Developing an Immersive Role-playing Game (RPG) to Improve Japanese Students' English Communication and Cultural Awareness

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1. Introduction

Japanese students often face communication difficulties when they travel abroad (Hanada, 2019). Culture shock, language difficulties, and shyness have been noted as potential reasons for this (Kobayashi, 2018). Many Japanese people never travel abroad, and for others, it may be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity (Nakamura, 2018). Students in the school where I teach study abroad in Australia. Upon returning, most students describe the initial difficulty they had in adjusting to life there.

Previous research has established that role-play and simulations can prepare students for real-life situations (Hofstede et al., 2010), and gamification can increase motivation (Monterrat et al., 2017). Gamification is the application of gaming elements to other situations. To combine these two powerful approaches, I developed a role-playing game (RPG) and applied Nicholson's (2015) RECIPE framework to achieve meaningful gamification.

2. Needs analysis

2.1 Current situation

I teach in a commercial high school in a small city, Fukui, in a rural prefecture of Japan. Second-year students in the International Business Course travel to Australia for three weeks to study English. In preparation for this, the students meet up for one hour a week for ten weeks. English teachers and third-year students also attend to help the departing students practise conversation.

The students are split into groups of four and work with the third-year students. Departing students take turns giving an extended self-introduction presentation while the others listen in silence. After all students have presented twice, there is an open Q&A session. Usually, one or two generic questions are asked and answered, but there are often large stretches of silence.

2.2 Identifying the problem

When students return from their trip to Australia, they exhibit much-improved confidence in language use. However, they usually report having had difficulty interacting with people in Australia for the first week. Each year, most students have passed the EIKEN Grade 2 English test before departure. This is the equivalent of B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). At this level, according to the CEFR can-do statements for oral competency, students "can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken" (Piccardo et al., 2018, p. 179)

It appears that the students have the appropriate language knowledge (having passed the test) but may not have developed the conversational ability to apply this knowledge. I have confirmed through informal discussions with teachers that students struggle to adapt, especially in the first week. Teachers attributed the difficulties to student shyness, lack of English conversation opportunities before departure, and culture shock.

3. Developing an educational role-playing game set in Australia

3.1 Background information

Based on the challenges outlined in the previous section, I decided to develop a **role-playing game (RPG)** based on characters experiencing a trip to Australia. To increase motivation, I have also applied Nicholson's (2015) RECIPE framework for meaningful gamification. The objectives of the game are:

- To encourage students to interact more freely and spontaneously in English for situations they are likely to encounter in Australia.
- To expose students to linguistic and cultural differences between Australia and Japan.

3.2 Description of the game

This game will run over ten weeks, matching the original preparatory timeframe. One earlier additional meeting is scheduled, Week 0, for training. From Week 2 to Week 9, all sessions will follow the same structure: 5-minute introduction, 40-minute scenario, and 15-minute reflection. Week 1 will be used as a tutorial session, while Week 10 will be used to reflect upon the entire experience, share thoughts in a larger group, and address any outstanding worries the students may have.

Each scenario is designed to familiarise the players with a different situation they are likely to encounter in Australia (see Appendix 2). These experiences will include linguistic differences (such as common Australian words and phrases, Appendix 5) and cultural differences (such as the meaning of flags at beaches, e.g., you should swim between the red and yellow striped flags). After completing the tutorial scenario using pre-generated characters (Appendix 8),

students will create their own character using the blank character sheets (Appendix 9). Students are encouraged to name their character and draw a picture of them. Students will also set their own goals for the campaign, representing what they want to achieve on their trip to Australia. Sample goals are provided as guides for the students (Appendix 3). The chosen goals will be negotiated between each student and a teacher to ensure that a manageable but still challenging number of goals is chosen. A total of 8-10 goals is recommended. Students do not need to complete all their objectives. Upon completing a goal, students are presented with a sticker to add to their character sheet (Appendix 4).

Each group of approximately four Japanese students will form a group with one Australian student. All communication will be done via video conferencing, using the resources available at the school – students each have their own individual tablet, with Google Suite access to Google Meet. The presence of an Australian student will allow for a more authentic experience as they can include more natural vernacular to help acclimatise the Japanese students to life in Australia. The Australian student will take on the role of the **game master (GM)**. The GM describes each scene to the players and takes on the role of any objects or characters the players choose to interact with. For example, if the players wish to read a sign, the GM will describe it to them. If another player wants a passer-by to take a photo of them, the GM will take on the role of the passer-by and role-play any interaction.

A **non-player character (NPC),** "Jack", will be played by the GM. The point of this character is to assist and advise the players if they need help. He is more prevalent in early scenarios, but he plays an increasingly small role as players get used to the system.

This paper will focus on Week 5 as an example to illustrate the procedure. Each scenario will follow the same structure but with a different storyline. This scenario consists of a trip to the beach. Students role-play their characters, with the third-year student acting as GM. The GM

describes the scene and plays the role of the NPCs. Advice on how to play each NPC is given to the GM in advance (Appendix 6), but they are encouraged to base characters on people they encountered in Australia to increase authenticity. The players are free to interact with the setting and NPCs however they like, and the GM will respond as he/she sees fit. Jack will accompany the players on the bus journey but leave them to explore the beach independently. Jack reappears at home at the end of the scenario and asks the players about their day.

Please refer to **Appendix 1** for an illustrative sample dialogue for this scenario.

The GM describes the location, listing several people or places with which the players can interact. If the players are struggling to decide, the GM will offer some suggestions. To avoid putting too much pressure on nervous players, the GM will attend to other players first to give uncertain players time to decide. If a player is hesitant to engage, it is not a problem. Instead, it is a topic to be discussed during the reflection session.

The GM, as an Australian student, can offer guidance from the position of a mentor. Other players can advise as peers. In this way, students can learn to overcome their fears in a safe and controlled manner, with support from their classmates. This will help develop their ability to interact spontaneously in unfamiliar situations in real life.

