

Newsletter No. 6

Workshop in October

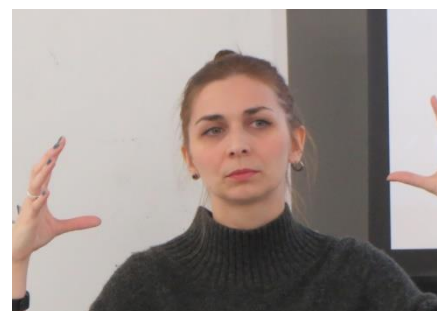
“Implementing Intercultural Communication in the EFL classroom”

Presenter: Jessica Zoni Upton

(Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Date: October 26th, 2019, 10:30-14:30

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-31



Abstract:

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations through the application of one’s intercultural skills, attitudes, and knowledge. In recent years, it has become a growing necessity for people to become part of a rapidly globalizing community. While many EFL learners are able to become fluent in their target language, they often still encounter difficulties in communicating. In order to be prepared for such instances, intercultural competence must be nurtured alongside linguistic competence.

This workshop will briefly introduce the theory behind ICC, yet the main focus will be on how it can be integrated in the EFL classroom. Attendees will have the opportunity to experience some of the practical activities I have been developing for my own classes, before creating adaptations to better suit their own students or research purposes. Hope to see you there.

The number of participants: 25

1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- I want to make use of Critical Incident Technique. These activities need inferential questions and it’s difficult for JHS students to try them. If I have a chance to try, I want to use them.
- Using pictures of DIE is a good way to create activities. I might want to use pictures more in my class.
- DIE and critical incidents can be widely introduced to many topics in the textbook.
- I like the focus on cultural differences and learning to see things from multiple perspectives, meaning we may be able to use materials we currently are using in class to add this element (ICC) to our classes.
- D.I.E – I thought it can stimulate the students to think, imagine and create their I own sentences. Critical Incident Technique – I thought I should try to find or come up with interesting topics which motivate the learners to have different perspective from what they usually have.



2. What you learned from today's workshop

- It's sure that one of the reasons why Japanese people are not eager to speak English is cultured difference. The speaker pointed out how to break the culture barrier in creative way.
- Keep an open mind and be considerate as a teacher. Be a guide not a dictator. Let students discover new things and ideas. Don't force ideas into students.
- 'Describe, Interpret and Evaluate' is good for not only ICC but also for brain storming.
- In our usual life, we/I can't have time to ask questions on sensitive, critical social issues. So, classrooms can/might be the place to talk about the issues.
- I learnt about the possible impacts of hidden curricula, where teachers unconsciously imprint their students on their personal beliefs as well as social and cultural beliefs. Furthermore, teacher collaboration, albeit being important for any teaching objectives, would have an essential role in designing and developing curricula for intercultural understanding especially in primary and secondary educational contexts.



3. Questions and Answers

Q (1): *For cultural role play activities, do you usually explain definitions of certain words or situations? In your example, I'm not sure if the students know what extroverts or introverts are, think or behave.*

A: Of course, any knowledge of the situation or vocabulary which is needed for understanding the dynamics of the roleplay should always be explained beforehand. At the same time, the activity is usually based on a topic which students already have a basic knowledge of. In the case of my extroverts-introverts example, students had already been discussing personality types and were researching the differences between introverts and extroverts for their presentations. Therefore the roleplay was conducted to help them experience first-hand what they had already learned about.

Q2: *Do critical incidents have to respond to stereotypes?*

A: The short answer would be no, they do not have to respond to stereotypes.

Critical Incidents are supposed to offer examples of intercultural situations to help learners become culturally aware (that such situations might happen), and to encourage them to become self-aware (to think about how they would behave). Depending on the objective of the teacher/researcher, critical incidents can offer a method of addressing stereotypes, but that does not have to be the primary goal every time.

Q3: *Do you think introducing the sentence frames such as; I think ... ← We Japanese think ... / I say ... ← We say ... would make them aware? If so, it could be a scaffolder.*

A: I definitely think that it would be beneficial for both students and teachers, as both become aware of how often people mistakenly use those phrases "we do/don't do that" or "we think this or that".



