

Cross-cultural Quizzes in the ELF Classroom

ELFクラスにおける異文化クイズ(の使用)について

Marinette Ishizaki, マリネット・石崎

Center for English as a Lingua Franca, Tamagawa University, Japan
marinette@lab.tamagawa.ac.jp

ABSTRACT

Learning a language is interlinked with learning culture. In ELF classrooms, cultural topics are important and inevitable because students interact with their non-Japanese instructors regularly and they both share similar or different views in class. It is said that lack of cultural knowledge or unfamiliarity with other people's cultures could affect the quality and exchange of communication and interaction in class (Merrouche, 2010). Hence, there is a need to integrate and discuss cultural topics in the classroom in order to increase intercultural understanding of one's own culture and other cultures that facilitates the process of building cultural connections and communication (Frank, 2013; Merrouche, 2010; Oxford, 1994). This paper details and explains the use of cross-cultural quizzes as interactive and practical classroom activities that are perceived to be interesting and highly engaging for language learners (Cullen & Sato, 2000) with the goal of increasing students' cultural interest, linguistic knowledge and learning, and intercultural communicative competence.

KEYWORDS: English language learning, Cultural awareness, Culture quizzes

1. INTRODUCTION

At Tamagawa University, English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) classes are composed mainly of Japanese students and non-Japanese instructors from different regions of the world. Students learn the varieties of English and are exposed to the cultures of their foreign instructors, and they share similar and different views on various topics in class. However, in some cases, lack of knowledge and unfamiliarity with Japanese culture and non-Japanese cultures could influence the quality of communication and interaction in class. It could also lead to “misunderstandings, communication breakdowns, or inappropriate language use” (Merrouche, 2010, p. 109).

As we embrace a globalized community, it is my personal goal for my students that they learn English not just as a language but also as a culture and tool to learning diverse cultures. Integrating culture in the classroom, therefore, is important and inevitable because it helps language learners develop cultural interest, knowledge, awareness and intercultural communicative competence as well as discover their own cultures while improving their language and communication skills (Dema & Moeller, 2012; Fantini &

Tirmizi, 2006; Frank, 2013; Merrouche, 2010; Nguyen, 2017).

Cullen and Sato (2000) suggest doing culture quizzes to “teach culture” in class because they are practical, fun, highly engaging, and interesting. Quizzes can be boring and nerve-wracking for students, but they are, in many ways, effective tools to assess learners’ performance. They are also often used by teachers to improve students’ knowledge on general information that bring about strong language learning outcomes (Ostrowska, 2015).

Cross-cultural Quizzes, in this paper, can be described as an interactive practical classroom activity that generally aims to stir up students’ cultural interest and knowledge helping them acquire intercultural awareness, competence and understanding in the long run. These quizzes also aim to increase understanding between similarities and differences of Japanese and non-Japanese cultures, but not to compare which culture is superior or better.

2. CROSSING CULTURES THROUGH INTERACTIVE QUIZZES IN THE ELF CLASSROOM

2.1. Allotting a Special Kultura Day for Cross-cultural Quizzes

“Kultura Day” or “Culture Day” is a special day I allot once or twice in a semester for students to research more about their own culture, know more about my Filipino culture, and get interested in other foreign cultures. Students may have heard about the Filipinos and the Philippines, but they may be unfamiliar with them that could influence the exchange of communication and learning in the classroom.

2.2 Warming-up for the Quiz

For warm-up, learning an easy song that can be sung in the Japanese, English and Filipino languages often creates a cultural vibe in the classroom. Songs can be varied depending on the students’ level. We learn the song for about 10 to 15 minutes and use it as a penalty song for the losing team in the quiz game. Many students report feeling that learning Filipino words for the first time is a mixture of fun and laughter because of difficulty in pronouncing the unfamiliar sounds.

2.3 Cross-cultural Quizzes in the ELF Classroom

Cross-cultural quizzes can be done in two ways to elicit both active participation and interaction amongst students. One is the paper-and-pencil quiz which can be done in pairs or small groups. Students write answers to a set of questions in pairs or groups depending on the size of the class. Members of the group take turns reading and asking the questions for communication skills practice. After answering the questions, the instructor and students check their answers together. After checking, students discuss their answers within the group and share their answers, opinions, discoveries and realizations on the topics.

Language phrases such as however, in contrast, but are avoided in the questions and statements in order to avoid making value judgements about either culture. Guide sentences are provided for low-level learners to use when responding to their partners/

groups. To ensure greater participation and interaction, the instructor walks around and facilitates each group while they are answering the quiz for about 30 minutes. Sample questions are shown in Appendix A.

The other style is interactive quiz games in which students are grouped in competing teams. Each team is given a box of candy/chocolate as their “treasure chest/bank” and tries to avoid giving wrong answers and losing their treasures to the other team. The instructor acts as the Quizmaster and asks the students to compete in answering a set of questions (displayed on PowerPoint) within 20 seconds. Each team must discuss their answer before raising the lettercard answer. The team with the wrong answer must give a piece of candy to the team with the correct answer. If both teams are wrong, they must return the sweets to the Quizmaster. Afterward, students are asked to do follow-up tasks for discussion. For sample questions, see Appendix B. To incorporate a communicative approach, one question is for brief roleplay of a real-life situation that also touches on a cultural practice and asks the students to translate common Japanese expressions to English. See sample question 4 in Appendix B.

