

TARGETED CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES Meeting Core Objectives through Cross-Cultural Activities in the ESOL Classroom

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“...globalization requires the integration of various voices from different languacultures into an ever changing perspective of intelligent adaptation for individuals. It is through the application and reintegration of languacultural schemas into pedagogical knowledge that applied cultural linguistics stands tall in the business of teaching and learning a second language.”

- by Jyh Wee Sew, National University of Singapore

“Languaculture is a term meaning a language that includes not only elements such as grammar and vocabulary, but also past knowledge, local and cultural information, habits and behaviors. The term was created by the American anthropologist Michael Agar.”

- Wikipedia

Many of us were drawn to teaching ESOL by a fascination with different cultures and our students often feel the same way. No matter what cultures your students are from or where you are teaching, cultural differences and similarities are a pervasive background to everything that happens within an ESOL class. Cross-cultural activities can become a means to enhance and accomplish target content, functional and structural learning objectives.

Before beginning, it is important to stress the crucial role authentic context plays in second language acquisition. It is context that makes the language accessible and comprehensible to the ESOL or ELL student and, by imparting and conveying real messages that motivate the student, context helps students absorb language and become more fluent. Context conveys schema and schema conveys culture. For example, we can GIVE SUGGESTIONS about everything from travel to movies to romance, but each carries with it a different schema and, depending on the native culture of the student, a very different connotation. When we choose objectives that have a variety of cultural contexts, students can become more interested and more motivated to communicate in the target language. They are then able to offer germane cultural realities they have grown up with and thus invest the task with more authenticity as they move into linguistically challenging arenas.

In an ESOL class, where language mastery is the main goal, teachers have great flexibility in culturally contextualizing the lessons so that this process occurs. In a content focused course, like an ELL class in a public school, these choices may be limited but can still be brought to bear, even in the most proscribed situations, if some of these procedures are kept in mind.

Here is the basic framework I propose in terms of implementing cross-cultural modalities into an ESOL lesson or unit (see Main Chart)

Some categories of specific materials or content to use in this context are:

- 1. Using concrete items to trigger conceptual language use around culture that is germane to the lesson. (Art, everyday items, ID cards, menus, all other cultural realia.)*
- 2. Using graphics, lexis or media to focus activities around specific cultural aspects that are germane to the lesson. (Websites, photos, youtube clips, cultural phrases or key words, etc.)*
- 3. Using abstract actions/notions to work with core cultural ideas that are germane to the lesson. (Body language, gestures, expressions, kinesthetic actions of all sorts etc.)*

THREE FRAMEWORK EXAMPLES-

Rather than discuss these three arenas of communication and how they would unfold in the TESOL classroom, let me give concrete examples and show this process in terms of a Functional Objective, A Structural Objective, and a Content Objective involving ELL students:

(See chart 1)

Functional Objective: GIVE SUGGESTIONS... REGARDING WHAT TO DO AT A WEDDING (context: in our country of origin)

Target Language: You should-, You ought to-, You shouldn't-, If I were you I would-, It is customary to-, It would be a good idea to- etc.

* Using concrete items to trigger conceptual language use around culture that is germane to the lesson: Students bring in wedding invitations, wedding charms and implements, wedding gifts and traditional items, copies of their parents wedding photos and wedding certificates to share.

(See Chart 2)

Structural Objective: FREQUENCY ADVERBS

Always...almost always... frequently... usually... often...sometimes... occasionally... seldom... rarely... never. (etc)

Context: Things we do in school.

* Using abstract actions/notions to work with core cultural ideas that is germane to the lesson.
Ex: Students share non-verbal cues for 'never' and 'sometimes' and 'always' from different cultures then discuss the following: ... LATE/ON TIME FOR CLASS, HAVE READING HOMEWORK, HAVE WRITING HOMEWORK, EATING, PLAYING SPORTS, PLAYING MUSIC, PRAY, BOYS AND GIRLS IN SEPARATE/SAME CLASSES, WEAR SCHOOL UNIFORMS, DETENTION, SCHOOL SOCIAL EVENTS, STUDY ART, STUDY OTHER LANGUAGES, STUDY MATH....AND___?

