will focus on the effective use of description and persuasion.

Extensions:

Suggestions for adapting the task for various levels:

For beginning levels: This activity can be done primarily in English.

For advanced levels:

- Students can write a one-page editorial expressing their views and submit it to *La Prensa* for publication.
- Students can choose one of the roles in their discussion group and write a follow-up letter responding to the role play interaction. Each member of the group can write a follow-up summary of the interaction that took place and the resolution. This summary should include a final attempt to persuade the other members to their point of view.
- Interested students can actively seek ways to try to improve labor conditions for the *maquila* workers. The instructor should have a list of addresses and telephone numbers available for those who would like to write letters expressing their concern and asking for a change in policy.

Cultural extensions:

Students can study youth employment and labor conditions within the U.S. and compare them to those of a Central American country and the *maquila* industry.

References and Resources:

DiPietro, R. J. (1987). *Strategic interaction: Learning languages through scenarios*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

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National Labor Committee (1994). *Zona de esclavitud: La niña detrás de la marca*. New York.

National Labor Committee (1994). *Zoned for slavery: The child behind the label*. New York.

Swenson, M., & Austin, J. (1994). *The cost of your shirt: A simulation exercise for secondary students and adults*. Minneapolis, MN: Resource Center of the Americas.

Tedick, D. (1996). Excerpt from: Report from the curriculum team of Minnesota's articulation project: Introduction to CAPRII and invitation to participate. *Minnesota Language Review*, 24, (2), 28-38.

Tedick, D. J., & Klee, C. A. (1998). Alternative assessment in the foreign language classroom. In G. S. Burkart (Ed.), *Professional preparation of teaching assistants in foreign languages*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.

Reflections:

"Las Jóvenes Maquiladoras" Multitrait Rubric for Assessment

This rubric can be used by the teacher (and, with guidance) by other students to assess the performance of students during the performance stage. Each performer is assigned a score (1, 2, 3, or 4) for each of the three categories. The maximum score is 12.

| | Presentation | Language Control | Content |
|---|--|--|--|
| 4 | Well-developed and organized presentation of argument; excellent attempt to persuade audience; excellent use of appropriate perspective. | Excellent control of language; includes a wide range of well-chosen vocabulary; appropriate use of register; numerous (at least 4) and accurate use of subjunctive/conditional | Thorough and sound understanding of concepts is reflected in content; effectively addresses the topic within the cultural context; is convincing to audience. |
| 3 | Developed and organized presentation of argument. Good attempt to persuade audience; good use of appropriate perspective. | Good control of language; good range of relatively well-chosen vocabulary; somewhat appropriate use of register; some (at least 3) and accurate use of subjunctive & conditional | Good understanding of concepts is reflected in content; good attempt to address the topic within the cultural context; is convincing to audience. |
| 2 | Adequately-developed, somewhat organized presentation of argument; attempts to persuade but without sufficient support; adequate use of appropriate perspective. | Adequate control of language; limited vocabulary range; use of register may/may not be appropriate; little (2) use of subjunctive/conditional that may/may not be accurate. | Adequate understanding of concepts is reflected in content; adequate attempt to address the topic within the cultural context; is only somewhat convincing to the audience. |
| 1 | Argument is undeveloped and unorganized; little or no attempt to persuade; little or no regard for using appropriate perspective. | Weak control of language; basic vocabulary choice with some words clearly lacking; inconsistent use of register; little (1) or no use of subjunctive/conditional | There is little or no evidence of understanding concepts reflected in content; does little to address the topic within the cultural context; is not or only barely convincing. |

Group Members: _____

Total Score _____

*Rubric adapted from scales found in Tedick & Klee (1998).

