


2004

Language and Cultural Learning Through Student Generated Photography

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School for International Training

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL LEARNING
THROUGH
STUDENT GENERATED PHOTOGRAPHY

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS IN TEACHING
DEGREE AT THE SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAINING
BRATTLEBORO, VERMONT

BY
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MARCH 2004

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This project by David M. Cosgrove is accepted in its present form.

Date _____

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Project Reader _____

Acknowledgements:

Many thanks to Barbara Stein and Jack Millett for their assistance and patience.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines and discusses the unique teaching context and the inherent problems faced by foreign English teachers in the Japanese University System. It contains a personal account of the process the author went through to develop a new and interesting curriculum to overcome these problems. This curriculum is based on student-generated photographs of their lives and is an effective method of both language learning and culture learning. Included in the paper is a step-by-step course description of twenty-four lesson plans based on the photographs.

ERIC Descriptors

SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING
CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES
STUDENT DEVELOPED MATERIALS
CROSS CULTURAL STUDIES
CULTURAL AWARENESS
COLLEGE 2ND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS
CONVERSATIONAL LANGUAGE COURSES
VISUAL AID

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I have been a teacher of English as a foreign language in Japan for over ten years. In the middle of that period of time, I attended The School For International Training as a member of the Summer Master of Arts in Teaching, SMAT 12 program. This paper represents a culmination or synthesis of those two experiences. It began as an interim year project for Pat Moran's Culture class and continued as the subject of this, my IPP thesis.

As with most foreign English teachers in Japan, I have struggled for years with the issues of pervasive Japanese shyness, general reticence in speaking and the effects of the Japanese education system. Though I tried many different approaches in my teaching, I was often frustrated with the results. Though I experienced some improvements, in general, the majority of my students remained passive and unmotivated. Using the interim year culture project as an opportunity, I attempted to devise a new and effective method that would be so interesting, relevant and fun that my students would gladly participate in it.

The result is a year long course in language learning as well as personal and cross cultural awareness. The course is based entirely on materials created by the students; photographs which the pupils take of different aspects of their own lives. The program

was designed and implemented for first year English major students in the Japanese university system. I believe however, that it can also be a very effective system of learning for students of other languages and at other levels and in other countries.

While devising this program, there were a number of influential resources that I found most helpful. The first influence was the S.I.T. culture class of Pat Moran. The in-class course work and the readings I was exposed to in this class were very helpful in focusing my ideas for this project. In particular, I would cite *Cultural Learning*, by Louise Damen as being a primary influence. In addition I would note that the feedback and help I received from Mr. Moran and my classmates was extremely helpful. The primary resource, however, was my many Japanese college students, who, over the last five years have "taken the ball and run with it" and as a result have given me much that has helped fine-tune this course.

In the following chapters, I will demonstrate the issues and process that resulted in this program. Chapter Two will discuss the context of the teaching environment in Japan. Chapter Three will follow up with the issues that are a result of the unique particulars of the Japanese teaching environment. In Chapter Four, I will discuss my personal insights and those of others who have studied these issues. I will also describe how I came to my personal solution for these issues. A comprehensive course description of the yearlong program will be provided in Chapter Five. It will present to the reader how to use the student-generated photographs and materials in lesson format. In Chapter Six, I will present my conclusions and the final Chapter Seven will offer suggestions on ways to extend this format in other courses.

CHAPTER 2

TEACHING CONTEXT

This course was designed for freshman speaking classes in Japanese universities. In general, they are eighteen and nineteen years old. They have all had a mandatory six years of English instruction through junior high school and high school. A small percentage of students have had overseas experience of "home stays," and an equally small percentage attend private language conversation schools. Approximately half of them have also attended "juku" or cram schools. These cram schools include English study in their curriculum but are geared for passing college entrance exams and do not focus on communicative fluency.

Typically, the standard Japanese university language class meets once a week for ninety minutes. The academic year is usually divided into two semesters; the first semester meeting from early April to late July and the second semester commencing in late September and finishing in late January. When figuring in national holidays and school festivals; there are approximately twelve class meetings per term for a total of twenty-four for the full year. Class sizes vary from school to school, but in general there are usually between twenty and forty students per class.