4. A structured approach to gamification

4.1 Justification of approach

I considered several frameworks for adding gamification, but I concluded that Nicholson's (2015) RECIPE framework was the most suitable for this project. Aparico et al. (2012) did not include debriefing (described in section 4.8 below). Blohm & Leimeister (2013) focused on computer-based gamification, whereas this approach uses only basic video-conferencing

software. Sakamoto et al. (2012) focused on competitive gamification, while my game focuses on the benefits of cooperative gaming.

4.2 RECIPE model

Gamification often involves thoughtlessly adding game elements to an activity (Nicholson, 2011). Nicholson (2012) describes the drawbacks of BLAP gamification – Badges, Levels and Leaderboards, Achievements and Points. These elements, though initially engaging, have been shown to decrease motivation, and when rewards are taken away, the participants are less likely to continue the behaviour (Nicholson, 2012; Sheldon, 2020). To combat this, Nicholson (2015) presents his RECIPE for meaningful gamification. RECIPE is used as a memorable acronym, but the order PECIER (Play, Exposition, Choice, Information, Engagement and Reflection) is more chronologically appropriate, so I will follow the PECIER order, as Nicholson himself did in his paper.

Before diving into Nicholson's framework, it is helpful to describe Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (2002), which lays the groundwork for part of Nicholson's RECIPE. In simplified terms, SDT identifies three crucial factors which affect human motivation:

- Competence (feeling we are capable)
- Autonomy (feeling that we have control over our actions)
- Relatedness (feeling meaningful connections with those around us)

4.3 Play

Play is perhaps the most challenging aspect of this framework to apply. Nicholson (2015) explains that if an activity is mandatory, it is no longer play. He acknowledges that it may be challenging to achieve this in educational settings and offers some suggestions to mitigate this as an obstacle. The main element to include is sufficient choice (see subsection 4.5 below). In role-playing games, players have almost complete freedom. In these materials, players are bound by the laws of physics (e.g., they cannot fly), but beyond that, almost anything is allowed. This gives the players the freedom to explore the world and interact as they naturally would.

4.4 Exposition (Narrative)

Nicholson (2015) describes exposition as the use of narrative. RPGs are naturally placed to provide a meaningful narrative. Daniau (2016) describes them as collaborative storytelling. Players are involved in meaningful decisions that affect the story. Although some applications of RPGs in education have involved commercial systems such as Dungeons & Dragons and Call of Cthulhu (Phillips, 1993), Nicholson warns that such fantasy settings may be distracting and impede the transfer of the game experience to real life.

In this set of materials, students follow basic storylines reflecting situations they are likely to encounter. As they explore the world, each player will interact with various aspects differently. Thus, although the outline is the same, the narrative is unique to each group of players. Kamm (2019) suggested that narrative might be particularly significant in the case of Japanese players, reflected in the fact that Japanese-language commercial games since the 1990s have focused more on narrative than fantasy battles.

4.5 Choice

Giving players control of how they interact with the game is an integral part of Nicholson's (2015) framework. Choice allows players to feel a sense of autonomy, which is a core component of Self-Determination Theory. In their meta-analysis on choice, Patall et al. (2008) concluded that the element of choice can enhance "intrinsic motivation, effort, task performance, and perceived confidence, among other outcomes" (p. 270).

I have incorporated three methods through which choice can be included, as suggested by Nicholson (2015):

- Allow players to choose which activities to undertake
- Students set their own goals, which allows them to focus on what is important to themselves
- Students create their own game-based elements (in this case, their own characters)

4.6 Information

According to Nicholson (2015), this component involves explaining to users why they are engaging in this activity and how it will help them. Nicholson reflects on Kramlinger & Huberty's (1990) work: although behaviourist techniques (mindlessly getting rewards for behaviour) can engage players, the humanist approach (understanding the reasons for changing behaviour) can additionally help players reach mastery. Mastery fulfils the competence portion of Self-Determination Theory.

In these materials, information is shared through repeated explicit instruction. In Week 1, the process is explained to the students. After the first year of its implementation, testimonials from third-year students can help junior students understand the system's benefits and limitations.

Further, at the start of each session, the GM reminds players of the game's goals and the core components of good role-playing (Appendix 10). This advice is adapted from Daniau (2016).

4.7 Engagement

Nicholson (2015) identifies two vital elements for engagement: engaging with others; and gameplay that is engaging.

Relatedness, feeling connected to those around us, is a crucial component of Self-Determination Theory. RPGs offer a cooperative gaming and narrative building experience. Halapi and Saunders (2002) highlight the social and educational benefits of role-play activities, such as allowing weaker students to see good examples from stronger students. In this game, students gather in small groups of their peers, with a single student from a partner school acting as a mentor. Halapi and Saunders also noted that students prefer minimal teacher observation in role-playing situations. Teachers will be present to assist students where needed but will only observe from a distance.

The second aspect, gameplay that is engaging, requires that the game's challenges adapt to match player ability. Games that do not advance in difficulty become boring. In the current set of materials, this engagement is achieved in two ways. Firstly, in the early sessions, Jack the NPC assists and supports players but plays an increasingly small role as players get used to the game. Secondly, in the preparation session, and described in each scenario, the GM is reminded that he/she should feel free to change the difficulty to suit the group.

4.8 Reflection (Debriefing)

In simulation-based learning (SBL), reflection (also known as debriefing) is considered a critical component of the learning process. Crookall (2010) argues that "learning comes from the debriefing, not the game" (p. 911). Nicholson (2012) notes that debriefing is often omitted in educational games, despite its well-documented importance. Even researchers who do not see debriefing as *essential* (e.g., Clapper 2018) admit that debriefing can improve the learning experience.

By reviewing various structures of debriefing, Nicholson (2015) distilled the process into three core components:

1) Describe – players describe what happened during the experience

2) Analyse – players analyse their actions and make connections with their personal experiences

3) Apply – players apply what they have learned to their lives

In my game, the Australian student will act as GM, and after the adventure ends, they will facilitate the debriefing session. A set of guiding questions is provided to the GM for each scenario (Appendix 7). This ensures that each of the three components above is met. Reflection starts right after play and is allocated 15 minutes, as recommended by Daniau (2016). Students will also keep a journal to allow for delayed, personal reflection.

