Overview:

In this lesson, participants will play *Among Us,* an online multiplayer (4-10) social deduction game where individuals are categorized as either crewmate or imposter. Each round everyone either completes tasks or, as an imposter, they must kill the other crewmates without being discovered. When a body is discovered, or someone calls an emergency meeting, everyone has to explain what they were doing, and the imposter must lie and protect their identity. Players of the game are quickly aware of the other players' various communication styles and often have to adapt a different style to successfully play the game. For example, will they be quieter when everyone converses to hide their deeds? Do they tend to talk over individuals to demonstrate their innocence? Are the pauses between their sentences something to be suspicious of?

The purpose of this assignment is to have individuals learn the range of communication styles that exist and identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own preferred style. Participants will develop skills in communication and self-awareness. Through debriefing questions, participants and facilitators will communicate how this activity allows for an easier transition to discussing communication styles in different cultural contexts.

Objectives:

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

1. Identify a range of communication styles.

2. "Code-switch" their communication styles based on particular situations.

3. Interpret communicative behavior as either being indirect or direct.

Time:

1 hour and 30 minutes

Group Size:

Small group

Materials:

The game, *Among Us*, which can be purchased on STEAM for $4.99 for Windows. Individuals with IOS or Android devices also have the option to download the game for free.

The article, "The Science of Why Your Friends Shot You From an Airlock" by Kyle Hoekstra, for pre-reading.

Note: Before playing *Among Us*, the group should complete the Pacing activity available on the HubICL. Optionally, they can also complete the Direct-Indirect Communication activity.

Intercultural Development Continuum Stages:

• 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).

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication:

- To articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings).
- To skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on these differences.

Other Skills:

Teamwork, Emotional Resilience

Activity Instructions:

1. First, participants should complete the pre-reading, and the facilitator should lead them in the Pacing activity available on the HubICL (see Materials section on previous page).

2. Then, to set up the game, you and the participants will need to have a free Discord account. Discord is a messaging app that allows users to communicate through a variety of channels, including voice, video, and text. It also allows them to send media and files either privately or through communities which are referred to as "servers." Participants will be using Discord to chat together during the game.

3. Create a virtual server for the course/participants. To do that, click the plus icon in a circle in the server selection column on the left side of the screen. Ensure participants set their Discord username as their actual name for ease of communication/keeping track of who is talking.

4. On flashcards write the communication roles participants will be taking: turn-taker, pauser, or overlapper. Before each game, give participants their roll and explain that no matter if they are crewmate or imposter they have to stick to their communication roll.

5. When opening up the game, participants should select "Online" and then "Enter Code," which the host of the game should provide under the "Private" section.

6. During the game, individuals will be using the Discord "General" voice channel. When actual gameplay is happening (tasks or being an imposter) participants must mute themselves on Discord. You do this by clicking on the microphone by your name in the bottom left corner of the app. Red-line through it means muted, no line means not muted.

7. After someone has reported a body, participants may unmute themselves in Discord and chat with the others to gather information and figure out who is the imposter. They should be mindful of the countdown clock in the bottom right corner to get their votes in on time. If they are now a ghost they cannot speak; they can only listen as others guess what happened to them (and maybe lie).

8. Once the game begins, participants will find out if they are a Crewmate or an Imposter:

   • Crewmates must complete their tasks together! Using the map on the top right, crewmates will navigate through rooms and click on tools to complete "mini-games" or tasks. During the game, they will need to report any bodies they find, discuss with their team to discover the imposters, and send imposters out the airlock or drop them into lava.
   • Imposters are tasked with murdering crewmates without getting caught. Usually, they should fake their tasks and sabotage the ship.
   • Ghosts are those who were killed during gameplay. However, if a participant died, they are not out of the game! They should continue completing their tasks (if they were a crewmate). If they don't do their tasks, their fellow living crewmates can't win the game (they'd have to rely only on discovering the imposters). If they were an imposter they can still sabotage the ship to help out their fellow living imposters.

Once gameplay is over, debrief with the following questions:

   • What communication style would you define yourself: Turn-taker, pauser, or overlapper?
   • Which communication style was hardest for you to perform?
   • What communication strategies did you try to use when a crewmate versus when an imposter?
   • In what ways did you feel confident when speaking? What were some instances in which you felt anxious?
   • What challenges did you face when communicating with your peers? How did you overcome these challenges? What new strategies would you try in the future?
   • What generalizations did you find yourself making about how someone communicated? For instance, would you assume someone who was too quiet was the imposter? Or vice versa?
   • What generalizations did you have going into the game concerning how to tell if someone is a liar or not? What did you learn about these assumptions during the game?
   • What communication style did you see as most effective in this game play?

Related Tools:

   • 50 Case Studies in Intercultural Communication
   • Building Team Communication
   • Communication Continuum Exercise
   • Communication Flexibility Scale
   • Direct-Indirect Communication
   • Engaging with Communication Styles Through Board Games
   • Pacing

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