

NUFS Workshop 2006

Newsletter No. 11

Workshop in January

Date: January 13, 2007 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30

Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 2

Instructor: Eiko Ujitani (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: 'Teaching culture in English class at a Japanese junior or senior high school'

The number of participants: 14

Abstract: Damen (1987) considers the knowledge of culture as the fifth skill for language learners in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. However, teaching culture has not been paid attention to in English classes in Japan (Kawano, 1999). In this workshop, six methods to teach culture effectively as claimed by Kawano (1999) will be introduced and explained first. Then participants will be asked to create a lesson plan based on one or a combination of several methods addressed in the first part and it will be shared among participants.



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

- I'd like to use the activity that students make dialogues. By thinking how we usually react toward compliments, students would have opportunity to be aware of the differences between other cultures. Also, students might appreciate Japanese culture.
- Simulation game: Montza and Zabhor. We had to pretend to be a person from different countries with different cultural background. We became aware of how the other person felt. I realized it is very important to have enough background knowledge about different countries, as we live in the so-called borderless era.
- Problem-solving is the most interesting activities I want to use in my class. Cultural assimilator might be the activity students will enjoy most. by showing and demonstrating different dialogues which show cultural difference, students will learn more about the culture and it will help them use the language better.
- I want to do something with Simulation. In this case, students can pretend to be foreign people. That means they can understand a piece of feeling of the foreigners. And it is useful for communicative exercise, too.
- I usually use textbook in my English class. The topics of the lessons are varied. Of course, there are topics about foreign cultures. Recently, I used the topic of housewives working outside. It was a story about an American housewife. I regret now why I didn't give chance for ALT to talk about it. Anyway, I want to use the 'color and meaning'. I'd like to ask students what image they have with the color and after that I'd like to show what are the answers of the students in other countries.

2. What you learned from today's workshop.

- I can have my students more motivated by sharing my experience in other countries. I should keep in mind that teacher's role is not only teaching English but also introducing them to other cultures.
- Not only providing students some information about some culture but letting them think about other cultures is important. Teachers will start teaching them surface culture, but teaching invisible culture is more important for students to communicate better.
- I found it important and interesting to know about cultural differences because to know a person requires us not only to understand what he-she is saying but also to understand their cultural behaviors.
- I saw some interesting ways to approach cultural reading, but I was impressed with the destination between surface and invisible cultural differences. This idea helps to clarify and organize cultural topics for teaching.
- Making a lesson plan is very important, especially by brainstorming with other teachers. We can get many ideas and improve our lesson plan.
- Culture is a very difficult topic to teach, because we teachers have to teach the cultures we don't know well about or the countries we have never been to. I'll buy some books Ms Ujitani showed us and browse some web pages.



3. Questions and Answers

Q: As to socio-cultural competence, I think ALT will be very helpful when we teach students about it. We have a regular team teaching class, so will you show us a few ideas how to have team teaching which focuses on acquiring socio-cultural competence?

A: If you have an ALT in your class, the intercultural class will become much more interesting just like PJ contributed a lot to our workshop. An ALT will become a great informant. Do you remember the activity about color association? First we could ask our students to come up some ideas and then ask the ALT if any of their responses look strange. First identify what looks strange to the ALT and then the reason why the ALT found it strange. From there, you will have interesting and natural interactions between the ALT and your students explaining each other's culture. Both the ALT and Japanese students will learn a lot about each other's culture.

Q: I wonder how to teach cultures of non-native English countries. Students who will study in English speaking countries will have more opportunities to share the class with non-native speakers. The textbook we use tend to include more American/British culture than other cultures. What do you think?

A: In intercultural communication class, it would be more interesting to include examples of varied cultures. When we talk about personal distance, for example, it would be more useful to compare Japanese culture

with Middle Eastern or Latin cultures since people from those cultures tend to speak to you standing much closer. You can learn about behaviors of different cultures everywhere through books, magazines, internet, movies or TV. You can also participate in a lot of intercultural events and talk about your own experience of meeting people from non-English speaking countries as well.



Q: Cultural quizzes are very interesting, but I don't know how to evaluate students with them. Do you have any good ideas?

A: Cultural quizzes on the internet such as Dave's EFL café evaluate your students' responses and send the result back to them immediately. So teachers don't have to mark them. What I usually do in my class is ask my students to report back their results (e.g. the number of correct answers or score).

Some teachers may use cultural quizzes after teaching some cultural traits. If you use it at the end of the class, you can evaluate how much cultural knowledge students acquire.

Q: Stereotype cultural information can be obtained by many publications available. However, I guess it might be a little difficult to learn the cultures of a multi-ethnic nation such as the USA. Please let us know your ideas.

A: Yes, not only ethnic backgrounds but also gender, generation, social class, occupation and many other factors will influence their cultural values. Culture is not created only based on national boundaries. Teachers need to emphasize diversities or individual differences whenever they talk about cultural traits and have students be aware that individual differences are always bigger than cultural differences. It might be a good idea to talk about different ethnic groups in the US, because it challenges stereotypes we tend to have about American people. If you would like to know about specific differences among ethnic groups, books, magazines and movies will give you a lot of ideas.

Group Session

Date: January 13, 2007 15:00-17:00

Venue: Nagoya International Center, Lecture Room 2

The number of participants: 10

Abstract: The participants made discussion about their lessons in the group. They talked how they can change grammar-centered lessons to more communicative ones, for example.



Next Workshop

Date: February 10, 2007 10:30-12:00, 13:00-14:30, 15:00-17:00

Venue: Nagoya NSC College, Room E-51

Instructor: Nancy Mutoh (Nagoya University of Foreign Studies)

Title: 'Movies as Learning Materials'

I'm waiting for your attendance. Please send an email to Chihaya if you can come.