

Luck of the Draw (Pragmatics)

LEVEL: Beginner and Upper Beginner

PROCEDURES:

TIME REQUIRED: 30 minutes, plus time for students to present

GOALS: To practice common greetings; to use appropriate greetings with different community members; to understand when to use informal and formal greetings

MATERIALS: Paper cut into strips (enough strips for each group to have four during the activity), two different colors of pens or markers, two large cups or containers, pencils and paper for students

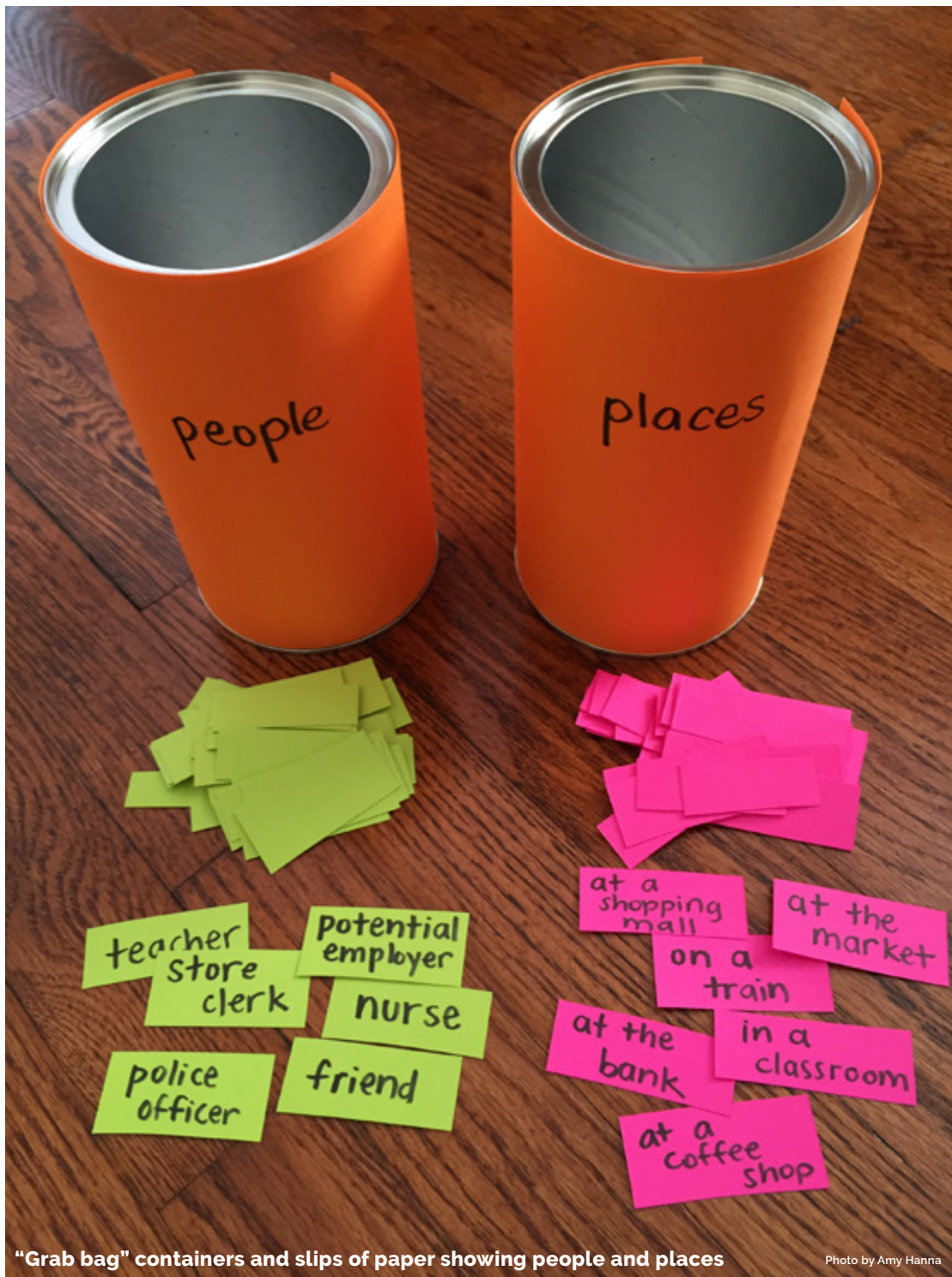
OVERVIEW: This activity will allow students to practice using greetings by creating a brief skit. Students should be familiar with common greetings and know whether they are considered formal or informal. Students should also understand appropriate register, meaning the use of language that is suitable in particular social situations. Creating a skit can be a useful practice activity for students from varying proficiency levels, especially when addressing pragmatics. The procedures outlined below make the task accessible to beginning-level students, but the variations can offer more advanced students a challenge.