5. Future steps

A small piloting session was scheduled with second-year students. However, heavy snowfall and the coronavirus led to unexpected school closures. The condensed school year, unfortunately, did not allow for piloting to take place. Second term (September – December)

has many international events for the students. As such, scheduling a pilot during this time is not possible. In the next school year (April 2023), a small-scale piloting session is planned with the new third-year students. Based on their recommendations and feedback, adjustments will be made to the game.

A full test-run of the game is planned to take place in summer 2023 to prepare students for a departure in spring 2024.

Once students return after their study abroad trip, they will be asked to give feedback on what RPG scenarios/interactions they found useful or not, and if there were any difficulties not covered in the RPG that they would like to add. Students are encouraged to even write their own scenarios for future students to enjoy. If there is interest, students could also make similar scenarios to help foreign students who are coming to Japan.

6. Limitations

First, some students may not want to engage with this process. They may prefer more traditional instruction methods. However, in previous studies, researchers have not reported this as a problem (Halapi and Saunders, 2002; Phillips, 1993).

The game requires Australian students to be GMs. This will be a new experience for most and may even be the students' first time participating in a role-playing game. To address this, students receive training in Week 0 and are supported by guidance in the GM guide (Appendix 5).

These materials provided are quite specific to the current situation. However, the basic system is extremely customisable and adaptable. The students at this level are above average, but the game's content can be adjusted to allow for lower or higher-level students or different destinations and situations.

To research the actual benefits of this gaming system in practice, long-term observation would be required over multiple years. This is currently made difficult by restricted international travel caused by the coronavirus.

7. Conclusion

Japanese students rarely get a chance to travel abroad to learn languages. However, when they do, they need enhanced preparation if they are to gain maximum benefit.

In this paper, I describe a role-playing game, which I developed, founded in the theory of meaningful gamification. Students can use this to prepare more effectively for studying abroad. This paper represents a useful innovation in this field by focusing on physical games designed for Japanese students; a meta-analysis by Hallinger & Wang (2019) highlighted that most publications in the field of gamification and simulation focus on games in Western settings and digital games.

Although the intent when developing these materials was to help students maximise the benefits of a study abroad trip, it may also act as somewhat of a replacement for students whose study abroad trip was cancelled (due to coronavirus, for example). This approach can also offer spoken language opportunities to students who may not have the means or opportunities to study abroad.

(Word Count 2,732)

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Appendix 1: Sample dialogue

The following is an excerpt from the full scenario (see Appendix 6)

GM: You step off the bus. to your right is a large signboard. Behind it is a beach. Some flags are flying along the beach. A man is renting surfboards. Many people are sunbathing next to a man sitting in a tall wooden chair. Some people are swimming. To your left, a crowd has gathered and is posing for selfies (pictures of themselves). On the other side of the road there are some restaurants. What do you want to do?

Player A: One of my goals is to go surfing in Australia. So, I'm going to talk to the man with the surfboards.

Player B: I want to get some Instagram followers! I'm going to the selfie spot.

GM: Great *(notices that player C is quiet)*. How about you, C?

Player C: Eh...

GM: You can go swimming, check out the sign, talk to someone...Anything you like.

Player C: Eh...

GM: OK, well think about it and I'll come back to you. Remember there are no wrong answers. OK, A, you walk up to the man with the surfboards:

Surfer (GM) G'day mate! What's the good word?

Player A: Huh? I...I want to surf...

Surfer (GM) Ah right! Nothing better than that is there? Is this your first time?

Player A: No, I'm really good at surfing! I wanna catch a tube today!

Sample Dialogue 3: Introducing the beach

Appendix 2: Timetable

Week	Topic	Goal	Jack the NPC
0	GM training	To familiarize the Australian students with the system	Yes, to show the usefulness of Jack
1	Explanation, tutorial	Players use pre-generated character in simple situations. Helps players to get accustomed to system, and an easy introductory session for the GMs to run	N/A
2	Scenario 1: Departing for Australia	Students make preparations to prepare for departure. Simple scenario to consult with NPCs (students and teachers) to decide what to take.	No, but many helpful teacher and senior student NPCs are present.
3	Scenario 2: Meeting the host family	Students arrive in Australia and meet their host family. They explore the house and the neighbourhood while having simple interactions with Australian NPCs	Yes, present for the entire scenario
4	Scenario 3: Going to school	Students go to school with Jack, meet new classmates, discover the school schedule and rules. Students have brief interactions in certain classes (e.g., math) to expose them to school life in Australia	Yes, but disappears from time to time for different classes and talking to his friends
5	Scenario 4: Seaside Trip	Jack brings students to the beach by bus, but Jack doesn't stay with them. Students explore the beach freely and interact with a number of people as they please.	Yes, joins them on the bus and reappears for reflection
6	Scenario 5: Shopping and cooking	The students have been given the day to themselves and asked to cook a Japanese meal for their family. They are given money and are dropped off at a supermarket.	Yes, but only appears towards the end to eat their dishes
7	Scenario 6: Getting lost	Students find themselves lost in the city and have to figure out ways to get home, through asking for help, describing locations and other creative methods.	No, absent for the entire scenario
8	Scenario 7: Souvenir Shopping	Students go to a number of stores looking for souvenirs. They can ask for people's opinions, but they may be recommended something they don't want.	No, absent for the entire scenario
9	Scenario 8: Leaving Australia	Students prepare for departure and say goodbyes to their family. There is time to do one last activity before they leave. What will the students choose?	Yes, but plays a minor role, just to say goodbye
10	Reflection on the experience and open Q & A	In new groups, students will share their experiences. This exposes students to many different perspectives, as all groups had unique experiences. Australian and third-year students will help to facilitate the sharing of ideas. At the end, there will be an open Q&A session to discuss any remaining worries the students might have before departure.	N/A

Appendix 3: Sample list of goals

You can choose any goals that you want. What do you want to do in your trip to Australia? Here are some examples to give you ideas. You can use them, you can change them a bit, or you can make your own original ones. Please choose about 8-10 goals. Try to make at least 3 **original** goals.