CHAPTER 3

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

For any teacher working in Japan, there are three major issues that need to be understood and dealt with in order for that teacher to have any successful impact on students. The first and largest is the educational system and second, the effect it has on the minds and social skills of the young people being processed through it. The third issue is the cultural perception gap between East and West as to the meaning of "Higher Education."

Japan, a Confucian based society, places a high emphasis on learning. Indeed, on paper, the Japanese educational system seems quite praise-worthy. Almost all children complete the nine years of compulsory education, elementary school through the finish of junior high school at around the age of fifteen. Ninety-five percent continue to senior high school and thirty -eight percent of the boys and forty-three percent of the girls go on to attend university or junior colleges. (Woronoff 1997) According to Jon Woronoff, in *The Japanese Social Crisis*, "Japanese children devote more time to school than children anywhere in the West. Despite efforts to reduce the number of classes, the level remains about 32 hours a week during a school year of 220 to 240 days. Japanese school children have a lot of homework, on the average two hours a night. Even during the summer

vacation, they are given work to do and must consult with their teachers in the middle." (Woronoff 1997) In many ways, the Japanese education system resembles that in the west. This has much to do with the reforms enacted during the American occupation after World War Two. If anything, it seems noticeably more rigorous. However, in reality, there are some very deep differences that need to be noted and understood. Many of the occupation era reforms, which were enacted, were strictly cosmetic and much of the old system has prevailed to today. One major difference is that, though there are very strenuous tests to enter schools, there is nothing very strenuous to pass out of them. This is particularly true for the Japanese university system, which is the teaching context for this course. Again, from J. Woronoff's book: "Once in college, students can slack off. And most do, for virtually everyone who gets into college can graduate unless they voluntarily drop out or die. There are few tests, and most of them are fairly easy, there are not many term papers, and nearly anything turned in is accepted, and there are no serious examinations to graduate." (Woronoff 1997)

This situation is quietly acknowledged and accepted by students, teachers and the parents who are paying for it. Even the former Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Nakasone, referred to Japanese colleges as "leisure land." (Woronoff 1997) After years of preparing for the grueling exams to enter university, many feel justified in "taking it easy" for two to four years. "After examination hell, they get as close to heaven as most Japanese ever achieve. Students tend to pick easier faculties, liberal arts or humanities rather than engineering and science and, within these, they often choose easier courses or professors. Even then, many of them don't bother attending classes, handing in papers or taking tests." (Woronoff 1997)

Indeed, many students are quite unabashed concerning their lackadaisical attitudes towards studying and in general the teachers do not seem to mind. "... according to their professors, many of them (students) are really broken in mind and spirit and too amorphous to absorb much learning and many colleges need the tuition fees to survive." (Woronoff 1997)

Though this may seem a shocking description of the state of "higher education" in Japan, after almost ten years teaching in the system, I can readily concur with Mr. Woronoff's view. Situations vary from school to school, but in general the above description is quite accurate. Adherence to attendance rules is not strongly enforced and I am very strongly encouraged not to fail students, especially seniors. On the rare occasion when I have found it just too farcical to pass a "phantom" student, I have been required to repeatedly give the "offending" student as many opportunities as needed to pass. Universities are primarily a business and the students and parents expect to get what they have paid for. "As one Kyoto University graduate, now a university professor himself said: '...Japanese colleges and universities today are not expected to educate. Their only function in society is to sort and classify students through their entrance exams and, four years later, send them out into the world with the school's brand stamped on them.' (Woronoff 1997)

So how does this above described "education system" affect the students entering university level English language courses? The Japanese education system, elementary through high school, focuses primarily on mathematics, hard sciences and written test taking skills. English, unfortunately, is generally taught as if it were a "soft science," focusing primarily on the grammar and structures of the language. It is sort of like

dissecting it into component parts and examining them closely. The main aim of Japanese English classes is to prepare the students for the written questions on entrance exams.

