Role Play Cards

A Note Before You Begin:
These roleplay activities are designed to help us understand how people from different cultures and backgrounds may communicate in different ways. Sometimes, what feels normal to one person might feel unfamiliar to another, and that's okay.
The goal of this activity is to

- Build **empathy** and **understanding**
- Explore how we can **respond kindly** and **respectfully**
- Learn how to work and **grow together** in a **diverse** classroom



1 Helpful Correction or Public Embarrassment?

Characters: Haruto (from Japan), Luca (from Australia)
Scene Setup: During a group reading activity, Haruto says, "*I goed to the park.*" Luca immediately interrupts, "*No, you say went! It's went, not goed.*" Haruto's face reddens, and he goes quiet, avoiding eye contact for the rest of the activity.
Cultural Explanation: In some classroom cultures, quick correction is viewed as helpful and part of peer support. However, for many English language learners –especially those from high-context cultures like Japan–public correction can be deeply discouraging and even shame-inducing. They may prefer correction in private or through gentle modeling.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Haruto and Luca rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

2 Curiosity About Cultural Clothing

Characters: Amina (from Sudan, wears hijab), Chloe (from USA)
Scene Setup: During art class, Chloe turns to Amina and asks loudly, "*Aren't you hot in that scarf? Do you wear it even when you sleep?*" Amina looks surprised and lowers her head without responding.
Cultural Explanation: Cultural or religious clothing, such as the hijab, often holds deep personal and spiritual meaning. While Chloe's curiosity is natural, the way the question is asked–in public and with surprise–can feel invasive. Respectful curiosity should be balanced with cultural sensitivity and personal privacy.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Amina and Chloe rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

3 Asking About Food with Care

Characters: Zara (from Syria), Max (from UK)
Scene Setup: Zara opens her lunchbox filled with traditional food from home. Max leans over and says, "*What's that smell? It's kind of weird.*" Zara quietly closes the lid and doesn't touch her food.
Cultural Explanation: Traditional foods are often tied to family, identity, and cultural pride. Negative comments, even if unintended, can feel deeply hurtful. What may be unfamiliar to one person may be comforting and meaningful to another.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Zara and Max rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

4 Dietary Needs and Teasing

Characters: Ahmed (Muslim student), Blake (from Australia)
Scene Setup: During snack time, Ahmed declines a sausage roll, saying, "*I don't eat pork.*" Blake responds with a smirk, "*What? You're afraid of bacon?*"
Cultural Explanation: Dietary restrictions can be connected to faith, health, or culture. Teasing, even if meant jokingly, can feel disrespectful and marginalizing. Understanding and acceptance of dietary needs promote a sense of belonging.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Ahmed and Blake rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

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5 Different Perceptions of Time

Characters: Anaya (from India), Leo (from Germany)
Scene Setup: During a group project, Anaya arrives a few minutes late. Leo sighs and says, *"You're always late. We were supposed to start 10 minutes ago."* Anaya responds softly, *"It's just a few minutes..."*
Cultural Explanation: Time is perceived differently across cultures–some emphasize punctuality as a sign of responsibility, while others have a more flexible or relationship-based approach.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Anaya and Leo rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

6 Turn-Taking in Discussions

Characters: Zahra (from Iran), Luca (from Italy)
Scene Setup: In a group debate, Luca frequently jumps in with his opinion, speaking over Zahra. She waits patiently, but never gets to share. Afterward, she says, *"I didn't have a chance to speak."* Luca replies, *"You just have to say it louder!"*
Cultural Explanation: Some cultures expect speakers to hold the floor until finished; others promote dynamic back-and-forth exchanges. The way people wait, listen, or interrupt varies globally and can impact classroom equity.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Zahra and Luca rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

7 Nonverbal Gestures – Kind or Confusing?

Characters: Elena (from Italy), Asim (from Bangladesh)
Scene Setup: Elena gives a thumbs-up after Asim finishes his project. Asim frowns slightly and looks unsure. Later he asks, *"Was something wrong?"* Elena is confused.
Cultural Explanation: Gestures like the thumbs-up can have different meanings across cultures. While in some contexts it's positive, in others it can be confusing or even offensive depending on how it's interpreted.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Elena and Asim rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?

8 Eye Contact – Respectful or Rude?

Characters: Isaac (from USA), Zara (from Afghanistan)
Scene Setup: During a partner discussion, Isaac looks directly at Zara when she speaks. Zara avoids his gaze, looking at her paper. Isaac later says, *"You didn't look at me once. Did I say something wrong?"*
Cultural Explanation: In many Western cultures, eye contact is seen as a sign of attentiveness and respect. In other cultures, especially among girls or in religious households, avoiding eye contact is considered modest and respectful.

Rewrite Prompt: How can Isaac and Zara rewrite the scene to show understanding, empathy, and respect for both perspectives?