Australia sightseeing

- See a kangaroo
- Hold a koala
- Visit Uluru
- Visit Sydney Opera House

Social

- Speak to 5 people on the street
- Get a new Instagram follower
- Add new school friends on LINE

Food

- Eat a kangaroo burger
- Eat a meat pie
- Try some Vegemite

Sports/Clubs

- Practise with the school basketball team
- Play music with the school brass band

Souvenirs

- Australian Football ball
- Boomerang
- Cricket bat

Appendix 4: Badges/Stickers
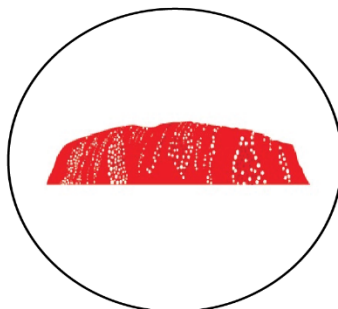

I saw a koala

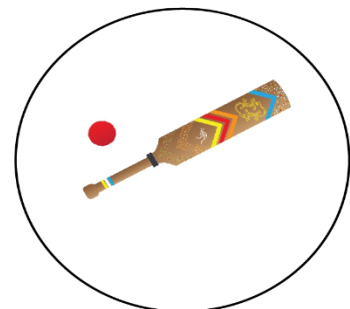I went surfing

I used a boomerang

I visited Sydney
Opera House

I visited Uluru

I played cricket

I saw a kangaroo

I made new Line
friends

I got new Instagram
followers

I practiced with the
school basketball club

I practiced with the
school baseball club

I practiced with the
school brass band

Images used for these stickers are from stockunlimited.com. My account allows for commercial use of these images.

Appendix 5: GM tips

You are great for being a game-master!

It may seem overwhelming, but remember these key points:

- There is no right or wrong thing for you to say – react however you feel
- The second-year students are so grateful for your help
- YOU are in charge. You decide what happens. If you say something different from the scenario THAT'S FINE!
- HAVE FUN!

The main goals you have are:

- Encourage students to interact with you and each other
- Let them know about different words and phrases used in Australia (see below)
- Let them know about cultural differences between Japan and Australia

Remind the students (and yourself!)

- There is no right or wrong answer, anything is OK
- This is a safe space
- You don't need to have perfect English, just communicate

At the end of every session, you will do some reflection with the students. You want them to think about

- What they did
- How well did they do it?
- How can they apply these experiences to their lives?

You can help with any advice or experience you had, especially based on your life in Australia.

If you need to take a minute to gather your thoughts – take it. There's no pressure.

If you have any questions, let one of the teachers know.

Each scenario you run will get easier and easier and it will help your creativity and spontaneous conversation!

Sample of different words

Here are some differences between American English (used in Japan) and Australian English. I've left some spaces that you can fill in with any other ones you think might be useful for students

Don't forget to share your ideas with your own classmates. You can get lots of ideas.

You don't have to use these, but it can help the students if they hear some of them.

American English	Australian English
Parking lot	Car Park
Gas station	Service station (servo)
Guy	Bloke
Drug store	Chemist shop
Movie	Film
First floor	Ground floor
Vacation	Holiday
Elevator	Lift
Woman	Sheila

Here are some common Australian phrases. Again, you can add anything you think might be difficult for Japanese students to understand

| Australian Phrase/Slang	Meaning
No worries mate, she'll be right	Everything will be OK. Don't worry
What's the John Dory?	How are you?/ What's going on?
Lobster	$20 – the money is red, like a lobster
Pineapple	$50 – the money is bright yellow
G'day mate	Hello.
They're having a bit of a chinwag	They're talking.

Appendix 6: Scenario

This is the full scenario document for Week 5, Scenario 4: A trip to the beach.

There will be similar documents for each scenario.

This was made in Adobe InDesign and is available as a PDF.
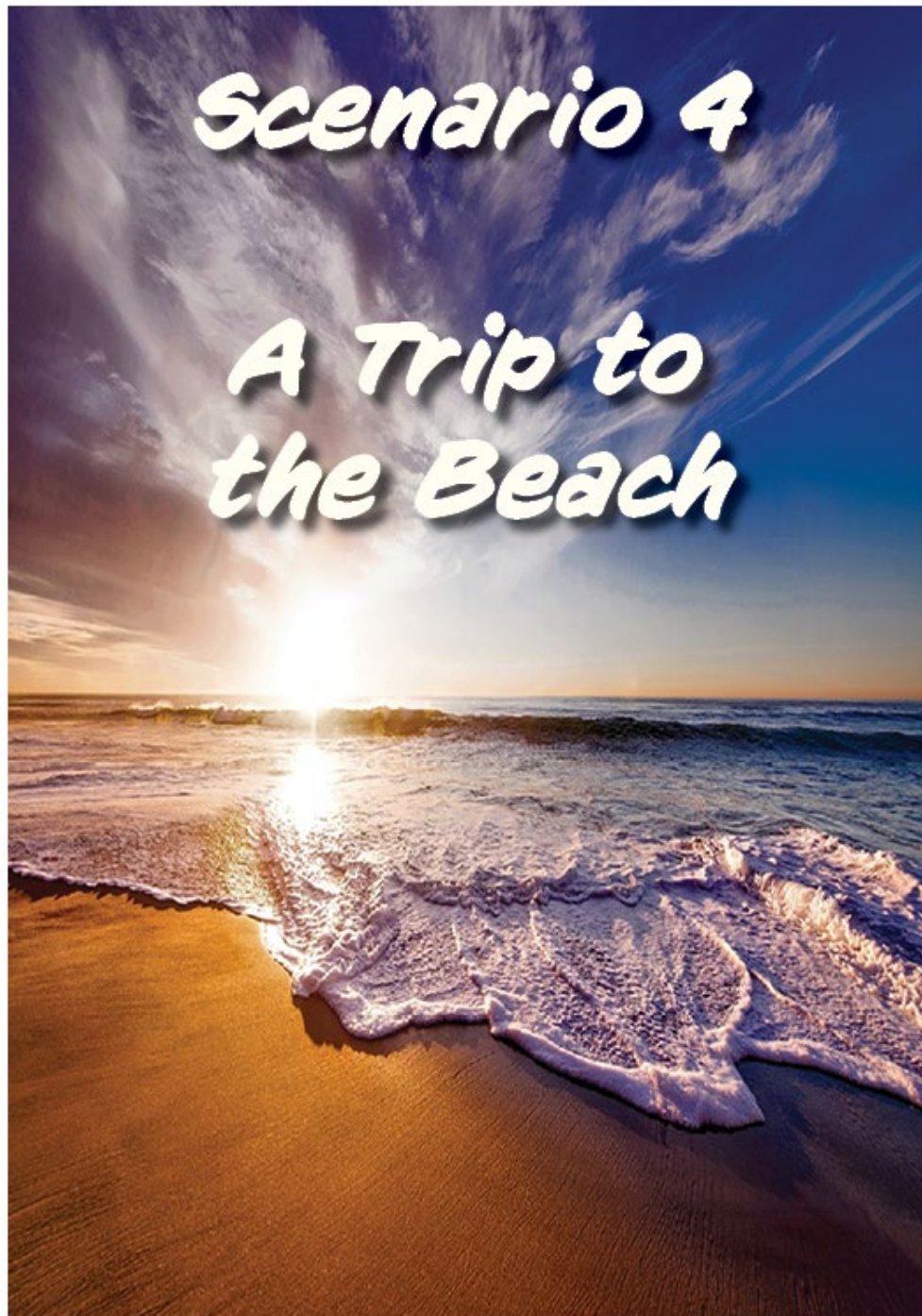
Summary