As a result, after six years of English study, in junior and senior high school, many students have a fairly large vocabulary and a quite good understanding of grammar but a very low speaking ability. In addition, after years of preparing for college entrance exams they have somewhat diminished "social skills" and a general dislike for learning in general. "... as they begin preparing for examinations...social skills are stunted. Pupils see ever less of their friends, meet and play together less. While there is some limited social life at school, there is very little mixing with other children of their age through clubs, sports teams or Scouting. Even personal interests, like playing musical instruments or collecting stamps, suffer. Leisure consists mainly of watching television, playing video games, reading comics and dozing-most often alone." (Woronoff 1997) In general, the students entering my freshman university classes are tired loners looking for their perceived well earned respite from learning. They are all too aware that the system is designed to permit this "vacation" and they feel no remorse or regret about the situation. It is a firmly entrenched scenario that the schools, students and parents are not overly interested in altering.

CHAPTER 4

INSIGHTS AND SOLUTIONS

During my first few years teaching in the Japanese university system, I made the same error that many of my colleagues made. I mistakenly carried with me, into class, my ethnocentric western ideals of college education; that university is the pinnacle of the learning process and that students should study harder than they have at the preceding levels of learning. This Western bias applied to this Eastern reality was, as it is with many foreign teachers, unsuccessful. I insisted on attendance, gave homework, quizzes and in general attempted to get my students to advance systematically towards a higher level of fluency. I tried an extensive variety of textbooks and methods that were available and stayed up late many nights trying to find some way to motivate my students to be interested in and improve their language and cross cultural learning skills. I was not successful and found myself bemoaning the inability of my students to improve their language skills with my fellow teachers. I literally made myself sick, very sick. I can honestly say that it almost killed me.

It was during this time that I attended The School For International Training. It was a last ditch effort before a possible drastic career change. I was looking for a different approach to teaching, something new and relevant that would engage my students in their own learning. It seemed like a tall order. I was looking for a system of

teaching which was effective in language learning, cross cultural training and was interesting and stimulating enough to engage apathetic Japanese college students.

SOLUTION:

During the interim year of my SMAT course, while planning for a culture class project, I came up with an idea that seemed to fit all the requirements. I devised what I thought was an interesting course in language and culture learning which also involved a personal interest in photography.

As with so many other language teachers in Japan, I often wondered what my students were really interested in and what was going on in their lives. I supposed that if I followed some of them all day with a camera recording their places, friends, activities, problems and such that I would probably get a better understanding of their lives and interests. This was, however, a very impractical solution.

The obvious and safer alternative was to give the cameras to the students and let them record their own lives the way they see them. Giving the students simple, inexpensive, easily obtained, recyclable cameras, I had them record on film a variety of common themes from their personal lives. These self-generated student photos would then be used as the base materials for the language/culture course and would be the backbone of the students' personal self made "textbooks."

In my previous years of teaching, I had used a variety of textbooks and materials. Some were fairly good and many were not very good at all. In general, my students and I found the materials to be aimed at too wide an audience and too impersonal and irrelevant to specific classes and individuals. By using personal photographs, I felt the

students would have a collection of materials which were directly connected with their personal lives and hence, much more interesting and relevant to them.

Cognitive research in Second Language Acquisition has shown the effective connection between relevancy and learning. H. Douglas Brown summarizes David Ausbel's cognitive theory as "learning takes place in the human organism through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to previously existing cognitive pegs." (H. Douglas Brown 1980) The students have an obvious emotional investment in their photographs. This emotional connection leads to a higher motivation than with exercises that are connected with some imaginary characters in generic textbooks. In *The Tapestry of Language Learning*, Scarella's and Oxford's definition of motivation includes, "Interest based on background knowledge and experience, and relevance." (Scarcella and Oxford 1992) They also say that, "Motivation encourages greater overall effort on the language learner and typically results in greater success in terms of global language proficiency." (Scarcella and Oxford 1992) The relevancy of the students' photos is obvious and the motivation, which comes from them, is very high.

As it was my desire to create a course, which included a component on cultural learning, the use of photographs was also ideal. According to Louise Damen, "Learning how to learn about a new culture is the primary skill needed for effective inter cultural communication." (Damen 1987)) For students in ESL programs, there are many opportunities to practice intercultural communication with native speakers. In the EFL context in Japan, the options are limited by the small number of foreigners residing in the country. I feel that using their own personal cultures, as their "laboratory," is the best way for the students to develop their abilities to learn about culture and themselves.