Q4: I wonder how do you find the photos, which shows two perspectives.

A: Google. Sometimes social media, such as Twitter or Instagram. There are also many websites which provide non-copyrighted photos, if copyright might be an issue. I usually spend a very long time looking for all sorts of pictures which could be related to one situation, then narrow it down to one or two which might work best for the purpose of the activity.

Q5: Do you think English classes in Japanese educational context are likely to prioritise the development of the target language abilities of listening, reading, speaking, and writing, but undervalue the importance of intercultural communication? As a researcher on intercultural understanding fields, how do you think language teachers in Japan could raise their awareness of intercultural communication and put more emphasis on the realm in their language classes?

A: I believe many English classes do not prioritise intercultural communication, mostly because they are not aware of it or do not have much knowledge of the field. I think teachers need to first be made aware of the existence of intercultural communication, then be educated on what it is and how it could be integrated in their classes. It is not something most teachers can do on their own, unless they attend workshops such as this one. It is something that should be addressed by the education system before they start teaching and/or the schools they work at.

Q6: Do you think the majority of coursebooks and textbooks in EFL contexts are based on Western perspectives and/or Japanese-based Western perspectives? Material development is always required, but do you think publishers should include more diversities of cultures and countries?

A: Based on my experience, many Japanese textbooks used in EFL classes are written FOR a Japanese audience, and therefore Japanese-based Western perspectives for Japanese learners. There is a lot of cross-cultural comparison which often strengthens the stereotypes instead of aiding cultural awareness. Unfortunately, from what I have heard it is often the publishing company which will push for that approach because it is more likely to sell. Should publishers include more diverse material in the textbooks? Definitely!



Q7: Although I have already asked this question at the end of your workshop and discussed it with you and one of the audiences, I would like to write the question for the NUFFS newsletter article. In EFL contexts, such as in Japanese contexts, although the number of children from other countries is increasing, it is still highly possible that most of the students are Japanese, namely the homogeneous circumstance, where learners share the same social and cultural beliefs as well as similar experiences. Therefore, it would sometimes be rather challenging to broaden their perspectives in authentic ways because the teacher's viewpoints, prejudice, (bias) can have noticeable influence on students as part of hidden curriculum. Thus, I conjecture that eliminating or lessen teachers' bias would be necessary. Could you possibly recommend some useful methods in secondary educational settings?

A: Teacher training in ICC would be recommended. If the teacher bias is the problem, then teachers should either be encouraged to participate in ICC-oriented workshops outside of the workplace, or the school should provide a teacher training specific to address the cultural aspect of language teaching.

Q8: *At the end of your presentation and workshop, you cited one scholar's argument that the development of intercultural competence takes forever. This statement emphasises the importance and necessity of autonomous learning. It seems that a lot of language instructors and learners tend to prioritise the development of language abilities rather than the development of intercultural competence and utilise various learning strategies to accomplish their learning goals. Regardless of fields and objectives, learner autonomy is necessary; however, I am just wondering if you can suggest possible methods for the outside-of-classroom learning to help learners to develop their intercultural competence even after the class and the course end.*

A: Intercultural competence can be developed on a daily basis if one recognizes that the interactions which take place might be instances of intercultural communication. When one talks to somebody who has different values or different behaviors, one has the chance to practice intercultural communication. Notice the difference in the way of thinking or behaving (awareness), and act appropriately.

Although these instances might be taking place all the time, it all depends on whether the learner is aware of it, and whether the learners acts upon it effectively and appropriately.

Q9. *Could you possibly share recommended research papers or book chapters on intercultural communication with us, please?*

A: Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002) *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: A practical introduction for teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Fantini, A. (1995). Introduction-language, culture and world view: Exploring the nexus. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 19(2),143-153.

Hall, E. T. (1959). *The silent language*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.

Kramsch, C., & Uryu, M. (2012). Intercultural contact, hybridity, and third space. In J. Jackson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of language and intercultural communication* (pp. 211-225). Oxford: Routledge.



Workshop in October (AR Discussion)

Date: October 26th, 2019, 15:00-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room A-52, A-62

Title: Group discussion on action research

Advisers: Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Juanita Heigham (NUFS)

The number of participants: 8