PREPARATION: Find two containers that can be used as “grab bags” for students to draw from. Cut paper into strips, sized so that you can write one word or phrase on each strip. You can use either two different colors of paper or two different colors of markers or pens.

1. Ask students to help you brainstorm a list of formal and informal greetings as a warm-up for the activity. If necessary, remind students of the difference between formal and informal greetings by saying, “Remember that formal greetings are those you would use when speaking to someone older or to an important person in the community such as an elder or a professor. Informal greetings are those you would use with friends or close family members. Think about the different ways you can greet these types of people.” If students need assistance, you can start the list by providing an example of each type of greeting, such as “Hey” for informal and “Good afternoon” for formal.

2. Ask students to help you brainstorm a list of people they greet in their everyday interactions. These could be members of their family, friends, people at school, or anyone in their community. As your students provide ideas, list them on the board while a few students copy them onto the strips of paper you have prepared. People from the list should all be written on the same color of paper or in the same color ink. Some people your students might come up with are:

- mother
- father
- sister
- brother
- grandmother
- grandfather
- aunt



"Grab bag" containers and slips of paper showing people and places

Photo by Amy Hanna

- uncle
- friend
- teacher
- store clerk
- restaurant worker
- seller at a market
- taxi or bus driver

3. Ask students to think about people they may not interact with often but that they still have to greet sometimes. Students can also list people they have not interacted with before. One option is to provide one or two examples from the list below and then give students

time to discuss their ideas with a partner or small group before asking the whole class to share. Record these people the same way as in Step 2, by writing them on the board and having a few students copy them on the same color paper or using the same color ink. Ideas for people students greet less frequently are:

- doctor
- nurse
- priest/imam
- dentist
- headmaster or principal
- community elder
- government official
- police officer
- the president or prime minister
- movie star/actor
- popular singer
- famous artist
- religious elder/member of the clergy
- judge
- potential employer
- boss or manager
- work colleague (same rank or higher rank)

Note: Be sure that you create enough slips with types of people on them for your whole class. For the skit, each group will draw three slips from the “grab bag” of people, so you may need to create multiples of some types of people in order to have enough slips. For example, you might have three slips with *judge*, three slips with *grandmother*, etc.

4. After you have created slips for many types of people to greet, ask students to think about the places where these interactions might take place. These can be actual places where students have had interactions or their ideas about made-up situations. The goal is to get your class to come up with a variety of places. Some examples are:

- in your home
- in your neighborhood/village

- on the street
- at a market or store
- in your classroom
- in the hallway or around the school
- at the doctor’s office
- at a restaurant
- at a shopping mall
- on a bus or train
- at work
- at the bank
- at a coffee shop
- at the post office
- at a place of worship

Create slips for the places the same way as you did for the people in Steps 2 and 3, but use a different color of paper or different color ink.

5. When all of the ideas about people and places have been written on slips of paper, create two grab bags using the containers. Attach a label to each container, marking one “people” and the other “places.” Students can assist you by folding each slip of paper and putting it into the appropriate container.

