

MATCH THE COUNTRIES WITH THE CUSTOMS (A MATCHING GAME FOR STUDENTS TAKING AN INTERNATIONAL CLASS)

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ABSTRACT

Many students in business class are required to take at least one class which deals with International or Global business. These classes can range from International Marketing or Management, International Finance, Global Business, Introduction to Global Customs or International Culture. In addition, many classes in the Liberal Arts field are including an International or Global component as well.

Students today must know at least the basics of what happens in the world around them. We cannot build a psychological wall around the country in which we live. With popular selling international websites. Like Etsy, Amazon or EBay a single marketer can sell their goods, services or ideas to countries all around the world with one click of the mouse.

I decided to create this basic game after I used the book, Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands (Morrison, 2006) in my International Marketing course and also when I was teaching on an International level in Austria. Because the book Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands discusses in detail the correct ways to speak, do business, or even recognize the basic customs of other countries it lets the students begin to think about how relating to other countries can be very different from their own. Even a basic discussion on M-Time and P-Time when conducting business is beneficial.

Materials needed:

1. List of at least 8 to 10 countries that interest you. I chose the following;
 - a. India
 - b. Russia
 - c. Argentina
 - d. Australia
 - e. Austria
 - f. China
 - g. Japan
 - h. South Africa
 - i. United States
 - j. France
2. Access to a color printer
I chose to create color copies to add depth to the experience
3. Laminator
 - a. I laminated each page and then cut it in half. I used the items of the culture on one page and the corresponding flag on the other
4. Time to create each country and their corresponding flag.

It should be noted there are games that can be played on the computer but when traveling and in the classroom internet is not always a “given”. Carrying these cards with me has proven invaluable when internet is spotty or even completely unavailable.

I gathered different customs, foods, cultural mores and beliefs and created cards for each one with the corresponding flag and name of the country. I would put the customs or cultural icons or whatever I wanted the students to learn about on each card from one particular country. On the second card I would put the name of the country and the country flag.

I would divide the students up individually or in groups of two (depending on the size of the class). Usually a group of two or three is large enough for a discussion when they find their corresponding country. Thus if a class is larger more countries may be needed and smaller if the inverse would apply. After dividing up the students in groups of two or three I would randomly hand each group one card. I would then do the same with their corresponding country. This game works best if there is room in the classroom for students to stand up and move around. This is so the students will have to walk around and look at different cards to find their match.

When I say go the students must find the icons or flag which matches their card. When they find the cards that fit I tell them if it is correct. When all the teams have found their corresponding cards they sit together as a small group. I ask them to look at the cultural icon which match their country and try to guess what some of them mean. It is interesting to note that many students do not get the correct flag and country the first time.

When the students are done discussing their flag and country I open it up to the class. Each small group presents their countries icons to the class. When we have gone around the room I open the discussion to the class and we discuss what is different from what they thought about that country. We also discuss the symbolism of certain numbers, colors and dates for countries.

I ask the students some of the following questions;

1. Why is a number important in certain countries and can you think of any numbers that are considered lucky or unlucky in our own country? (like the number 13 or 666)
2. Why would it be important to consider color when making a product for a country? (gold is only for royals in China)
3. What is the importance of business cards in certain countries?
4. What foods would be considered offensive? (beef in India).
5. What would you have to consider when managing people in certain countries?
6. What must people consider when doing business in the United States? (we are one off only a few countries in the world that don't follow the metric system)
7. Why is it important that we understand these cultural symbols and customs.
8. Do we have any within the United States that can make it difficult to do business even between our own citizens?

In the corner of every card I have a number. I don't tell the students until the very end but this is the drinking age in each country. In countries like Austria the drinking age starts at 16 for beer and wine. We discuss why this is acceptable and the importance of transportation to prevent accidents when drinking this early. (The driving age is 18 in Austria and very difficult and expensive to obtain)

I have found this simple game starts a discussion on how each country is unique in their own way and respecting this uniqueness can bring about a better understanding in management, marketing, finance and many disciplines in arts and sciences as well as music and law.

REFERENCE

Morrison, T. & Conaway, W. (2006) Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands
2nd Edition, Adams Media