

Extended Definition Essay, Style III: Define a Foreign Word That is Difficult to Translate (directly) into English.

Exercise 13

- 1 Read the essay titled “*Salu*” below.
- 2 Write the “Definition Strategy” that is used for each paragraph.

Strategies for Defining a Word

- ___ Give examples ___ Explain parts ___ Give the history
___ Use similar terms to compare and contrast ___ Use negation

Salu

STRATEGY
INTRODUCTION
(no strategy used)

¹ Last night, on the evening news, I saw an interview with a teenager who had recently shot another youth. When asked why he had shot the boy, he said that it was because the boy had shown him disrespect. This report made me realize how universal the need for respect is. In fact, in my native language, Timberi*, we have a special word which is *salu*, and its unique characteristics make it difficult to translate directly into English.

_____ ² The first time that someone called me a *salu* was when I was 18 years old. I was still living in my village at that time. A 13-year-old neighbor boy was having problems with some bullies, and he asked me for some help. We spent that entire afternoon together talking about his problem, some possible solutions, and life as a teenager. By the next week, the problem with the bullies was resolved. Ever since that day, he has called me by my name, Ken, and added the honorific *salu*: Ken-salu. He would also tell other people that I was his *salu*.

_____ ³ *Salu* is a word that is impossible to translate directly into English. Some people think it means “teacher,” but that is not accurate because many teachers are not called *salu*. In my high school, only five of our thirty teachers were called *salu*.

_____ ⁴ Surprisingly, the word actually has a connection to English. About 300 years ago, there were English-speaking soldiers stationed in our country. These soldiers would greet each other with a salute by raising their right hand to their forehead as a sign of respect. *Salu* comes from “salute.”

*Timberi is a fictitious language.

(continued on the next page)

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⁵ In English, the word “mentor” has some similarities to *salu*. Like a mentor, a *salu* is always older than the other person. A mentor and a *salu* both give advice. However, it seems that for a person to be considered a mentor, the relationship has to continue for several months or even years. This is not necessary for a person to be a *salu*; the relationship can develop very fast, as it did with my neighbor. Even though we have never spent much time with each other since that one afternoon, he has continued to call me *salu*.



⁶ There are two important characteristics of a *salu*. One is that they helped someone learn something special. And, second, they continue to behave in a way that others will respect. As a result, once someone is considered a *salu* by someone else, there is pressure to perform well because it is possible to lose one's *salu* status. If my neighbor stopped calling me *salu*, I would be very troubled by it.

⁷ We can find *salu* in all parts of society. I call my computer-man *salu*; he not only sold me my first computer but also opened up the internet world to me through his instructions. Also, the mayor of our village is a *salu* to all our citizens. We chose him as our mayor because he was well respected. During the six years that he has been our mayor, he has never disappointed us.

⁸ Unfortunately, this special word is gradually changing in meaning. Over the past 30 years, our country has attracted immigrants whose native language is not Timberi. It is difficult for them to understand the true meaning of *salu*, so now almost all teachers are called *salu* by their students.

CONCLUSION

⁹ Most people in this world would like to be recognized and respected (no strategy used) by others. That may be the motivation for people to work hard to get advanced degrees, to run successful businesses, or do other good work. In my country, we are able to show our respect to special people, even to someone with nothing more than a lot of common sense, with the word *salu*.