Jack goes on a bus with the students, to bring them to the beach. Jack starts a game of "I spy" on the bus. When they reach the beach, Jack tells the students to get off. He has to stay on the bus as he's going to a guitar lesson further away.

The students explore the beach and have a chance to interact with many people. They can surf, swim, sunbathe, get Instagram followers. Students may make mistakes about where they can swim (which is determined by the flags). Maybe one of the NPCs will get angry with them.

Across the road from the beach is a food court. Students can check out the various different types of cuisine. If they don't ask about the price, it may be an expensive dinner for them! Also, if they are not careful about the spice level, they might not be able to eat the food!

After this, the students will return home where Jack is waiting for them. They sit around the living room eating snacks and telling Jack all about their day. (This final part is the reflection time).

Sections

This scenario has 4 main sections

- On the bus
- At the beach
- The food court
- Back home (reflection)

Before the bus

Jack tells the players to pack their bags because they are going to the beach today. Ask the students what they want to bring, but they do not have long to decide because the bus is coming.

Look at *Sample Dialogue 1* on the next page.

On the bus

Jack introduces a game called "I spy". When it is your turn, you choose something that you can see (on the bus or outside the window). For example, if I see a tree, I will say "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with T." The other players must guess what it is. As Jack, the GM can guess too, but try to let the other players get most of the answers.

The goal here is to get the players to start using their imagination.

Look at *Sample Dialogue 2* on the next page.

Getting off the bus:

After everyone has had a turn, you arrive at the beach. Jack tells the players that he can't come with them. Say he has a music lesson or something and he will meet them in the evening.

Jack: Hey guys. It's a beautiful day, so let's go to the beach. Grab anything you want quickly and let's go! The bus will be here really soon!

GM: So, is there anything you guys want to bring?

Player A: I'll bring my towel.

Player B: I'll bring my swimsuit.

Player A: Oh, me too!

GM: C? Anything you want to bring?

Player C: Suncream.

Jack: OK, you've got your stuff now, let's go!

GM: You hurry out to the bus stop and arrive just before the bus. You sit down towards the back of the bus.

Sample Dialogue 1: Getting Ready

Jack: OK guys, so we have a bit of time before we get to the beach. Let's play a quick game: I spy! I'll choose something that I can see, and tell you the first letter. You have to try to guess what it is. So it's probably something on this bus or that I can see out the window. For example, if I see a tree, I would say "I spy with my little eye, something beginning with T."

Player C: Ok…I think I understand.

Jack: Don't worry if you don't get it or you make mistakes. It's just a bit of fun. Ok, let's see… *(pretend that you're thinking and looking around)*. Got it! I spy with my little eye something beginning with B.

Player A: Is it a bus?

Jack: Ha ha nice guess but no.

Player B: How about a bag?

Jack: Yeah that's it! OK, who wants to go next *(if no-one volunteers, choose someone at random)*

Sample Dialogue 2: I spy

At the beach

Introduce the players to the setting and put the map in front of them.

The main interactions are:

- Signboard – here they can see the rules about flags
- Surfboard man – here they can rent a surfboard and talk to this man
- Sunbathers – They can sunbathe and talk with the people

- Lifeguard in the chair – They can ask him some questions. He can tell them the swimming rules, but he can't talk for too long because he is working
- Instagram spot – they can talk to instagrammers, take selfies, get Instagram followers
- Food court – they can choose what kind of food they want to eat

See *Sample Dialogue 3* for an example.

GM: You step off the bus. to your right is a large signboard. Behind it is a beach. Some flags are flying along the beach. A man is renting surfboards. Many people are sunbathing next to a man sitting in a tall wooden chair. Some people are swimming. To your left, a crowd has gathered and is posing for selfies (pictures of themselves). On the other side of the road there are some restaurants. What do you want to do?

Player A: One of my goals is to go surfing in Australia. So, I'm going to talk to the man with the surfboards.

Player B: I want to get some Instagram followers! I'm going to the selfie spot.

GM: Great *(notices that player C is quiet)*. How about you, C?

Player C: Eh...

GM: You can go swimming, check out the sign, talk to someone...Anything you like.

Player C: Eh...