How often do you ___ in school?

In ___(country)___ I often/always.rarely_____in school.

(See Chart 3)

Content objective; Know and understand and be able to explain the difference between amphibians and reptiles

ELD: 1.1 Uses listening and observation skills and strategies to focus attention and interpret information

1.2 Understands, analyzes, synthesizes or evaluates from a variety of sources

2.2 Uses interpersonal skills and strategies in a multicultural context to work collaboratively, solve problems and perform tasks (Washington State ELL Learning objectives: 'EALRS')

Cultural context; Using real information about reptiles and amphibians from different countries of origin of students, be able to understand and apply/discuss/write about the differences between the two.

3. Using graphics, lexis or media to focus activities around specific cultural aspects that are germane to the lesson.

Example: Using cell phones/PDAs/iPads etc. students research and find photos or video clips of one toad and one frog from their country or their assigned country.

Collect data on all these, sort into two lists and discuss differences.

HOW ARE FROGS AND TOADS DIFFERENT?

- Frogs and toads are in the same family
- Frogs have smooth, wet skin that looks slimy.
- Toads have drier, rough skin that looks really bumpy, like warts.
- Toads do have a weird smell and yucky taste to their skin, though. This is to keep bigger animals from wanting to eat them. □ □
- Frogs have skinnier bodies than toads to.
- Toads are kind of wide and look fat.
- Frogs also have longer legs and webbed hind feet, but toads don't need long jumping legs because they walk, and they don't need webbed back feet for swimming because they live on land.
- Frogs live in water and jump everywhere they go. □ □
- Toads do lay their eggs in water, though, because their babies start off as tadpoles, just like frog babies do.
- The difference is that frog eggs are laid in bunches, or clusters, and they have a jelly-like substance around them.
- Toads lay their eggs in lines, or strands, on leaves of plants that live in the water. □ □
- In some parts of the world, especially tropical parts near the equator, frogs and toads look very much alike.

FROM: <http://www.frog-life-cycle.com>



Fire Bellied Toad



Red Eyed Tree Frog

TARGET OBJECTIVE:
*GIVE SUGGESTIONS... REGARDING
WHAT TO DO AT A WEDDING*

COMPETENCY
FLUENCY
MASTERY

SHARED LATERAL
INPUT/OUTPUT

SLA

OTHER
CULTURAL
SCHEMA

DOMINANT
CULTURAL
SCHEMA
*North Am.
religious or civil
marriage customs*

OTHER
CULTURAL
SCHEMA

CORE INPUT

JAPANESE STUDENTS:

***You should** bring in a special envelope with a lot of yen as a gift-*

***You ought to** applaud when the bride and groom blow out the 'marriage candle'*

***If I were you I would** learn about how to pray properly in a Shinto ceremony.*

ARABIC STUDENTS:

***You ought to** bring a lovely, personal present for the couple*

***You ought to** learn Arabic table manners how to properly eat with your hands at the banquet*

***You shouldn't** ever pass anything with your left hand*

***You should** remember that generally men only greet men and women greet women.*

SHARED CROSS-
CULTURAL
SCHEMA

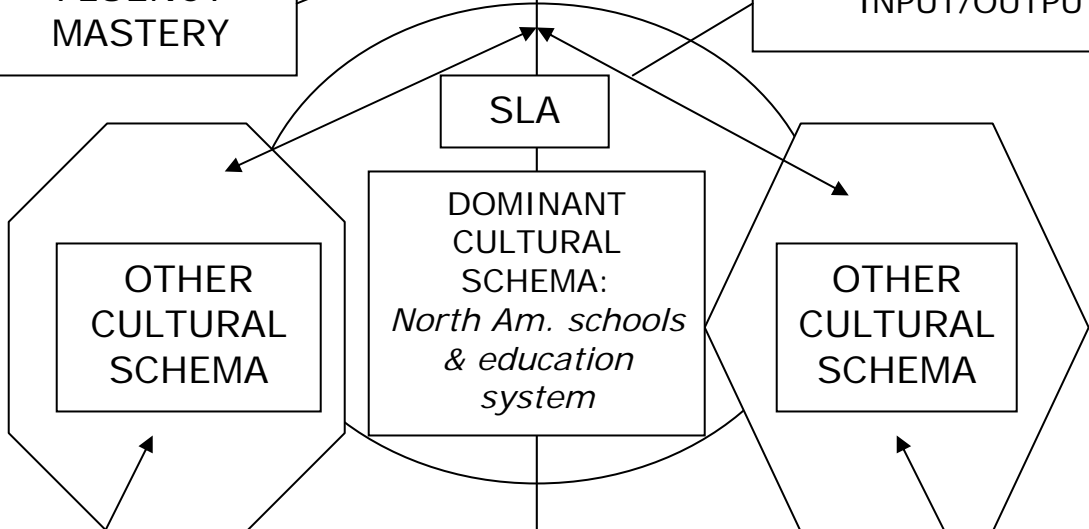
Weddings are universal, most have been to one, many students were married in their country of origin
-Traditions
-Ceremony
- Gifts
-Feasting