Role A: *Lesley Margoth Rodríguez Solorzano, worker in a maquiladora factory*

- You are from Honduras and you are 15 years old.
- You began to work in a *maquiladora* factory that makes sweaters for Liz Claiborne when you were 13. You work for a Korean company called “Galaxy Industries.” There are many young woman your age that work there.
- You have to work 12 hours a day. However, there are days when you must work from 7:30 am until 9:30 or 10:30 pm. There are even weeks when you need to work up to 80 hours a week.
- You earn 188 lempiras a week. This is roughly equivalent to \$21.36. You earn about 38 cents an hour. The sweaters you make for Liz Claiborne sell for \$90 in the United States.
- While you are working in the factory, you are not allowed to talk. If a supervisor finds you conversing with another worker, you and she are punished. They may scream at you or send you home for 3 to 5 days without pay.
- The supervisors always are hollering at the workers to work more quickly. Sometimes they strike them on the head or the back.
- During the day, you are not given a break except for lunch. To use the bathroom, you must raise your hand and ask permission. The bathrooms are locked at all times. If you spend too much time in the bathroom, you are punished.
- You left school in the 5th grade to help your mother financially by working. Although night school exists, you cannot go because you usually have to work.
- The inspectors from the Labor Ministry cannot enter and examine the working conditions of the *maquiladora* plants without permission from the company. The factory will not let them enter.
- One year ago you joined a labor union. You and other workers wanted to have a union in order to force the Koreans to treat you better. The owner of the business was opposed to the creation of a union and illegally fired 35 young women. Now, the factory owners have promised the workers health services and a cafeteria. They say that they are not going to mistreat the workers any more. They have yet to fulfill their promises.
- You dream about being a lawyer or a union director. You want to help your people. You want the *maquiladora* factories to give its workers better salaries, to allow workers to go to school, and to improve the working conditions within the plant.

Role B: *Charles Kernaghan, Executive Director of the National Labor Committee*

- You are the Executive Director of the National Labor Committee, an organization made up of 23 U.S. labor unions. Since 1980, your group has monitored the conditions of Central American and Caribbean workers regarding labor and human rights.
- The *maquiladora* businesses of these countries are not following the labor laws. The workers, the majority of them girls, have to work 6 days a week, 12 hours a day. They cannot go to school at night. If they go, they are fired from their jobs.
- In Honduras, although exports to the U.S. have grown by 2400%, the workers' salaries have decreased by 53%.
- 34% of employed women in the Honduran *maquiladora* factories are less than 18 years old. Children between 12 and 15 years old make up 13% of the work force.
- More than one quarter of the workers have suffered physical abuse in the *maquila* or have witnessed such acts as whippings, kicks, or blows to the head with fists.
- A majority of the women say that they are obligated to work more than 12 hours a day. It is common to work more than 50 to 60 hours a week.
- Each one of the workers mentioned that she or he would be fired immediately for expressing an interest in joining a labor union.
- Under Honduran law, a child is not to work more than 6 hours daily and no more than 30 hours a week. Neither is he or she to be asked to work overtime or work under less than healthy conditions. Also, a child is not to be punished. However, he or she has the right to attend night school.
- Each one of these laws is violated daily.
- These violations not only go against Honduran law but by allowing goods made under these conditions to enter the U.S., also violated are the legal rights guaranteed within the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act and the Generalized System of Preferences.

Role C: *Raúl Santiago, The Minister of Economy in Honduras*

- The International Monetary Fund is pressuring Honduras to pay its international debt. Because of this, the Honduran government is trying to come up with ways to attract foreign companies that will bring industry, jobs and money to the country. The Free Trade Zones are a wonderful way to do just that.
- It is in Honduras' best interest to keep foreign companies working in the country happy. If they are not, these companies easily can move to other countries where workers will be more grateful to have jobs and will not complain so much. You would like to tell the workers just how lucky they are to have work at all and that they should not complain about their situations.
- Wages must be low to attract foreign investors. In this way, corporate earnings will be higher.
- The unions sabotage government efforts to attract foreign investors. They must be controlled.
- You have an international reputation of not protecting workers' basic rights.

Role D: *Barbara Simpleton, Manager for a U.S. company with various contracts in Honduras*

- The earnings of your company went up 66% last year. You are very proud of the role you played in your company's financial success. You do not want any changes.
- You believe that unions should not be able to demand so much. You think that if unions attain their demands, other workers in other *maquiladora* plants also will organize and probably your company will have to pay other benefits.
- You personally feel responsible that investors in your company continue to report such high earnings due to the *maquiladora* factories in Honduras. A successful union could cause you to fail to reach your goal.
- Although the majority of the workers are very young, this is in the best interest of the plant. It is a proven fact that hand-eye coordination is optimal at 16 years of age. Workers also are extremely docile and follow commands easily at this age.

Role E: *Steve Miller, a U.S. factory worker for a U.S. company*

- Since 1980, the U.S. has lost more than 500,000 jobs to foreign factories. Each year it loses 28,000 workers to other countries.
- Although you realize that in the short run the U.S. will benefit from such low prices paid for goods made outside the U.S., you also know that these low prices result from too low wages paid to workers in poor working conditions. In the long run, this situation will affect U.S. workers and the U.S. economy.
- The present situation is a lose-lose situation. If U.S. workers do not have jobs because they have lost them to foreign factories, they also will not have the financial means to buy products made by these factories. Likewise, under the current conditions, workers in the foreign plants never will have enough money to buy the products they are making for the U.S. market.