Quiz questions can vary, and they may include trivia or facts, geography, gestures, practices, beliefs, customs, food, traditional clothing, and other information that generates interest among the students. Questions are designed to incorporate elements of culture (perspectives, products and practice) and the cultural components: knowledge, awareness, skills and attitude (KASA) for intercultural communicative competence (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey 2002; Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006; Nguyen, 2017). See Appendices A and B.

3. BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATION

There is no doubt that cross-cultural quizzes are fun, interesting and highly engaging as they tickle curiosity and stir up cultural interest and knowledge of both Japanese and non-Japanese cultures, familiar and unfamiliar, to the students. Some students have expressed interest in learning the Filipino language or traveling to the Philippines in the future. Others said that they would like to travel the world to know more about other countries such as Papua New Guinea, Nepal, Tibet and Myanmar.

Cross-cultural quizzes provide a good opportunity for students to explore similarities and differences of their own culture, their instructor’s culture, and other non-Japanese cultures. It is also a good opportunity for students to express and discuss ideas, opinions and feelings; acquire knowledge of cultural topics; accept or reject new information; and perhaps even dispel stereotypes.

The quiz activity, in general, is interactive, participative, collaborative and communicative allowing language learners to be expressive. For teachers who avoid using paper, quizzes can also be made on digital web applications. For variation of quiz question content, teachers can allow students to come up with their own culture questions to be collected and included in a future activity. This also provides good practice for sentence construction skills.

It is worth noting that cross-cultural quizzes, initiate a basic, surface and factual level of cultural awareness and understanding, and students should be encouraged to go beyond this level. Showing only select pieces of culture might be problematic as it could lead

to negative generalizations and stereotypes (Frank, 2013; Oxford, 1994). Therefore, discussions and supplemental activities (cultural journals, diaries, cultural informants and observer activities) through different means (media and technology, first-hand experiences, visiting CELF tutor service for interviews, and so on) are highly recommended .

4. CONCLUSION

Based on my observations, cross-cultural quizzes are useful and facilitate getting students interested in learning their own Japanese culture and non-Japanese cultures and in understanding cultural similarities and differences. While doing this activity is fun, it needs supplemental discussions and follow-up cultural activities to deepen students' intercultural awareness, stir up their 'cultural antennas', and increase their intercultural communicative competence over time.

REFERENCES

- Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching: a practical introduction for teachers*. Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe.
- Cullen, B., & Sato, K. (2000). Practical techniques for teaching culture in the EFL classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 6(12). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Cullen-Culture.html>
- Dema, O., & Moeller, A.K. (2012). *Teaching culture in the 21st century language classroom*. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/181/>
- Fantini, A., & Tirmizi, A. (2006). Exploring and assessing intercultural competence. *World Learning Publications*. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/worldlearning_publications/1/
- Frank, J. (2013). Raising cultural awareness in the english language classroom. *English Teaching Forum*, 51(4), 2-11. Retrieved from https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/51_4_2_frank.pdf
- Merrouche, S. (2010). Approaches to culture in foreign language teaching. *Revue Sciences Humaines*, 33, 103-114. Retrieved from <http://revue.umc.edu.dz/index.php/h/article/view/619/fr8-MERROUCHE.pdf>
- Nguyen, T. (2017). Integrating culture into language teaching and learning: learner outcomes. *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 17(1), 145-155. Retrieved from <http://www.readingmatrix.com/files/16-lm7civ98.pdf>

Ostrowska, S. (2015). The importance of world knowledge to the ELT classroom #3 – general knowledge quizzes. *World of Better Learning*. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/elt/blog/2015/08/19/importance-world-knowledge-elt-classroom-3-general-knowledge-quizzes/>

Oxford, R. (1994). Teaching culture in the language classroom: Towards a new philosophy. In J. Alatis (Ed.), *Georgetown University Round Table on Language and Linguistics 1994* (pp. 26-45). Washington DC: Georgetown University Press.

APPENDIX A (Paper-and-pencil)

Sample Questions: (Paper-and-pencil Quiz)