GM: OK, well think about it and I'll come back to you. Remember there are no wrong answers. OK, A, you walk up to the man with the surfboards:

Surfer (GM) G'day mate! What's the good word?

Player A: Huh? I...I want to surf...

Surfer (GM) Ah right! Nothing better than that is there? Is this your first time?

Player A: No, I'm really good at surfing! I wanna catch a tube today!

Sample Dialogue 3: Introducing the beach

Cultural difference!

In Australia, flags at beaches are very important. You can only swim between the "Red and Yellow" flags. And you can only surf between the "Black and White" flags. The players can learn this information in at least 4 ways:

- If they read the signboard, which has Image 1 on it
- If they ask the man renting surfboards
- If they ask the lifguard
- If they ask anyone about the flags

If the students swim or surf without learning about the rules, the lifeguard will come in and pull them out of the water. The lifeguard will be a little bit angry. But if the players can explain that:

- they didn't understand OR
- they are from Japan

the lifeguard will calm down and explain the rules to them.

If the players can't say anything to defend themselves, have a passer-by come and help them.

In this way, they can learn the cultural difference, and in the **reflection** you can talk about explaining themselves if they get in trouble.

Surfer man

The man renting surfboards is very friendly and happy to talk about surfing all day. He might ask if the players know how to surf, and he can teach them if they don't. (You don't have to explain it! But if you know, that would be cool!)

Instagram Spot

This is a really beautiful spot, so many people are here from all over the world to take selfies. If any players come here, describe some of the people, and the players can choose who they want to talk to. You can create your own characters, but here are some examples:

Image 1: Beach Flags

Name: Emma
Age: 30
From: California, USA

Emma is from America and she is travelling the world to see some really beautiful spots.

Her next stop is Japan and she wants some recommendations from the players. Especially she wants to know the best spots from their home prefecture.

Sample NPC 1: Emma

Name: Lucas
Age: 23
From: Brisbane, Australia

Lucas is a tall, muscular man from Australia. He's really interested in fitness and he's trying to get more Instagram followers.

He's happy to answer any questions that the players might have about the area...if they follow him on Instagram.

Sample NPC 2: Lucas

Name: Yumiko
Age: 21
From: Ishikawa, Japan

Yumiko is a Japanese woman, she moved to Australia when she was 18 to marry her husband, who is Australian.

Yumiko can tell the players any difficulties that she had when she first came to Japan, and she's happy to help them with anything.

Sample NPC 3: Yumiko

Food court

Introduce the restaurants. Here are the key details but rememeber, you can always change the details any way you want.

There are 3 restaurants:

- **Wagamama** - Japanese restaurant serving traditional Japanese food. Medium prices
- **Blue Moon Steakhouse** - A steakhouse. Quite fancy and expensive.
- **The Three Amigos** - A Mexican restaurant, serving burritos. Cheap

Wagamama

This is quite a normal Japanese restaurant with ramen, gyoza, katsu and dishes like that. The Australian servers may be interested that

the students are from Japan and can ask them about it.

Note for reflection:

Why did the students choose this? It's no problem, sometimes you need to have something from home to stop you from feeling homesick. But it's also good to try new experiences in a new country. There is no right or wrong answer, but talk to the students about it. Maybe you can talk about any homesickness you felt when you were in Australia.

Blue Moon Steakhouse

The menus is simple, only steaks, but they come with french fries too. The players can choose the size. The price is NOT on the menu. If they ask, you can tell them the price. Tell them the price in Australian dollars. If they ask what that is in yen, you can give them an estimate (1 Australian dollar = 85 yen)

- Fillet steak (12oz) $50   (4,250 yen)
- T-bone steak (18oz) $80   (6,800 yen)
- Porterhouse (32 oz) $110   (9,350 yen)

The fillet steak is a nice big steak. The t-bone steak is very big, maybe the student can't finish it. The porterhouse is HUGE. One students cannot finish it! Make a big gesture when you give them a huge imaginary plate. Say

something like "It's bigger than your head!" After the students eat the food, the waiter will bring the bill, and the students can't afford it. Give them some time to think about what to do. Then the waiter will come over. The waiter is not very angry, but he is strict. The students must pay for it.

Give the students some time to try to find a solution. If you think they have a good solution, you can accept it. If they can't think of anything, a kind older woman can come over and pay the bill for them.

Look at *Sample Dialogue 4* on the next page.

The Three Amigos

This is a simple burrito restaurant. The server will ask them a few questions:

- What kind of protein do you want? (pork, beef, chicken, tofu)
- What kind of rice do you want? (plain, mexican, lime)
- Do you want cheese?
- What salsa do you want? (see next section)

The salsa is important! Some of them are very spicy. If the student doesn't ask about it, they will get a really spicy meal! Don't tell them unless they ask.

There are 4 kinds of salsa:

- Tomato salsa (mild)
- Salsa verde (a little spicy)
- Chipotle (very spicy)
- Naga (EXTREMELY SPICY!)

The server will prepare it all and wrap it up in tin foil to the player. Ask them how they eat it. If they don't know, you can explain how other people around them are eating it: You tear off a bit of the foil and eat it from there. No knife or fork.

Cultural difference

In Japan "mild" means very mild. But in other countries it might be a bit spicier. The very spicy one will be difficult to eat. Maybe players don't know what to do with spicy food. If they drink water, it makes it worse! It spreads the spiciness. Milk is the best option. Don't tell them unless they ask someone.

Waiter: Here is your bill. (*walks away*)

Player A: What?! It's so expensive!

Player B: 110 dollars? How much is that in yen?

Player C: I think about 9,000 yen.

GM: Yeah , that's about right.

Player A: I can't pay for this, what will I do?

Waiter: Can I take your money now?

Player A: I...I don't have that much money

Waiter: I see. Well you have to think of some way to pay for it.

Player B: I can give you some money, but it's not enough.

Player C: Me too.

Waiter: That's still not enough. Can you call your parents?

Player B: We're from Japan, we're studying abroad. We didn't know the price.

Waiter: I see, well you have to pay for the meal. I have to call your teacher.