TARGET OBJECTIVE
FREQUENCY ADVERBS MASTERY
 always...frequently...usually...often...sometimes
 ...occasionally...seldom...rarely...never. (etc)

**AUTHENTIC
 CONTEXT:
 SCHOOL**

COMPETENCY
 FLUENCY
 MASTERY

SHARED LATERAL
 INPUT/OUTPUT



JAPANESE STUDENTS:

Students **always** wear uniforms.

Sometimes schools are old and dirty but sometimes they are new.

We **usually** have a lot of homework to do.

We **rarely** talk in class.

We **often** eat lunch in our classrooms.

We **usually** go to Juku after school!

SHARED CROSS-CULTURAL SCHEMA

All kids go to school. Classrooms, teachers, students, rules, basic skills, homework etc. all exist in most places.

ARABIC STUDENTS:

Students **often** wear uniforms, but it depends on the school.

In the cities the schools are **usually** new and modern.

Sometimes we have a lot of homework, it depends on the teacher.

Occasionally we discuss things in class.

We **rarely** eat lunch in our classroom. We go to the cafeteria.

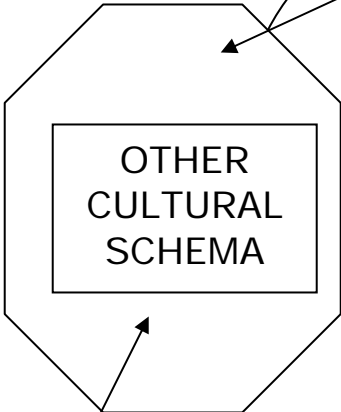
CONTENT TARGET OBJECTIVE
Understand, evaluate and
synthesize information about the
differences between frogs & toads

**AUTHENTIC
CONTEXT:**
*Intl. Internet
images &
information
about frogs &
toads*

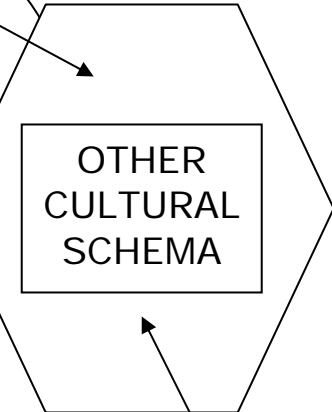
COMPETENCY
FLUENCY
MASTERY

SHARED LATERAL
INPUT/OUTPUT

SLA



DOMINANT
CULTURAL
SCHEMA:
*North Am.
Frogs & Toads*



CORE INPUT

JAPANESE STUDENTS:
*Some frogs & toads to
gather data on-*

GAERU

Kajika Frog
*Amani Green Tree
Frog*
Ishikawa's Frog

HIKI-GAERU

Miyako Toad
Marine Toad
Japanese Stream Toad

**SHARED CROSS-
CULTURAL
SCHEMA**

Toads and Frogs
are in most
countries-

Their
characteristics are
the same
everywhere

ARABIC STUDENTS:
*Some frogs & toads to gather
data on-*

DIFDI'

Skittering Frog
Yemen Tree Frog

DIFDI' AL-JABAL

Arabian Toad
Dhofar Toad

