

GAME “UNDERSTAND ME” (AGES 6+)

Photographs: Y.Bubekova (Photoshop), EI KFU (photographer)

Editors: candidate of sciences, docent of Elabuzhsky Institute L. Bubekova; doctor of pedagogical sciences, Chief Child Psychiatrist of Moscow City A.A. Portnova

GAME DESCRIPTION

Observe, Reflect, Sound Out

Game “Understand Me” is a unique opportunity to develop intercultural communication both at the conversational speech and gesture levels. At the basis of the game is the language of gestures and its conversational “interpretation” in various cultures and situations, the process of converting a gesture into speech in a laid-back situation.

How is it possible to understand other people if you don’t know their language? How do you free yourself from the subjective opinions and clichés in “reading” the gestures of representatives of other cultures? Does a fist always mean a threat, and an open hand – an invitation to friendship? By playing “Understand Me” you will learn not only to interpret the same sign in different ways, concentrate on the context of the situation, but also to “read the minds” of other participants when they express themselves through signs, not words!

The more the game is played, the more interpretations of gestures emerge and the gesturing becomes more varied and creative.

Attention! How the player holds a card, on it different gestures with the differing values can be “found”. Therefore if the game purpose – not to find as much as possible gestures, it is important to agree in advance – how to hold cards (horizontally or vertically).

Target Audience

The game can be played by children aged 6 and above, teenagers, youth and adults; people studying a foreign language and culture or striving to maintain a non-native or one of the native languages and cultures outside of the language environment, both individually and in group setting. The game is also suitable for the periods of introductions, first meetings in the school and youth exchange programs; family fun time or travel.

Experienced teachers and parents advise to play “Understand Me” for the purposes of learning foreign languages.

The Game's Goal

Learning and practicing communication skills with representatives of another language environment and activation of the vocabulary, development of observation skills for every-day life, improving the conversational and situational response time and switching the language and sign codes from one to another.

Materials Needed

This is a table game using the set of cards with pictographs or photos of gestures and (optionally) the “Gesture Guide.”

RULES OF THE GAME

At the beginning of each round, the teacher/leader names the languages that the players can use, or gives them the freedom of choice.

Note: Despite the absolute freedom for creativity, the players must:

- *observe the rules of word and phrase formation in the language(s) of the game;*
- *not mix the words from different languages; use no more than one language during the game;*
- *use the shared language during the game that every player speaks, if the players are native speakers of several different languages. If the players wish so, the descriptions of gestures may be given in other languages as well (for example, in the foreign languages the players study).*

At the beginning of each round of the game it is necessary to agree upon which country or within which culture the communication is taking place. For example, before the cards are drawn, the players agree that this round is taking place in Russia, the next one – in Poland or Germany.

The gestures that may insult other players are banned from the game. Their intentional use results in the exclusion of the player or the entire team from the game.

This is a high-speed game. There’s no time to think in Figures 1 and 2.

Attention: Depending on *how* the player is holding the card, the other players may “discover” different gestures with differing meanings. This is why the goal of the game is not to identify as many gestures as possible, but it is important to agree at the outset of the game upon how to hold the cards (horizontally or vertically).

FIGURES

Figure 1: “Gesture Phone”

Option 1:

Up to 10 players can participate. The players take turns to draw from the common stack a card with a picture of a gesture (1 card – 1 gesture) without showing it to the other players.

The player who has drawn the card (the leader) voices its meaning in such a way as it is done in his/her culture. The other players must show this gesture. *In multi-cultural groups it would be interesting to show this gesture both in the tradition of the culture the leader comes from, as well as each of the other player who represent different countries and nations.*

The player who shows the gesture correctly (within the leader’s culture) becomes the leader for the next round.

Each leader is awarded as many points as many players correctly guessed the gesture based on his/her explanation of the gesture.

The leader with the most points wins the game.

Option 2 (“Broken Gesture Phone”): *What will happen if at the beginning of interaction the people don’t agree about the common rules and norms?*

The game is played like a chain, from one player to another (they sit in a circle or a row). The number of players is not limited.

The leader shows the card with a gesture only to the first player. The player then whispers the card’s meaning (as he/she understood it) into the next player’s ear. The second player transfers the meaning he heard from the first player to the third one with a gesture that the other players should not see. The third player whispers the meaning of the gesture (s)he heard into the fourth player’s ear, etc. Thus, the meaning transfer happens through the gesture (leader, player 2, 4, 6) and whisper (player 1, 3, 5) in regular turns. The last player must both pronounce and show the gesture.

If the group is international and from the very beginning it was not agreed that the round is played within the norms and traditions of a certain country, the last player can show a totally different gesture or voice a meaning different from the original.