Role F: *Suzanne James, representative of a U.S. company with various contracts in maquila factories in Honduras*

- During the last 10 years, Free Trade Zones have existed in various countries in Central America and the Caribbean. Within these zones, U.S. companies can build factories, import materials duty free and export goods at special reduced tariffs. They do not have to pay corporate or income taxes and little or no social security or health benefits.
- The wages of employees in these countries are much lower than those in the U.S. Therefore, investor earnings are much higher. It is in the best interest of the company to continue to have its products made in these factories under similar conditions.

Papel A: *Lesley Margoth Rodriguez Solorzano, empleada de una maquiladora*

- Eres Hondureña y tienes 15 años.
- A los 13 años empezaste a trabajar para una maquiladora que hace suéteres para Liz Claiborne. Tú y muchas muchachas de tu edad trabajan para “Galaxy Industries”, una compañía coreana.
- Por lo general, tienes que trabajar 12 horas al día. Sin embargo, hay días cuando tienes que trabajar desde las 7:30 de la mañana hasta las 9:30 o 10:30 de la noche. Hasta hay semanas en que te obligan trabajar 80 horas.
- Ganas 188 lempiras a la semana que son aproximadamente \$21.36 dólares. O sea, tú ganas 38 centavos por hora, más o menos, mientras que los suéteres que haces para Liz Claiborne se venden por \$90 en los Estados Unidos.
- La maquiladora no te permite platicar con tus compañeras. Si un supervisor te encuentra platicando con alguien, las dos reciben un castigo. El castigo puede ser que el supervisor les grite o hasta las puede mandar a casa por 3 a 5 días sin sueldo.
- Los supervisores siempre les gritan a las trabajadoras, diciéndoles que trabajen más rápido. A veces les golpean en la cabeza o en la espalda.
- El único descanso que recibes durante el día es para comer tu almuerzo. Para ir al baño tienes que alzar la mano y pedir permiso, porque los baños están cerrados con llave. También te castigan si pasas demasiado tiempo en el baño.
- Para poder ayudar a tu mamá, dejaste de asistir la escuela en el quinto año de primaria para empezar a trabajar. Aunque hay escuela por la noche, no puedes asistir porque normalmente tienes que trabajar.
- Los inspectores del Ministerio de Trabajo no pueden entrar a investigar lo que está ocurriendo en la maquiladora, porque la compañía no les da permiso para entrar.
- Hace un año te afiliaste a un sindicato. Tú y las demás empleadas querían un sindicato para que los coreanos las trataran mejor. Los patrones se opusieron a la formación del sindicato y despidieron ilegalmente a 35 muchachas. Ahora, les han prometido cuidado médico y una cafetería, y dicen que no van a seguir maltratando a los empleados. Todavía no han cumplido con sus promesas.
- Tu meta es llegar a ser abogada o miembro del consejo directivo de un sindicato. Quieres ayudar a tu pueblo. Quieres que paguen más, que les permitan ir a la escuela y que las condiciones del trabajo sean mejores.

Papel B: *Charles Kernaghan, director ejecutivo del Comité Nacional del Labor*

- Eres director del Comité Nacional del Labor, una organización formada por 23 sindicatos estadounidenses. Desde 1980, su organización ha estado manteniendo cuentas de como se respetan los derechos laborales y humanos en las fábricas de América Central y del Caribe.
- Las maquiladoras en estos países no están cumpliendo con las leyes del trabajo. Los empleados, que en su mayoría son muchachas, tienen que trabajar 6 días a la semana y 12 horas cada día. No pueden ir a la escuela por la noche. Si van, la maquila las despide.
- Las exportaciones de Honduras a los Estados Unidos han aumentado 2400% a la vez que el sueldo de los trabajadores ha disminuido un 53%.
- 34% de las mujeres empleados por las maquiladoras hondureñas tienen menos de 18 años de edad. Niños de entre 12 y 15 años de edad constituyen el 13 % de todos los trabajadores.
- Más de un cuarto de las empleadas han sido maltratadas en la maquila o han sido testigas de abuso como latigazos, patadas, o golpes a la cabeza.
- La mayoría de las mujeres cuentan que se les obliga trabajar más de 12 horas al día. Es común tener que trabajar más de 50 o 60 horas a la semana.
- Cada una de las empleadas ha dicho que sería despedida inmediatamente si expresara algún interés en formar parte de un sindicato.
- Según las leyes de Honduras, no se permite que los niños trabajen más de 6 horas diarias ni más de 30 horas a la semana. Tampoco se permite que trabajen horas extraordinarias ni que trabajen en condiciones que sean malas para la salud. Los niños tampoco pueden ser castigados y tienen el derecho de asistir a la escuela por la noche.
- Cada una de estas leyes es violada cada día.
- Estas infracciones no sólo van en contra de las leyes hondureñas. Cuando estas mercancías entran a los Estados Unidos, también quebrantan el “Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act” y el “Generalized System of Preferences” que garantizan los derechos legales de los trabajadores de estas áreas.

