

# Examining Australian and Japanese Stereotypes Via E-mail Exchange

## A Worksheet and a CALL Lesson Plan

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## Introduction

Successful e-mail exchanges share many characteristics. Foremost is that they are project based, keeping individual e-mails focussed and collaborative in nature. Projects preempt the lifelessness and shallowness that characterize many e-mail exchanges after the initial excitement wanes. Project based tasks encourage collaboration within and between classrooms and can lead to potentially significant language and thought development. Research suggests that cross-cultural e-mail exchanges that are project based are excellent ways to improve communication skills and develop cultural awareness (Cononelos & Oliver, 1993; Gray & Stockwell, 1998; Kern, 1996; Tavares & Cavalcanti, 1996). In culturally isolated Japan any window to the outside world which encourages critical thinking is welcome.'

Prior to any individual e-mail exchange it is highly recommendable to give the participating classes a chance to get acquainted. A snail mail exchange including a student produced short video of school life and a quick message for their e-mail partners will pave the way for meaningful e-mails from the outset of the project. The following transcripts are examples of the first e-mail exchange between Toyoyama junior high school students and their e-mail partners in Australia.

Australian queries regarding the video	Japanese responses to the queries'
<i>"I can't believe you have to clean your school!"</i>	<i>"Do you have to clean your school?"</i>
<i>"How do you feel about cleaning the school?"</i>	<i>"It's fun because I talk with my friends."</i>  <i>"I hate it."</i>
<i>"What cleaning job do you do?"</i>	<i>"Weeding. (It's) better than cleaning (the) stairs."</i>
<i>"Do the teachers really help too?"</i>	<i>"Many teachers do."</i>

On the administrative side, excellent teacher to teacher communication is vital, as well as clear objectives and flexible timelines. A good pairing of exchange classes in terms of size, ability and aims is also very important. A good place to start your search for a suitable exchange class is <http://www.epals.com>. Finally ongoing evaluation, sensitivity to the other class's needs and flexibility help keep the project on track.

The following worksheet was adapted from a presentation by Ishbel Galloway at TESOL 1995. This worksheet was modified to suit an Australian-Japanese exchange situation rather than one between an American and Japanese classroom.

## Examining Australian and Japanese Stereotypes -- a Worksheet

Definition: A stereotype is a "standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude or uncritical judgement."

## Part One

With a partner, look at the words below and make sure you understand their meaning.

- friendly decisive honest rude sophisticated
- creative hard-working greedy outspoken lazy
- energetic intelligent nationalistic self-indulgent athletic
- shy conservative outgoing

When you think of Australians, what four adjectives do you most associate with them? Choose quickly as you have a time limit of two minutes. Next decide what four adjectives you least associate with them.

## Part Two

Read the following situations and decide how you feel about such behavior.

Ratings

1. very common 2. common 3. not strange but not common 4. strange 5. very strange

Circle the number that corresponds to your feeling.

1. A man wearing a skirt.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
2. Eating meals with your fingers.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
3. Using the same bath water as others in your family.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
4. Bargaining with the salesperson in a department. store.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
5. Slurping soup in a restaurant.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
6. A woman breast-feeding her baby in public.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
7. Two adult men holding hands in public.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
8. Adult children living with their parents until they get married.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
9. Sniffing continuously in public when you have a runny nose.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
10. Receiving a present from the bride and groom at a wedding.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
11. Blowing your nose in public.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
12. Eating in public, e.g. on the street.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
13. Your brother or sister marries someone from another country.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
14. Using an umbrella when it's sunny.  
1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

## Examining Australian and Japanese Stereotypes - a CALL Lesson Plan

Class: JHS English club

**Number of Students:** 25

**Level:** Beginner

**Time:** 120 minutes

**Objectives:** To examine Australian and Japanese stereotypes through completing a questionnaire and sharing the results with the exchange class via e-mail.

**Hardware:** One computer per student

**Software:** Internet Browser, e-mail account, stereotypes quiz (you will need to create your own stereotypes quiz at <http://school.discovery.com> so students can e-mail you their responses. This will allow you to check which students have completed and sent questionnaires).

**Knowledge:** How to open and copy a file and paste it into an e-mail, how to use e-mail.

## Procedure

Stage	Time	Teacher	Students
Pre-computer work	7	Explain the notion of stereotypes and illustrate with examples	Can brainstorm examples of stereotypes from different countries on the board.
	5		With a partner look at the adjectives in part one and check that you understand their meaning
	2		Individually choose 4 adjectives that you most associate with Australians and 4 adjectives that you least associate with Australians.
	7	Write their responses on the board	
	2		In pairs try to decide on what adjectives the Australian class may choose as they are doing the same questionnaire.
	7	Write their responses on the board	

Stage	Time	Teacher	Students
Computer work	20		Open stereotypes questionnaire and complete. Send it to your teacher. Copy and print.
	5		Open your email account and address a letter to your epal. Paste your questionnaire

			into the e-mail
	5	*To ensure that the students have received an email check with the Australian teacher before class.	Check your email and print out the completed questionnaire from your epal.
Post-computer work	15	Collate results of the English club's questionnaires on the board	
	15		In groups write a summary of the results. <b>A few / about half / most / all</b> of the English club students thought that statement number <b>1,2,3,etc</b> was <b>very common / common / not common but not strange / strange / very strange.</b>
	15	Collate results of the Australian class's questionnaires	
	15		In groups write a summary of the results as you did in the previous exercise.

Through doing this project the students thought about how they perceive other cultures and in turn how they are perceived by others. The students reflected upon why certain stereotypes exist and how they are perpetuated. The students at my school were given the worksheet in Japanese so that they could immediately engage with the material and select gut level responses. The Japanese worksheet along with this lesson plan, follow up activities, lesson ideas for more advanced levels and useful links are available at <http://www.geocities.com/rebecca19722001>

## References

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