Again, according to Ms. Damen, "An important first step in developing cross cultural awareness and inter cultural communicative skills is to know yourself." (Damen 1987) My premise was that if the students, using photographs of their own personal cultures, could "learn how to learn" about themselves and their culture, they would then have the skills needed to better learn another culture. This theory is supported by Corinne Mantle-Bromley's Preparing Students for Meaningful Culture Learning where she states "Students must become aware of their own culture-bound behaviors before they can realistically observe others' behaviors non-judgmentally." (Mantle-Bromley 1992)

An important issue to be resolved, after language and culture learning, is getting the "leisure land" apathetic students interested and engaged in their learning. My many years in Japan and my many years of frustration with teaching eventually taught me the way. As mentioned earlier, carrying my ethnocentric views on "university level" instruction had born few satisfying results. After years of disappointment, I realized I had to drop these "Western" ideals in my approach to teaching in Japan. My freshman Japanese university students, having recently survived years of preparation for "examination hell," were absolutely uninterested in any form of traditional learning. They were survivors, who felt entitled to their "four year holiday" which was, for all intents and purposes, mandated by the system.

I finally accepted that it is not my education system and that I alone am not going to change a deeply embedded system, which the Japanese are not overly interested in changing themselves. So be it. If it's fun that will spark their interest, then give them fun.

I find the Japanese to be very visually oriented people. There is no place on the planet where computer games are so popular as they are in Japan. In Japan, the appearance and presentation of food is as important as the taste. Also, anyone who has traveled and seen Japanese tour groups in motion cannot deny their penchant for photography. With these points in mind, the use of cameras seemed an ideal means of sparking student interest.

Thus, on day one of the course, I explain to the students that there will be no standard textbook and that they will be using photography to create their own personal textbooks. In general, there is always a positive and energetic response by the students. They very much enjoy taking their photographs and enjoy even more looking at and discussing their photographs with each other-in English.

CHAPTER 5

COURSE DESIGN

The university academic year in Japan is divided into two semesters of approximately twelve to fourteen weeks each. Classes are ninety minutes and these particular classes meet once a week, meaning the students have at least twenty-four class meetings or thirty-six hours in class.

There is no required text for this course. The students create their own texts through their photos, drawings, writings, and handouts provided by the teacher. The students are expected to have bilingual dictionaries, a folder for their text and to contribute 500 yen, approximately four US dollars, towards the shared expense of a disposable camera and developing.

Each student and the teacher are to take personal photographs of the following:

1. Their house or apartment,
2. Their room,
3. Their best friend,
4. Something they want
5. Something typically Japanese,
6. Something that is a problem for them.

Students and teacher are also asked to bring in photos of their families and a photo of themselves from at least two years earlier. The students are placed in groups of four or five members with one camera per group. The cultural subjects chosen for the photos are, I believe, areas of common interest to the students and also are topics they are likely to discuss with their peers in the target culture.

I chose the topics for their familiarity and potential for a wide range of English language and cultural study. I decided against allowing the students to choose their own topics because of the potential for an unmanageable variety of subjects. I believe the topics chosen are fairly general and give the individual a wide range for interpretation and structure.

FIRST SEMESTER OVERVIEW:

During the course of the first twelve-week semester, the students take turns having the camera for one week to record their six personal photographs. After one week, the students pass the camera on to the next member of their group. Also, in classes of the first semester, the students will focus on learning and using the vocabulary and structures necessary to discuss their photos. The length of the term allows for about two lessons per photo topic. In pairs or small and large groups, the students develop vocabulary lists and work on exercises in grammatical usage. Lessons involving visualizations, role-plays, drawings, surveys and listening and writing exercises help implant what they are learning.

Teacher's Role:

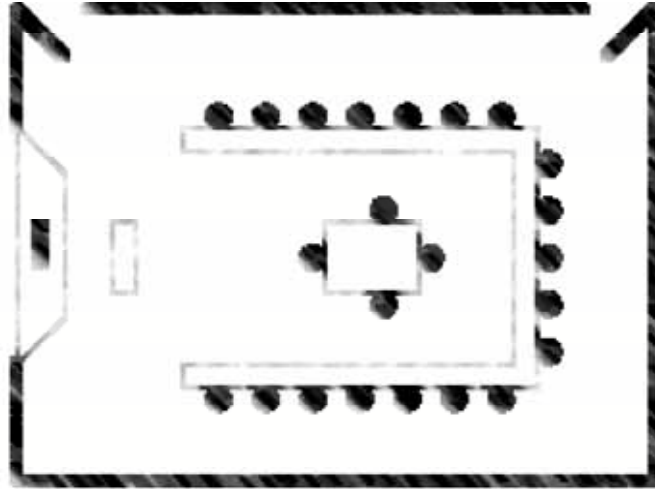
An effective teacher, especially one, using self-awareness techniques in the classroom, must wear many hats to create an effective and secure environment for the students. In the culture classes at SIT, Professor Patrick Moran mentioned four roles of a teacher; informant, model, co-researcher/guide and counselor. In the first semester of this course, all four of the above roles come into play, but the emphasis is more on informant and model. Students coming through the Japanese educational system are generally accustomed to seeing the teacher as an informant. In general, as the students

enter college, they are used to and comfortable with the scenario of "teacher talks-students listen." This "comfort" can be used effectively in the first semester as the students are learning the vocabulary, grammar and structures needed to discuss the photos they are taking. This is not to say that the students will be receiving "more of the same" that they have had in school up to now. In reality, during the first semester, the students are slowly weaned from this old fashioned approach and slowly brought to the point of taking more personal responsibility for their learning.

As the school year opens, the scenario is a room of twenty to thirty shy students who do not know each other or the teacher. It is my experience in Japan, that unless the students get to know and feel comfortable with each other and the teacher in the first few weeks then the whole year will be a fruitless struggle. For this reason, in the opening weeks of the first semester, much time needs to be spent on familiarizing the class with each other and with the teacher. The use of pair, small group and whole class exercises help facilitate this process.

The design of the room is also an important variable in creating a secure environment. The students should feel comfortable and not isolated. The standard arrangement of rows of desks is unsuitable. Having a conventional classroom with movable desks, I have found the following arrangement effective:

DIAGRAM OF ROOM ARRANGEMENT



This configuration allows the students to work in pairs, small groups and large groups. The centre table can be used for representatives from each group to sit and present their group findings with the remaining students circled around them. The students also feel that they are in a group and can make eye contact with their peers.

SECOND SEMESTER OVERVIEW:

During the first semester, the students each have one week to take the aforementioned six photos. When the groups of four students have finished taking their pictures, the films are developed and the photos turned over to the teachers. In the second half of the year, the students will have their photos returned to them one at a time. If the students are allowed to hold on to their own photos, they will undoubtedly share them with their classmates or possibly lose them. Many activities of the second semester require that the students not be familiar with their classmates' photos. With the addition of the family photos and "younger self" photos, the students have a total of eight photos to work with during the second semester. Because the students work with most of the photos twice, once in each semester, there is a built in recycling of material. Whereas

course work in the first semester is based on developing vocabulary and grammar skills, the second semester emphasizes discussions of the photos and work on self-awareness of personal culture and the target culture.

Teacher's Role:

If in the first semester, the teacher's roles are primarily informant and model, in the second semester there is more focus on the teacher as co-researcher/guide and counselor. In the second semester, the students' photos become the centre of class work. The students' personal lives are put on display. At this point, the teacher's role as counselor is important, as this can be rather unnerving for some students in a culture where the people are quite shy and reluctant about sharing personal information.

The fact that the teacher also shares his or her own photos on the same topics is very important. The reality of the teacher showing and talking about photos from his/her life has a strong reassuring effect on the students. It models an essential openness and honesty based on trust and helps create a classroom community of which the teacher is a part. In addition, the presentation of the photos does not occur until the second semester and by then the students have been working together for over three months. The benefit of having this period of time together before exposing themselves is noted in R. Michael Paige's "On the Nature of Inter cultural Experiences and Inter cultural Education," "Learning activities which require a considerable degree of personal disclosure should come later in the sequence, after less challenging activities have been used and when an atmosphere of trust and comfort has been established in the learning group." (Paige 1993) Even with the comfort levels, which result from shared time and the teacher and fellow students disclosing personal information, some students might still feel uncomfortable at

this stage. It is important at this stage for the teacher to keep in mind his or her role as a counselor to help any student who is feeling discomfort.