6. Let your class know that you will show them an example of how the activity will work. Ask for three volunteers to act as your group members for the explanation. Then, choose three slips of paper from the “people” container and one from the “places” container. Write the people and the place on the board so that students can see them.

7. Model a discussion with your group of volunteers. For each of the slips you drew from the “people” container, you will need to decide how the person should be greeted. Ask the class and your group of volunteers questions such as:

- How would I greet this person?
- Can I speak to them the same way I would my friends at school?

- Do I need to speak to them in a different way?

Try to get the class to give you ideas about exactly what greetings they would use for each person. Write these on the board under the names of the people.

8. Once you have discussed each of the people and written some ideas, model how to act out a scenario in the place you chose. Assign each volunteer one of the people drawn from the container and explain that the volunteers will have to act out those roles during the skit. You can even create a sign for the students to wear or hold up, or write each student's name next to his or her role on the board so the class will remember who that person is. Tell the volunteers that you will greet each of them as if you are meeting in the place that you have drawn from the container. For instance, if your place is the market, have the group members act as though they are carrying shopping bags and looking for items to buy. If the place is a coffee shop, students might be waiting in line to order or sitting at a table sipping coffee.
9. Act out a quick version of what the skit should look like by encountering each person individually and greeting him or her appropriately. Each student volunteer should respond by returning your greeting accordingly. They can get ideas from the list of formal and informal greetings on the board from Step 1 if needed. The purpose of this example is to model what students should do in the activity and to remind them to use formal and informal greetings appropriately. Once you have completed your first example, give students time to ask any questions they may have, and offer any further explanation you think is necessary.
10. Inform students that they will be working in groups of four. You can use any method to group your students, or allow them to choose the classmates they will work with.
11. Tell students: "You will draw slips of paper from each of these containers and then use them to plan your greeting skit. You will choose three people and one place. In your group, you will have to assign one person to play the role of a student your age. The other three group members will act as the people you draw from the container. The skit will take place in the location you pull from the other container."
12. Once the students are in groups of four, they will need to choose their people and their place for the skit from the containers. This is probably easiest if each group selects one representative to go to the front of the classroom to make the selections and then return to the group.
13. When all groups have selected three people and one place, give the following instructions: "Think about the three different people you chose from the container. Your group needs to discuss how you would greet each of these people. Remember to think about exactly what you would say to each person if you met him or her in the place that you chose. Think of what the people would be doing in the location of your skit. Are they shopping, eating a meal, or sitting on the bus? Try to show what is happening in the place you chose. Your group can write ideas on paper if you want to."
14. At this point, circulate around the room and listen to the groups' discussions. Answer any questions students may have, or offer assistance if they need it.
15. Once the groups have had enough time to discuss their ideas for how to greet each person in their skit, you can say: "Now you need to decide who will take on each role in your group. One person will be a student like you. The other three will act as one of the roles you

chose from the container. Then, you need to create your skit. Remember, it should happen in the place you chose from the container, and each person needs to be greeted appropriately.”

16. Give students time to plan and rehearse their skits. They can write a script if they find it helpful, or if you want to have a written assignment to use for grading purposes. Otherwise, students can perform the skit from memory. Again, move around the room to help groups that need assistance.
17. Before asking students to present their skits, give them guidelines or questions to think about as they watch the different groups. You can say: “As you watch your classmates present their skits, I want you to think about a few things. This way, when everyone is finished, you can give each other feedback or advice about how you used the greetings. I will write questions on the board for you to think about as you watch each other’s skits.”
18. Write on the board: *Did you think the greetings you heard were good ones to use with the people in the skit? If yes, why? If no, what greetings would you use?* Explain these questions to students, and model how to give feedback to their classmates by saying: “For example, I watch a skit where someone greets the principal of our school at the market by saying, ‘Hey, Principal Rouso, what’s up?’ I do not think this is the right greeting, so I would tell the group, ‘I think that you should use a more formal greeting to say hello to the principal,’ and give my idea for something different to say.” You can also have students write the questions, give a written response to each one, and then hand in their papers at the end of the activity. Or, you could have students use a checklist (see Extensions) to give the groups feedback on their skits.
19. Once all the groups have had time to plan and practice their skits, they can present

