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Second Language Teaching  
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### **Reflection 1: Lesson Plan Selection**

For the lesson plan selection, I have chosen to include an outline of a Halloween-themed lesson I prepared for my tutees that began with a structured “Back and Forth” activity before transitioning into broader discussions of how holidays are celebrated in general. The overarching goal of this lesson (labeled as the ‘Unit Objective’ in the lesson plan) was for students to identify similarities and differences between their home cultures, target cultures, and the cultures of other students in the tutoring group during spoken discourse. This is in keeping with a central tenet of my teaching philosophy: learners should be both acquiring cultural knowledge about the world that enhances their language study and reflecting on their own cultural identity, not just memorizing forms and functions. Although the open, semi-structured format of the majority of the activities that comprised it may have posed a difficulty for one learner in particular (A-chan) whose proficiency seems to be slightly lower than that of her peers, the lesson was successful overall.

Because I have three tutees, I paired A-chan with Bogota for the Halloween “Back and Forth” activity and let Lala participate on her own. There were two reasons for this choice of grouping: 1) A-chan and Bogota do not share an L1, forcing them to communicate with one another in English, and 2) Bogota is more proficient as a speaker than A-chan, so it was possible for her to assist her when necessary (usually when A-chan was struggling to recall a vocabulary word); Lala is proficient enough to succeed in this activity on her own. This grouping worked well, and I would certainly seek to maintain the pairing of a lower-proficiency learner with a higher-proficiency one in the future, at least with this particular group’s L1 distribution. Students were given a handout with four rows of four classic Halloween monsters (ghost, witch, vampire, and zombie) and tasked with figuring out which monster was marked on the opposite group’s sheet. During the back-and-forth activity, I mainly provided corrective feedback as recasts for the tutees, particularly in order to draw their attention to syntactic

errors in their question formation (Lala asked “what she is holding?” in reference to the witch, which I recast as “Right, good question, so what *is* she holding?”) or their pronunciation (repeating the word *zombie* to emphasize the voicing of the /z/ for Bogota, who produced it originally as an /s/). The end of this activity signaled the end of the more ‘structured’ portion of the lesson, after which both activities were presented as open-ended discussion tasks. The majority of my preparation time before this lesson was devoted to making the “Back and Forth” activity, but if I planned on reproducing this lesson in the future, I would produce a set of instructions or prompts to guide the open-ended conversation of culture.

During the open-ended discussions, I adopted the role of facilitator and stepped back as a participant, encouraging the students to do the majority of the talking and asking questions to elicit their thoughts. While I had hoped that the students would ask each other questions in a more organic way without having to ask them to do so, it became clear that they needed explicit instruction to do so, so I asked each learner to think of one or two questions about what the other students had said. Bogota described a feast day for a local saint during this discussion, while Lala detailed the “Bon Festival” (a holiday for commemorating ancestors) and A-chan talked about “Setsubun,” a holiday when soybeans are thrown at evil spirits to ward them off. Here, the corrective feedback I offered focused less on correcting their production and more on getting them to clarify their intended meanings and expand on their ideas. Interestingly, during these portions of the lesson, Lala never resorted to asking A-chan questions about vocabulary in their shared L1 (Japanese) even though A-chan stopped to ask Lala questions in their L1 on three separate occasions. While ordinarily I would have asked A-chan to attempt to find another way to express or describe her intended meaning, I allowed this “consultation” for the sake of time. The only thing I was left wondering at the end of the lesson is what my tutees took away from this whole experience, and if I should have assigned something like a brief (1-3 paragraphs) reflection on what they learned. In the context of a full course where I expected my learners to actively prepare between lessons, I probably would.