Papel C: *Raúl Santiago, el Ministro de Economía de Honduras*

- El Fondo Monetario Internacional est presionando Honduras para que pague su deuda internacional. Por esta razón, el gobierno Hondureño está intentando varias maneras de atraer compañías extranjeras que traeran al país industrias, empleos y dinero. Las Zonas de Libre Comercio son una forma excelente de hacerlo.
- Lo mejor para Honduras es que las compañías extranjeras con inversiones en el país estén contentas. Si no lo están, les sería muy fácil trasladarse a otros países donde los trabajadores no se quejan tanto y donde estarían más agradecidos por su trabajo. Usted quisiera poder decirles a los trabajadores de su país que tan afortunados son por siquiera tener un empleo, y que no se deberían de quejar tanto por las situaciones en que se encuentran.
- Para poder atraer a los inversionistas extranjeros, los sueldos tienen que ser bajos. De esta manera, las ganancias de estas empresas serán más grandes.
- Los sindicatos sabotean los esfuerzos que el gobierno hace para atraer a los inversionistas extranjeros. Los sindicatos tienen que mantenerse bajo control.
- Su reputación internacional es de no proteger a los derechos básicos de los trabajadores.

Papel D: *Barbara Simpleton, gerente de una compañía estadounidense con varios contratos en Honduras*

- Las ganancias de su compañía aumentaron un 66% el año pasado. Usted está muy orgullosa de su papel en el éxito financiero de su compañía. Usted no quiere que nada cambie.
- Usted cree que los sindicatos no deberían de poder exigir tanto. Usted cree que si los sindicatos obtienen lo que están pidiendo, los trabajadores en otras maquilas también formarán sindicatos, y es probable que su compañía tendrá que pagar más beneficios para los empleados.
- Usted se siente responsable de que los accionistas de su compañía sigan recibiendo buenas ganancias debidas a las maquiladoras hondureñas. Un sindicato exitoso podría impedir que usted consiga esta meta.
- Es bueno para la fábrica que la mayoría de los empleados sean muy jóvenes. Es un hecho que la coordinación entre las manos y los ojos es óptima a los 16 años de edad. Además, a esta edad los trabajadores son muy dóciles y siguen las muy bien las órdenes.

Papel E: *Steve Miller, un obrero estadounidense que trabaja en una fábrica en los EEUU*

- Desde 1980, los Estados Unidos ha perdido más de medio millón empleos a fábricas extranjeras. Cada año pierde 28,000 empleos más a otros países.
- Usted sabe que aunque a corto plazo los Estados Unidos beneficiará de los precios bajos de los bienes importados, estos precios son el resultado de sueldos muy pobres pagados a personas que trabajan en malas condiciones. A largo plazo, esta situación impactará a los trabajadores y la economía de los Estados Unidos.
- Nadie gana bajo estas circunstancias. Si los trabajadores de los Estados Unidos pierden sus trabajos a extranjeros, no tendrán dinero para comprar productos importados. Estas circunstancias también impiden que los trabajadores en fábricas extranjeras ganen suficiente dinero para comprar los productos que envían a los Estados Unidos.

Papel F: *Suzanne James, representante de una compañía estadounidense con varios contratos en Honduras*

- Durante los últimos 10 años, los países del Caribe y de América Central han establecido Zonas de Libre Comercio. Dentro de estas zonas compañías estadounidenses pueden construir fábricas, importar materiales libres de impuestos y exportar su producto a tarifas bajas. La compañía no tiene que pagar impuestos, y el impuesto sobre la renta tampoco se tiene que pagar.
- Ya que los sueldos de los trabajadores de estos países son mucho menores a los sueldos que se pagan en los EEUU, los accionistas ganan mucho más altas dinero. Le conviene más a la compañía seguir fabricando sus productos bajo estas circunstancias.

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