It is also during the second semester that the cultural component of the course is most apparent. Ideally, the teacher should be modeling photos of his or her home culture as well as photos taken in the students' culture. Hence, the teacher is showing how he or she lived in his or her home country as well as how he or she is living in the students' country. It is at this stage that the teacher's role is model, informant and co-researcher/guide. As informant, he/she provides the students with a foreigner's view and experience through his/her photos. Demonstrating how a foreigner relates these views and experiences in a culturally appropriate manner puts the teacher in the role of model. By directing and participating in discussions, the teacher becomes both co-researcher and guide.

FIRST SEMESTER SYLLABUS:

Week One:

The first class meeting should be an informal affair that sets the mood and form of the entire year. It is important to quickly let the students know that this class will not be like any other they have experienced. They should feel that this class is casual, interesting, productive, helpful and fun. As the students are for the most part shy and do not know the other students or the teacher, the majority of the class is spent on letting the students get to know each other and their teacher. A variety of activities are possible. In general, I have the students introduce themselves to each other, telling where they are from, their hobbies and interests, about their families and so forth.

After they have had time to get to know each other, I place the students in groups and ask them to imagine my life, that is, the life of their teacher. Each group then presents their imagined life story of the teacher. I confirm, deny and explain the results. I usually then ask the students why they are studying English and what benefit it can have to them. I usually follow this with a short talk on the benefits of language skills for finding work, making friends and travel. I often show slides of countries they can visit and talk about how interesting they are, how cheaply they can travel through them and how much English can help them more thoroughly enjoy their trips.

The last portion of the class is dedicated to assigning the students to groups, having them choose captains and exchanging phone numbers. I then explain about the class and the use of the cameras. The students are told what materials they are expected to have and bring to class every week. The captain is then assigned the task of purchasing the camera and is given the first week to take his or her six photos. If there are no questions, the class is dismissed.

Week Two:

In the second week of the semester, the format of the course is reviewed to make sure the students understand what is happening. The "captains" of each group are then asked if they have purchased the cameras and taken their photos. Other group members then reimburse the captain for their share of the costs. The camera is then passed to the second group member.

The students are each given a small blank piece of paper and asked to write down six topics they would like to discuss this year. They are encouraged to choose any topic of interest to them. Some examples, such as; part time job, hobby, recent films are given.

The papers are collected and six topics are chosen at random from the papers and written on the board. One die is then given to a student and he/she is instructed to throw it. The student is told that the topic which coincides with the number he/she rolls will be the topic for a short ten minute free conversation warm up period. The students are told that this will be the format for the first ten minutes of each class meeting. The die is thrown and the students then have ten minutes to discuss the topic with their partners, in English. The students are told to not use dictionaries or Japanese and to just speak as best they can. There is no grading or evaluation of any kind. The teacher keeps the papers to choose six new topics each week.

At the end of the ten minutes, the teacher may, if time allows, ask questions to individual students about their partner's answers.

The subject of the second week is; directions.

Learning to give directions is a common subject in most textbooks and language courses. However, in this course, the personal relevancy is stressed and enhanced by the connection to the students' own homes and neighborhoods that are subjects of the photos they take. The students are told that they are learning how to describe to others the directions to their own homes.

1. First, the students are told about the necessity of knowing how to give and receive directions while traveling. A generic "city map" is handed out on which is written the following vocabulary and structures:

walk up, walk down, walk along

turn right, turn left

you will see

on the left, on the right

next to, across from, between, near to, far from

2. Students are asked about their understanding of the vocabulary and dictionaries may be used until all the words are understood.
3. Students are asked to write how to get from a point A on the map to a point B.
4. Students compare their answers with a partner.
5. Teacher then solicits answers from students.
6. Teacher gives correct answers of how to go from point A to B using the given vocabulary.
7. Students write directions for three to four more "journeys" using the generic map and the vocabulary.
8. Students check answers with their group members.
9. Students do oral pair work, asking and giving directions between points on the city map.
10. Teacher shows students a map of the teacher's neighborhood.
11. Students are asked to draw a similar map of their neighborhoods.
12. Teacher explains directions from his/her house to different points in the neighborhood.
13. Students are solicited to ask teacher for directions in the teacher's neighborhood.
14. Students, in pairs, ask and give directions related to their neighborhoods.
15. Students are given time to talk about their neighborhoods with group members.

