

Out-of-The-Box Teaching Activities To Develop Creativity And Critical Thinking Activity in a Second Language

What Does This Actually Mean?

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Independent Researcher

Duration: 80 minutes

Target student proficiency level: Intermediate, advanced

Target student age: Adults

Objectives: To develop

- Language skills: the ability to read and understand formal instructional English and how to respond by writing formal notes or emails in English.
- Content knowledge: issues related to living in an apartment building
- Cognitive abilities: the ability to understand and question assumptions through word choice (e.g., *undesirable*) in written messages and to respond critically
- Social abilities: the ability to recognize implicit intention and to express one's position appropriately

Materials: Beamer or overhead projector, handouts, pens, paper

Preparation: Have handouts and projector ready

Procedure:

1. Illustration (10'):

- Ask *yes/no* warm up inquiries such as
 - 'Have any of you ever lived in an apartment complex?'
 - 'Was it mostly an enjoyable (nice) experience?'
 - 'Would you say your building were desirable or undesirable?'

Be ready to explain what 'desirable' and 'undesirable' mean.

- Tell students about once living in an apartment and receiving a complaint from the management about something undesirable (show the complaint memo).



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Dear Resident,

Please remove the cat food dishes from the exterior of your apartment. This attracts undesirable animals to the community.

Thank you,
Management

2. Critical Evaluation (10’):

- Put students into pairs to discuss:
 - ‘What do you think “undesirable animals” means in this case?’
 - ‘Do you agree that the cat food bowls should be removed at night?’
 - ‘What is the intention of the writer of this memo? Why?’
 - ‘What might be wrong with this memo? Why?’

Take a quick survey of each pair’s answers.

3. Focusing on Word Choice (15’):

- Hand out Form 1 and put students in small groups to discuss the desirability of specific animals.
- Assign a group leader to tell the class which animal was the most desirable and undesirable in the group.

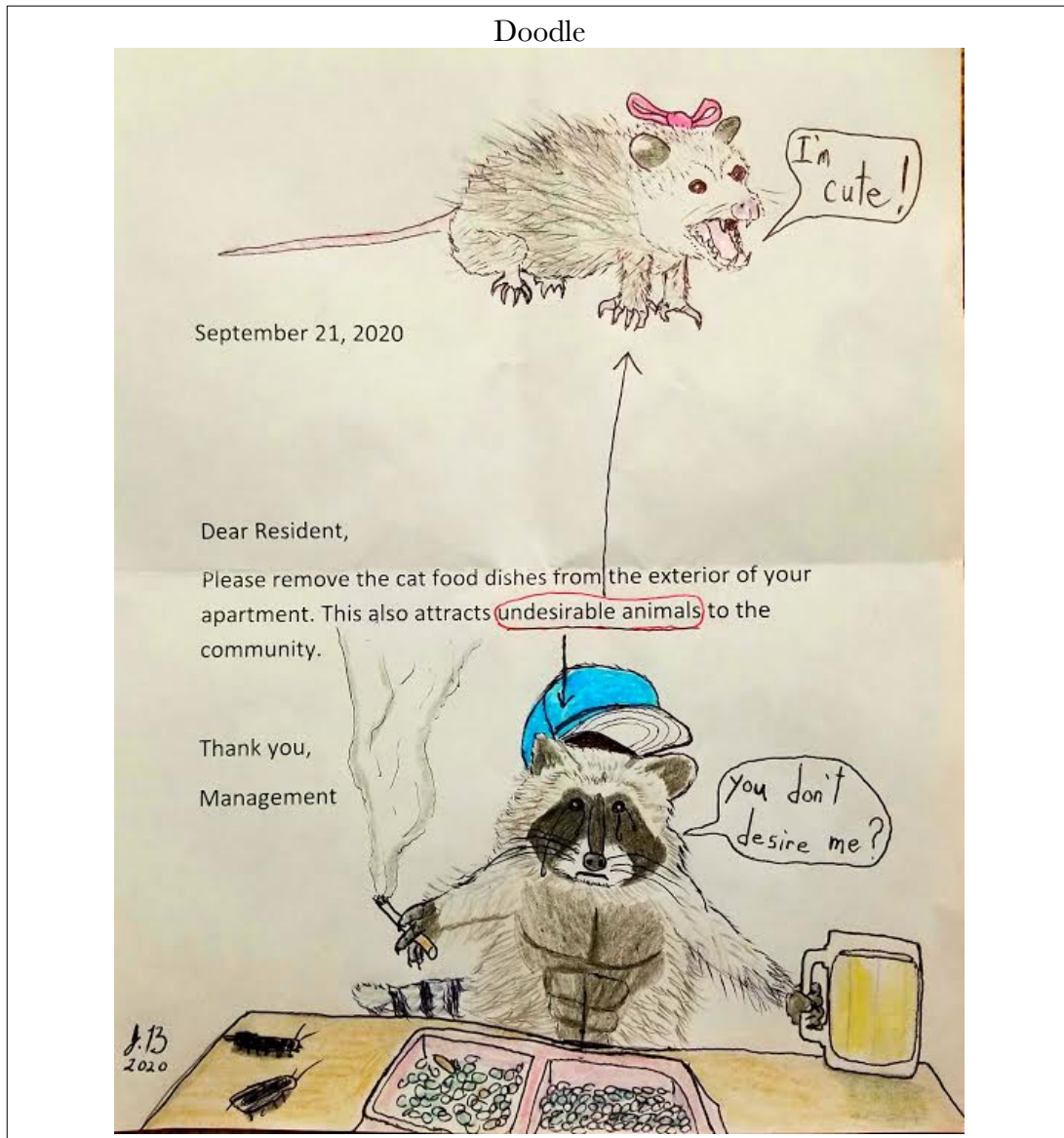
4. Creative Responses (20’):