Kultura Quiz Wiz

Work as a group. Read the questions and/or statements aloud within your group. Take turns in reading the statements/questions. Circle the letter. (Note: This can also be done in pairs).	
Questions/Statements	Choices
1. Tokyo is the capital city of Japan. What is the capital city of the Philippines? (Guide sentence.)	a) Hanoi b) New Delhi c) Kuala Lumpur d) Manila
2. In Japan, <i>kimono</i> is considered as a traditional and national wear/clothing. What is the traditional and national clothing of the Philippines? In the Philippines, _____ is known as a traditional and national clothing. (Guide sentence.)	a) qho and khira b) hanbok c) barong and baro't saya d) dhoti and sari (See pictures of clothing at the back.)
3. In Japan, eating noodles with slurping sound is polite and common, and it could mean that slurping noodles could better savor the taste and smell of noodles (especially soba). In the Philippines, eating noodles with slurping sound could mean _____. (Guide sentence.)	a) rude and can be annoying b) cool, polite and fun c) hungry, so people should eat fast d) people do not like the food at all
4. Tipping in Japan is not common and not expected in certain services like restaurants. Tipping in the Philippines and in the US in certain services like restaurants is okay, common and acceptable.	a) True b) False c) Maybe d) No answer.
5. In Japan, a bow or slight bow is a common greeting gesture. In the Philippines, _____ is a common casual gesture to greet their friends and family members. This is also used in other countries like Italy and France, and even US, sometimes. (Guide sentence.)	a) beso-beso (cheek-to-cheek) b) fist bump c) sticking tongue out d) firm handshake (See pictures of gestures at the back.)
6. In Japan, people say "Itadakimasu" before eating their meals. Which of the following do most Filipinos do before eating their meals? Filipinos _____ before eating their meals. (Guide sentence.)	a) Say "Hello, food!" b) Pray c) Do nothing. d) Wave their hands.

After answering the questions/statements, do the follow-up questions. Take turns in asking questions.

Follow-up Task for Discussion

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) What countries can you find these places?
2) Have you ever been to/heard of the Philippines?
3) What do you think about it? | |
| 1) What countries can you see these traditional and national clothes?
2) Describe each. | |
| 1) What do you think about eating noodles silently? Share your thoughts.
2) If you go to the Philippines, how will you eat your noodles? Share your thoughts.
(Will you eat your noodles with slurping sound the way Japanese do or Filipinos do?) Share your thoughts. | |
| 1) What do you think about tipping or giving tips? Share your thoughts.
2) Will you give tips if you go to the US or the Philippines? Share your thoughts. | |
| 1) What will you do if someone greets you in beso-beso? Share your thoughts.
2) Do the gestures.
What do you think about each gesture? | |
| 1) What do you think about the Japanese' before-meal-practice? Share your thoughts.
2) What do you think about the Filipino's before-meal-practices? Share your thoughts. | |

APPENDIX B (Interactive Quiz Game)

Sample Questions (Interactive Quiz Game)

Work as a team. Discuss and answer the questions for 15 seconds (or 20 secs for beginner students).

	Questions (displayed on PPT)	Follow-up Tasks for Discussion (after answering the questions)
knowledge	1) In Japan, Konnichiwa is Hello. In the Philippines, _____ is "Hello" and also "How are you?" a) Olah! c) Kumusta! b) Halo! d) Kembali.	a) Say " <i>Kumusta!</i> " to your seatmates or teammates. b) What are the countries and/or nationalities that use these greetings? <i>Name the country/ies for each greeting.</i>
awareness	2) In Japan, eating noodles with slurping sound may be polite and common, and it could mean that slurping noodles could better savor the taste and smell of noodles (especially soba). In the Philippines, eating noodles with slurping sound could mean _____. a) rude and can be annoying b) cool, polite and fun c) hungry, so please eat fast d) customers do not like the food at all	a) What do you think about eating noodles without any sound? Share your thoughts. b) If you go to the Philippines, how will you eat your noodles? (<i>Will you make slurping sound when you eat your noodles the way Japanese do?</i>) Share your thoughts.
skill	3) In Japan, a bow or slight bow is a common greeting gesture. In the Philippines, _____ is an informal common gesture to greet their friends and family members. This is also used in other countries like Italy and France. a) <i>beso-beso</i> (cheek-to-cheek) b) fist bump c) sticking tongue out d) firm handshake	a) Do the gestures on the pictures with your seatmates/classmates. b) What do you think about each gesture? Share your thoughts. c) What country or nationality makes use of the sticking-of-tongue-out as a form of greeting? <i>*Some questions can be assigned as homework.</i>
attitude	4) Roleplay and translation question: Observe and listen to the following conversation. (<i>Ask other students in the classroom to read and do a roleplay of the conversation.</i>) <i>Situation: Receiving a Call on the Train</i> Student A (Mike): Hello, Hiro? Student B (Hiro): (in a small voice) Oh, I'm sorry. I'm on a train now, <u>「電車を降りたら、すぐかけ直します」。</u> Quiz Question: In the conversation, translate the following line into English (20 seconds): ...電車を降りたら、すぐかけ直します。 (<i>Write answer on the whiteboard. The first team with the best/ correct translation wins.</i>) Answer: <i>I will call back when I get off the train.</i>	In Japan, talking on the phone on the train is not a good manner. In the Philippines, talking on the phone (in minimal voice) is accepted, common and normal. a) What do you think about this behavior? Share your thoughts. b) If you are on a train in the Philippines, what will you do if your friend calls and talks to you on the phone? (<i>Will you talk to someone on the phone too?</i>) Share your thoughts. c) When foreigners talk on their phones while on train, what do you feel? Share your thoughts. <i>*Some questions can be assigned as homework.</i>