

Overview:

This activity helps participants prepare to look for themes in their data and build an argument around those themes.

Background:

This activity was created by Dr. Kris Acheson-Clair, CILMAR, based on a similar activity, [Language Envelopes](#). Language Envelopes was created by Janet M. Bennett based on an exercise developed by Jack Condon.

Objectives:

As a result of this activity, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the thought processes behind creating categories.
2. Examine how language categories get interpreted differently.

Time:

1 hour

Group Size:

Small group

Materials:

Copy of activity instructions and US American compliments cut out into individual strips of paper for each group (in [Downloads](#)). For the virtual option, the [Language Coding Jamboard](#).

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

- Denial
- Polarization
- Minimization
- Acceptance

AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Goals:

Cultural Self-Awareness:

- To articulate insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g., seeking complexity; aware of how their experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description).

Curiosity:

- To ask complex questions about other cultures.
- To seek out and articulate answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.

Knowledge of Cultural Worldview Frameworks:

- To demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs & practices.

Other Skills:

Teamwork

Activity Instructions (In-Person Option):

1. Divide participants into small groups. Ensure that each group has a copy of the activity instructions and the list of US American Compliments cut out into individual strips of paper so that they can be spread out and rearranged.
2. Participants should pretend that these compliments are data they have collected in interviews and observations. Their task is to code the data, i.e., identify themes and find evidence for them.
3. They should spread out their data so everyone in the group can see and arrange the slips of paper into categories.

Note: The facilitator should emphasize that there are multiple ways to categorize any given data set, so they shouldn't worry about getting it "wrong."

4. Once all groups have finished, they should each share the rationale behind their categories and the data in them to demonstrate how their coding system is valid.
5. The facilitator should then debrief using the [Thiagi debrief](#) method or, alternatively, come up with their own questions.

Activity Instructions (Virtual Option):

1. Begin by preparing the [Language Coding Jamboard](#) for your participants. The version available in Links is view only, so the facilitator will first need to make their own editable copy. In the top right corner, there is an icon with three vertical dots. Click that icon and then select "Make a copy." Rename the copied document to whatever is appropriate for the context. Click OK.
2. You will then be directed to the new document. To ensure that anyone with the link to this new Jamboard copy has editing privileges, select "Share" in the top-right corner. Click "Change to anyone with the link." A new window will pop up with a drop-down menu that says "Viewer." Click that menu and select "Editor."
3. For this activity, the facilitator will be dividing participants into small groups and placing them into breakout rooms over Zoom or another similar video conference platform. Before meeting with their participants, the facilitator should determine the number of groups and ensure that each group has their own frame to work with on the Jamboard. To duplicate the current frame, first select the square icon in the top middle of the page. Then, click the icon with the three vertical dots and select "Duplicate." Repeat this step until there are the correct number of frames.

Note: The facilitator may also want to label each frame with "Breakout Room [insert number]" so it's clear which frame each group is assigned to.

4. While everyone is together in the main room, explain the premise of the activity: On their frames, participants should see a list of US American compliments. Participants should pretend that these compliments are data they have collected in interviews and observations. Their task is to code the data, i.e., identify themes and find evidence for them. To distinguish between their themes, they should color code the statements.

Note: The facilitator might show the participants how to change the color of the text. First, click the text box of the compliment you wish to change. Then, highlight all of the text and select the text color button (the "A" with the line underneath it) from the upper left-hand menu.

5. Divide participants into small groups and assign each group to a breakout room. Ensure that all groups have the link to the Jamboard and know which frame they're working in.

Note: The facilitator should emphasize that there are multiple ways to categorize any given data set, so they shouldn't worry about getting it "wrong."

6. Once all groups have finished, they should return to the main virtual meeting room and each group should share the rationale behind their categories and the data in them to demonstrate how their coding system is valid.
7. The facilitator should then debrief using the [Thiagi debrief](#) method or, alternatively, come up with their own questions.

Related Tools:

Similar tools:

- [Language Envelopes](#)

Tools to use in conjunction with this lesson:

- [Language, Culture, and Perception: The Sapir Whorf Hypothesis](#)
 - Use this activity to discuss how language may shape thoughts and perceptions (which, in turn, may affect how they categorize and code data)
- [Thiagi Debrief](#)