(English not required)

16. Teacher moves around room, commenting on maps and neighborhoods and asking questions and directions in English.

17. Homework for week three:

Students are asked to write out directions for more point A to point B journeys.

They are also asked to make a list, in English, of things in their rooms that fall into three categories: furniture, electrical items and decorations.

If there are no questions, the class is dismissed.

Week Three:

The subject of the third week is students' homes; descriptions and locations.

This week's lesson involves a variety of tasks, which the students find enjoyable. In addition to speaking, listening and writing exercises, the students are also physically moving about the classroom and involved in drawing activities.

1. Cameras are passed to the third group member.
2. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
3. Students, in pairs, compare homework answers from city map.
4. Teacher models correct answers for homework assignment.
5. Students do a listening activity based on the city map. In this activity, the teacher orally gives directions from one point on the city map to another. The students should follow on their maps.
6. Students are handed pieces of paper with names such as; bookstore, gas station, café.
7. The aisles of the room are given street names. In an exercise I call "Human City," the teacher asks a student for directions from one location to another and then walks through

the directions in the Human City. After modeling the exercise, a student is chosen to ask another student for directions from one location to another.

8. Students are given handouts with a hand drawn picture of the teacher's house and the following vocabulary:

old, new, _____ years old

wood, brick, metal, stone, plastic, glass, concrete

one story, two story, three story

white, black, brown, green, red.....

first floor, second floor, third floor

Japanese style, Western style, Japanese and Western style

9. Teacher asks the students if they understand the vocabulary and dictionaries are used until all the words are understood.

10. Teacher writes on the board a description of his/her house.

Example: I live in an old, two story, brown and white, wood, Japanese style house.

11. Students are then asked to draw a picture of their houses and write a brief description of them.

12. Students are given time to discuss their pictures with group members.

(English not required.)

13. Teacher moves around room, commenting on houses and asking questions in English.

14. Teacher then shows a series of pictures of buildings from magazines and asks students to describe them.

15. Teacher then shows his/her neighborhood map and house picture and writes on board:

I live in an old, two story, brown and white, wood, Japanese style house, across from a temple.

16. Students then write a description of their house and its location.

17. Students then ask their partners for a description of their houses and its location.

18. Finally, students are given a worksheet with pictures depicting prepositions. The pictures show a ball in different positions in relation to a box. In groups, the students are asked to write the preposition for each picture. Examples of these would be: the ball is *below* the box, the ball is *next to* the box, the ball is *in* the box. Students are told that they will need this worksheet in the subsequent lessons.

19. Homework for week four:

Students are asked to cut a picture out of a magazine of a building, any building.

Students are also asked to draw a map of their personal rooms on an A-4 sized piece of paper. (See attachment 1)

If there are no questions, class is dismissed.

Week Four:

The subject of the fourth week is personal room.

In week four's lesson, the students are discussing their personal rooms. As student rooms in Japan are usually quite small, students do not usually visit each other rooms much.

This fact results in the students having a very high level of interest in this week's topic.

This lesson also introduces the use of the Dengon Game. This is a highly popular game

in Japan that I have adapted for use in the classroom. The format of this game, which is explained below in the lesson plan, involves a lot of physical activity for the students.

1. Cameras are passed to the fourth group member.
2. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
3. Students are given a brief oral review of directions using the city map. The teacher may use a variety of tasks such as asking students to perform dialogues in front of the class, of asking for and giving directions or having the students do these activities in pairs at their desks.
4. Students are asked to take out their homework; magazine pictures of buildings.
5. Students are told to write descriptions of their pictures based on last week's exercise of describing buildings by; age-height-color-material-style-type. For example: a very old, two story, brown and white, wood, Japanese style house.
6. Teacher collects students' pictures and places them on tables at the back of the room. Teacher asks one third of the students to come to the front of the room with their descriptions. Teacher then asks another third of the students to take their descriptions and stand in front of the first group of students. Teacher then asks the last third of the class to take their descriptions and stand in front of the other students. The final positioning should be three rows of students. What follows is known in Japan as the **Dengon Game**. In this variation of the Japanese game, the first student reads the description of his/her picture to the student in front of him or her. The second student must remember the description and repeat it to the third student who must then go and find the picture and return with it. If the third student returns with the wrong picture, he or she must ask why it is wrong. The first student must reply; for example: "That

building is too old." or "That building is too tall." The third student returns again till the correct picture is found. Before the game begins, the teacher models the exercise once or twice with two of the stronger students of the class. Once the first line has successfully completed the task, students change positions and repeat the process.

