

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.

○ *Diaries: Observations & a Listening Logs* (based on Jenny Kemp's 'Listening Log' article in ELT Journal, Oct 2010).

- 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



STUDENT WORK & RESULTS

- 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	
5 [2]	4 [5]	3 [2]	2 [1]	1 []

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

Very much			Not Much	
5 [3]	4 [4]	3 [3]	2 []	1 []

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

Very important			Not very important	
5 [6]	4 [4]	3 []	2 []	1 []

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

- *Keeping a diary*

Very useful			Not very useful	
5 [2]	4 [3]	3 [2]	2 [2]	1 [1]



IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECT WORK

- The initial orientation
 - Need for more input, such as:
 - texts on ICC
 - viewing TED/You Tube clips about culture/ICC (see Holmes & O'Neil, 2012 *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36: 707 – 718)
- 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)



REFERENCES

Byram, M. (1997) *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

Gkonou, C. (2013) Some methodological issues in using learner diaries to investigate classroom language anxiety. *Newsletter of the IATEFL Research Special Interest Group: ELT Research Issue, 28*

Holmes, P. & O'Neil, G (2012) Developing and evaluating intercultural competence: ethnographies of intercultural encounters. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 36: 707 – 718*