them in a variety of ways. Depending on the size of your class, one option is to have each group of students present to the whole classroom. Or, if you have a large class, you can split the class in half and have each group present to its half of the class. Another option would be to pair groups and have them present to each other. Depending on how the groups present their skits and how you ask students to provide feedback, you can monitor the presentations and also participate in the discussions.

VARIATIONS

1. This activity can also be used to give students practice with other kinds of speech acts. Using the same procedures, you can assign your students a skit to practice apologies, introductions, closings, or any other speech acts you have been teaching them. To challenge students even more, create a third “grab bag” container and allow the class to brainstorm additional types of interactions they could use to create their skit. Here are some ideas:
 - apologize
 - give advice
 - make a request
 - ask permission
 - order a meal in a restaurant
 - make introductions
 - make an excuse for being late
 - close a conversation and say good-bye
2. For higher-proficiency students, you can assign the skit without going through the brainstorming (Steps 1–7). Instead, allow students to choose any speech act to use in their skit. Tell students that the goal of the skit is to show how one would interact differently, using the chosen speech act, with people in varying roles and relationships. The groups can choose their own people and place for the skit and even create a detailed scenario. As an added challenge, groups can write down

the people in the skit, the speech act, and a short description of the scenario and then exchange their ideas with another group. Then, groups of students would have to act out the skit according to the guidelines they receive. Here are examples of the types of scenarios students might come up with:

- apologizing to your boss, a coworker, and a client for being late to a meeting
- making an excuse to your classmates, your teacher, and the headmaster for missing a group presentation in class
- inviting a coworker, your boss, and your friend to a dinner party

EXTENSIONS

1. Provide a checklist (as mentioned in Step 18) for students to use to assess and give feedback to their peers. Here is an example that you can write on the board for students to copy and use during the activity.

Names of group members:			
	Yes	No	Suggestions
The greeting used with Person 1 was a good choice.			
The reply from Person 1 was a good choice.			
The greeting used with Person 2 was a good choice.			
The reply from Person 2 was a good choice.			
The greeting used with Person 3 was a good choice.			
The reply from Person 3 was a good choice.			

2. If you want to extend this activity, the feedback students give to each group about their skit can play a bigger role. Groups who received suggestions about

how to change their skit can use the feedback to make changes and improve their work. If some groups received only positive feedback, they could choose another set of people and a different place to plan a new skit. Then, all the groups can present again, showing either their improved skit or a new one.

3. This activity also allows for some repetition to give students more opportunities to practice and reinforce their skills. For example, groups could keep the same people in their skit but change the location by drawing a different place from the container. Groups can also repeat the process with a different speech act or a different group of four students from the class.
4. As students learn more ways of interacting, they can continue their skit. Because the original activity focuses on greetings, there are many possibilities for adding to the dialogue. If students work in the same groups, with the same people and place, they can add more speech acts to form a full conversational exchange. For example, after students learn about making introductions, they can practice introducing a friend to each of the individuals in the skit. Of course, this will require that students take on multiple roles by acting as the friend when they are not the person greeting or being greeted. Once students learn different ways to end a conversation and say good-bye, they can continue by adding a closing to the interaction. Any of the speech acts listed above in Variations, or others your students are learning, can be used to continue the skit and give students additional practice with using appropriate register in different situations.

This activity was written by **Amy Hanna**, who has taught ESL to students in primary school, university, and adult education classrooms, trained teachers in TESL methods, and developed materials for English language programs in the United States and abroad.