- Tell students to write a creative response to the original memo in which they can express themselves freely.
 - They can take the perspectives of
 - (a) the undesirable animals or
 - (b) a resident who loves these undesirable animals
 - They can use doodles, drawings, poems, or other forms of creative expression
- Show examples if necessary (below)

Poem

I am a Desirable Animal!

I don’t want to disturb you, I don’t want to be rude
I’m simply standing by your door because I smelled delicious food.
Although I might look scary and make a mean face
I’m scared to death of you and this concrete place.
So, if you see me eating,
there is no need for a beating.
I’ll soon be back in the woods,
so it’s all good.



5. Polite Responses (15')

- Now that students have examined different viewpoints toward the memo, have them respond to the memo in culturally appropriate ways, using a suggested template (Form 2).

Variations and Extensions:

1. This activity structure can work with any short authentic artifacts as a starting point, e.g., building memos, spam advertisement, news headlines, commercials.
2. Students can work in groups to respond to different artifacts.
3. As an extension, the class can hold an exhibit of their creative responses or display them together with the original artifacts on the class wall or in the hallway.

FORM 1

1. Match the pictures with the names.

cat

dog

claws

fangs

raccoon bird

elephant

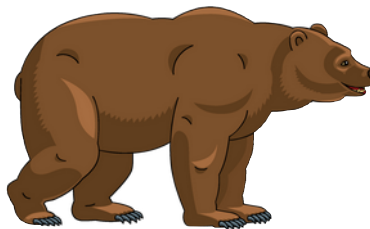
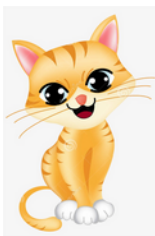
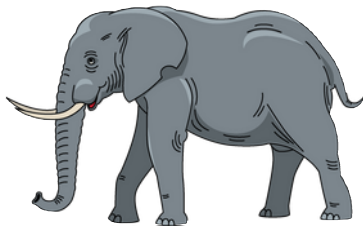
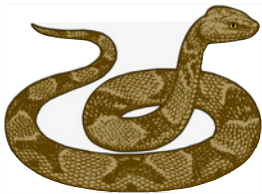
possum

squirrel

bear

monkey

snake



2. Talk about each animal in small groups and tell why you find them desirable or undesirable to have near your home. You might use words such as: *friendly, loyal, quiet, dangerous, noisy, aggressive, shy, clean, dirty, powerful, cold, warm, mean, kind*, etc.

Examples:

- *I find dogs to be desirable animals because they are mostly loyal and friendly. Although they are sometimes noisy, I prefer a dog over a squirrel.*
- *I find snakes to be undesirable. They are cold, shy, unfriendly, and have sharp fangs.*

Form 2

Writing a Polite Letter of Response to the Management:

Let's write a brief reply to the management that either agrees with or disagrees with the management's request to remove the cat food dishes.



Example of Agreement:

Dear Management,

I apologize for _____

In the future I will _____

Thank you,

Example of Disagreement:

Dear Management,

I appreciate the fact that you _____

However,

Thank you,

Image Sources:

Angry man

https://st.depositphotos.com/1010652/3821/v/950/depositphotos_38218559-stock-illustration-cartoon-angry-boss.jpg

Claws

<https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/monster-claw-hand-gm843223356-137808441>

Raccoon

https://classroomclipart.com/images/gallery/Clipart/Animals/Raccoon_Clipart/TN_raccoon-cartoon-clipart-image.jpg

Possum

<https://i.pinimg.com/736x/5b/b6/75/5bb675116e484ec8e1790e0db9fb02f1--opossum-australian-animals.jpg>

Snake

<https://clipartmag.com/images/snake-animated-39.gif>

Bird

<http://clipart-library.com/clipart/1239162.htm>

Fangs

<https://i2.wp.com/brisbane-snakecatchers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/snake-fangs.gif?fit=300%2C200&ssl=1>

Elephant

<https://free.clipartof.com/1269-Free-Clipart-Of-An-Elephant.jpg>

Squirrel

<https://clipground.com/images/squirrel-clipart-13.jpg>

Dog

https://www.clipartkey.com/mpngs/m/26-266535_pet-clipart-many-dog-transparent-background-dog-cartoon.png

Cat

<https://clipartmag.com/images/picture-of-cartoon-cats-20.png>

Bear

<http://www.clipartbest.com/cliparts/ace/R5M/aceR5Mpri.png>

Monkey

<https://clipartcraft.com/images/monkey-clipart-animated-2.png>

About the Author

Justin Brice holds an MA in TESOL from Hawaii Pacific University and has taught English as a foreign and second language in South Korea, Thailand, Cambodia, Japan, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. He is interested in teaching strategies in which the meaning of the target language can be expressed through drawn illustrations.