Good mood in tracing back the truth will be guaranteed.

The points in this version of the game are not awarded.

Figure 2: “Rock-Paper-Scissors”

Option 1: *Not only one and the same concept can be referenced in different cultures by different gestures, but also the same gesture can be read differently by carriers of different classes, ethnic traditions, experiences, ages, professions, etc.*

In this option, a leader and an unlimited number of players can participate.

The leader takes a card with a picture of a gesture (1 card – 1 gesture) and shows it to the other players.

The winner is the player who names the largest number of “meanings” of the gesture or the one who names the last possible meaning.

Option 2: *Are we always ready to see, understand, and render a gesture with words? And do two different people always understand the same word in the same way?*

The game is between two players. After taking a gesture card from the stack (1 card – maximum of 3 options of one- or two-word descriptions), the player puts the card in front of him/herself without showing it to the other player.

The pronounced meanings are written down by the player him/herself. The other player is to draw on paper the possible gestures that are behind the descriptions.

When the cards are all done (or when each player collects the agreed upon number of cards), the players compare:

- the written down descriptions and the actual cards;
- the drawings made on the basis of the gestures and the actual cards.

The points are awarded for the most accurate description of the gesture (1 point) and for the gestures drawn correctly (1 point).

With the experienced players, the winner will be friendship.

Figure 3: “Gesture Expert”

Option 1: *Is it possible to communicate without words, only with gestures? How intensive and effective can such communication be?*

The game is played by two leaders and other players.

Each player independently determines the sequence of using the cards in the game.

In the dialogue, 1 card may be used (1 score), one card can be used twice (0.5 point), or no cards used at all (0 points). When all the cards are used correctly, the player receives a maximum of 5 points. If the cards are not used correctly, one point is deducted.

The two leaders take 5 cards each, without showing them to each other. The first turn is determined by a coin toss or another random method. The leader names the gesture, one of those that was depicted on one of his/her cards (1 point). The second leader is to respond to him/her by voicing a gesture from his/her card (1 point for the new card, 0.5 points for the repeated use of the same card) or with a gesture that was not on any of the drawn cards (0 points).

The game continues to the point where the dialogue stops making sense or all 5 cards from each leader have been used. In the process, the leaders’ exchange must make sense as a dialogue.

The other players are to guess and write down/draw what each of the leaders’ cards meant. The winner is the player who guessed the most gestures correctly.

For example:

“Give me some money, please!”

“Just a couple of Euros? It’s almost nothing!”



Option 2:

Two players participate.

At the beginning of the game, each player has one set (identical or different from the other player’s) of cards with gestures (or, as an option, one player has a set of cards, and the other one – paper and pencil to draw the gestures in response).

From the very beginning, the players can agree upon a topic/theme, or alternatively they can just start live communication, where the partner is to determine, based on the other player’s gestures, what he/she is trying to communicate. Each card can be used only one time.

The game is about the dialogue of gestures (without naming or explaining them). In the process, each player quickly draws on paper what (s)he wanted to say with the gesture and how (s)he understood the other player’s answer. At the end of the game, the notes are compared.

The winners are friendship and good mood.

Figure 4: “Guess This!”

Imagine that you have completely run out of words and now all you have is gestures. With their help, you need to explain well-known sayings and folk wisdoms.

You can play either showing the gestures without a cue or choosing (through blind drawing or intentional selection) the cards from the game “Understand Me.”

For example, the leader thought of the phrase “neither this nor that” and intentionally selected and showed the following gestures/cards to the other players who are to guess the phrase:



Or: the player blindly draws and shows everyone the following cards:



The other players’ responses may show the following sayings: “Neither this nor that,” “Neither fish nor fowl,” “Neither stop nor go,” “Neither give nor take,” “Neither hot nor cold.” The player who gave the most fitting or the first correct answer becomes the leader for the next game round.

Game idea: E.L.Kudryavtseva, Uwe Ingo Krüger

“GESTURE GUIDE”

For the game not to be lost in excitement but to enrich the participants with new information about their own and others’ cultures, we suggest the participants (especially in an international or multicultural community) fill out the “Gesture Guide”).

For this purpose, the table in the game set should be copied by the number of the participants or emptied by the participants at each new round. While playing, the participants can fill it in either in their native language or in the language they are learning.

Enjoy the game and learn from playing it, too!

Gesture	Country/ gesture meaning	Country/ gesture meaning	Country/ gesture meaning	Country/ gesture meaning
	РОССИЯ немного	DEUTSCHLAND ein bisschen, so viel/so groß	USA a little bit	
Your gesture (drawing or photo)				

Game idea: E.L.Kudryavtseva, Uwe Ingo Krüger