GM: Just then a woman gets up from her table and walks over

Woman: Hey, it's their first time in Australia. I'll pay for the difference

Waiter: Alright, if you want to.

Player A: Thank you so much! You're our hero!

Sample Dialogue 4: Can't pay for steak

Time to go home

It's time to go home now, so the players go towards the bus stop, get on the bus and go home.

Back home (reflection)

When the players get home, Jack is waiting for them and wants to hear about their day. Use the debriefing questions as a guide while you play Jack's role.

Look at *Sample Dialogue 5* below.

Congratulations

That is the end of this scenario. How did it go? If anything was unclear, or if you have any suggestions on how to make it better, please tell your teacher.

I hope you enjoyed it. Next week, the players will try cooking a meal for their host family. I wonder how it will go....

Jack: Hey guys! Welcome back. How was your day?

Player A: Yeah we had a good time, we did a lot

Jack: Tell me all about it. On the bus we played I spy. What happened after that?

Player B: A went surfing and C went swimming

Player A: Yeah I was great at surfing

Player C: But then the lifeguard got mad at us!

Player B: Yeah, I didn't know about the flags. But now we understand it.

Jack: Oh wow! I forgot to tell you about the flags. Don't you have flags in Japan?

Player C: I don't know...I don't think so.

Player A: I've never seen them before.

Jack: Ooops! Sorry! Well what did you do B?

Player B: I took some selfies at an Instaspot and made some new friends.

Jack: Oh really? What were they like?

Player A: She met a really muscly man and she's in love!

Player B: No I'm not! I just followed him on Instagram

Player C: He followed you too. Maybe you will fall in love and get married

Player A: Then you can move to Australia just like Yumiko!

Jack: Ha ha ha wow you had a busy day. Did you get anything nice to eat?

Sample Dialogue 5: Reflection with Jack

Pictures:

Pictures of the NPCs in this scenario were generated randomly from the website thispersondoesnotexist.com. This website uses a computer program to randomly generate faces. They are not real photographs.

The cover photograph on the first page is a free stock image from pexels.com

Appendix 7: Debriefing

Debriefing

Goals

The goals of debriefing are for students to:

- Describe (talk about their experience and their feelings)
- Analyse (talk about what they learned and how it relates to their lives)
- Apply (talk about how they can apply what they learned to the real world)

Describe

Sample questions:
- How do you feel?
- What happened?
- What did you do next?
- How about you?
- Did you do anything else?

Analyse

Sample questions:
- What did you learn?
- Have you ever had similar experiences?
- What was difficult for you?

Apply

Sample questions:
- What would you do next time (X) happens?
- What if someone gets angry at you again?
- What if you don't understand a sign? What would you do?

Appendix 8: Sample Pre-generated characters

Player Name: _____

My Achievements

- see a kangaroo
- see a koala
- throw a boomerang
- go surfing
- eat a meat pie
- visit Uluru
- cook japanese dish for host family
- buy souvenirs
- get 3 new instagram followers
- play cricket

Character Name: ___Paddy_____

Player Name: _____

My Achievements

- see a kangaroo
- see a koala
- go swimming
- talk to 10 new people
- go to an Australian Football game
- visit Uluru
- cook japanese dish for host family
- buy souvenirs
- see a shark
- join school soccer team

Character Name: ___Ichiro_____

Appendix 9: Blank character sheets

Player Name: _____

My Achievements

Character Name: _____

Appendix 10: Good role-playing

These points are adapted from Daniau (2016, p. 437) for qualities of a good role-player. A copy of this is given to each player and it is reviewed before every session.

Maybe you are wondering what makes a good role-player. Here are some good tips to follow:

1. Uncertainty

Things will happen that you are not prepared for. Just do your best to react to it. During reflection time, think about what you did well and what you can improve on.

2. Rules

This game doesn't have many rules, so it should be easy to follow them. If you think changing some rule would make the game better, discuss it with your group. This is YOUR game, so you can make changes to it.

3. Personal engagement

Try to get more and more involved in the game. The more you participate, the more you will benefit. Encourage your classmates to participate, too. Be confident. This is a safe space. No-one will judge you and you should not judge anyone else. Praise people's good role-playing and don't criticize their mistakes.
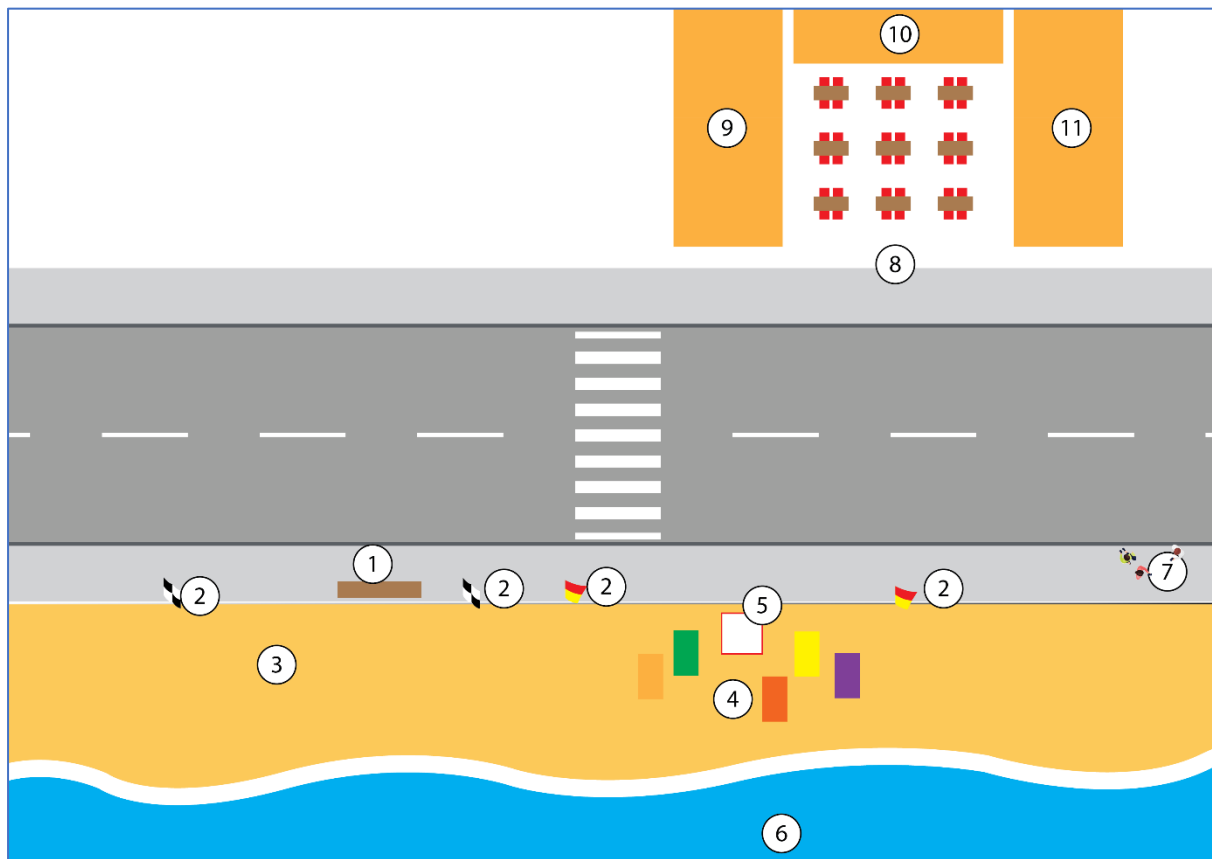
4. Frivolity and pretending

