RAISING INTERCULTURAL AWARENESS IN A GENERAL ENGLISH CLASS

1. The Context & Content
2. The Project Aims & Intentions
3. Results & Implications
The Context

The Class:
- General English (Upper Intermediate)
- Class 10 students (most in early - mid 20s):
  - 7 Japanese women (all women)
  - 3 Saudi students (2 women, 1 man)

The Project
- Project work: Total 30 hours (1 morning per week)
- This project: 3 groups (a mix of Japanese & Saudi students)
  - Group A: Public & domestic behaviour & language
  - Group B: Jeremy’s placement situations
  - Group C: University academic culture
INTERCULTURAL PROJECT: STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS

- **Interviewing**
  - *Situational responses* (‘what would you say/do…?’) & comparing different responses from different groups of people.

  - As eavesdropper (e.g. on a bus, on T.V. etc.)
  - As a participant (service encounters, with classmates, etc.)
  - Reflect on encounters and observations
PROJECT AIMS

- For students to:
  1. to use and develop their language skills in a meaningful and authentic way.
  2. to explore aspects of English language use & appropriacy.
  3. gain a greater awareness as to the importance of cultural norms in language learning.
  4. to gain insights into cross cultural similarities and differences.

- Intercultural encounters & intercultural speakers

- Critical language awareness/ critical cultural awareness:
  “An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 1997: 53).
PROJECT ORIENTATION

- Initial Orientation (4 hours)
  - Discussions about:
    - Jeremy’s contextual situations
    - Dress code, contexts & language
    - Traffic culture
    - Stereotypes & limitations & distortion of such models
The project work produced:

- Written reports, class presentations & individual reflective writing.
- Diaries:
  - Only 5 out of 10 submitted
  - Purely descriptive
  - Little sign of self reflection or post reflection or use of listening logs
STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE PROJECT WORK

1. How motivating/interesting did you find this project?

   Very                           Not very

2. How much did the project help you with your English?

   Very much                      Not Much

3. Is a knowledge of culture important in your learning English?

   Very important                  Not very important

4. Which aspects of the project were most useful for you:

   • Keeping a diary

   Very useful                    Not very useful

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IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECT WORK

The initial orientation
- Need for more input, such as:
  - texts on ICC

Listening logs and language recording – a framework and templates to record language & behaviour.

The diaries
- More rationale needed initially
- A trial period of writing diaries
- Greater tutor control of diaries? (see Gkonou, 2013 Newsletter of the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group: ELT Research Issue, 28)

James Greenough  Sussex Centre For Language Studies 2015
REFERENCES