Whatever happens, try to react naturally. This is an experience for you. It will help you in real life. When you are talking to a different character, imagine you are really in Australia talking to them.

Appendix 11: Map of seaside

PLAYER MAP
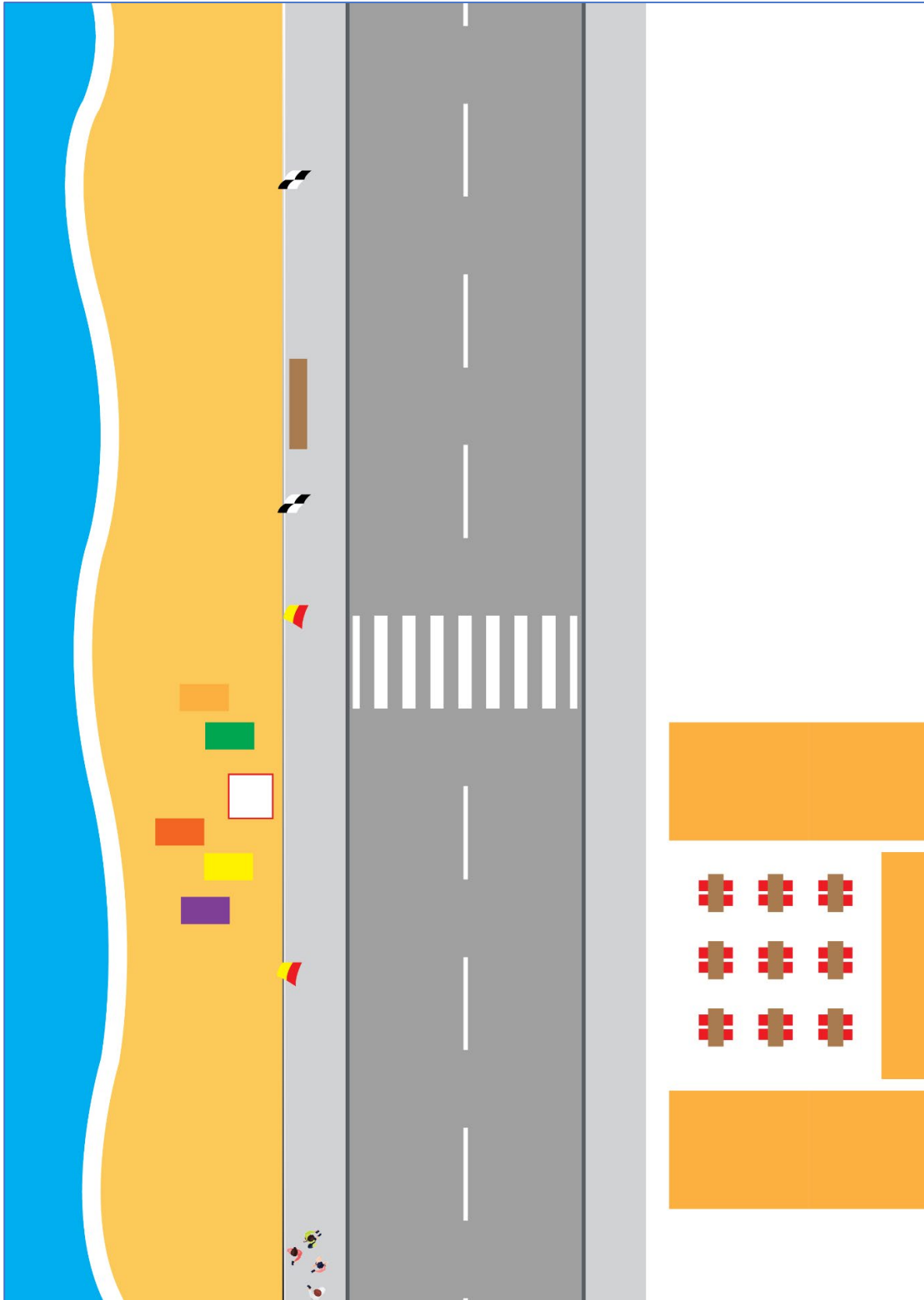
GM Map

Legend

1. Signboard

2. Flags along the beach

3. Man renting surfboards

4. People sunbathing

5. Lifeguard in his chair

6. People swimming

7. Instagram spot

8. Food court

9. Wagamama – Japanese restaurant

10. The Three Amigos – Mexican restaurant

11. Blue Moon Steakhouse – Steakhouse restaurant