Finally, the third line completes the process.

7. Students are then told that they will next be discussing their rooms and asked to take out their lists describing the furniture, electrical items and decorations in their rooms, the A-4 size map of their rooms and the preposition worksheets.

8. A map of the teacher's personal room is drawn on the board along with this dialogue:

A. Do you have a _____?

B. Yes, I do.

No, I don't.

A. Where is it?

B. It is _____, _____. (two prepositional phrases)

Teacher selects one student to come to the board and model the exercise with the teacher.

The student assumes the role of person A and the teacher the role of person B.

9. Students are told that person B should always use two prepositional phrases to explain the location of items for example, *on the desk, next to the lamp*.

10. Student A asks Teacher B: Do you have a _____. (Stereo)

Teacher B responds: Yes, I do.

Student A asks: Where is it?

Teacher B responds: It is first preposition, second preposition. (on the desk, next to the lamp.) Student A then writes the name of the item in the space on the map of the

teacher's room. The process continues until all items have been written in on the teacher's room map.

11. Teacher then instructs the students to do the same process with partners and then reverse the process so that both partners have a chance to ask questions and answer them using the correct form.

12. Students are given time to discuss their room maps with group members.

(English not required.)

13. Teacher moves around room, commenting on room maps and asking questions in English.

14. Students are told that they will be discussing their best friends the following week.

15. Homework for week five:

Students are asked to write a description of their best friends, including: age, height, weight, hair, face, eyes and personality.

If there are no questions, class is dismissed.

Week Five:

The subject of the fifth week is a students' best friend.

By week five, the students have had a month to get to know each other and the teacher.

By now their comfort level with each other and the teacher should be apparent. This week's lesson incorporates reading, writing and listening tasks in addition to a drawing exercise which the students tend to enjoy very much. The group discussion about "ideal boys and girls" is usually a very lively exercise in which students' responses are very spontaneous.

1. Photo taking should be completed by this week. If any students have not completed their work, due to illness or absence, another week is given. If all photos are finished, the captain is instructed to have all the photographs developed and printed. Captains should then give the developed pictures to the teacher to hold. If the students keep their own photographs and show them to classmates, certain later exercises would be compromised. There is also the chance that students might lose photographs.

2. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.

3. Students are given a brief review of prepositions with a work sheet.

4. Students are asked to take out their homework; descriptions of best friends.

5. Teacher asks students sample questions about their friends to activate schema.

How old is your best friend? How tall is your best friend?

6. Teacher reads description of his/her best friend to class.

7. Teacher elicits any information students have retained.

8. Teacher gives students a handout of the description of the teacher's best friend.

Teacher asks students to circle on the handout: age, height, weight, hair, face, eyes and personality of Teacher's best friend.

Teacher asks about the age, height, weight, hair, face, eyes and personality of the teacher's best friend. Students respond orally.

9. Teacher asks students to re-write their description of their best friends based on the handout given describing the Teacher's best friend.

10. In pairs; students ask their partners to describe their best friends and then attempt to draw a picture of the friend.

11. Students are given time to discuss their drawings with group members.

(English not required.)

12. Teacher moves around room, commenting on drawings and asking questions in English.
13. Teacher then elicits adjectives of personality the students chose to describe their friends and writes them on the board. If the list is limited or repetitive, teacher may add a few from his/her description to round out the list.
14. Students are asked to copy the list of adjectives and use their dictionaries and write the Japanese definitions.
15. Students are placed in all male and all female groups. Male groups are asked to write down a description of the ideal girl and the female groups are asked to write down a description of the ideal male.
16. Teacher elicits groups' answers and marks them on the board.
17. Class discusses group answers.
18. Homework for week six:
Students are asked to cut out a picture of a person from a magazine and bring for next week.
If there are no questions, class is dismissed.

Week Six:

The subject of the sixth week is review for a mid-term test.

In this week's lesson, students devote the entire ninety minutes to preparing for the following week's mid-term test. As "at home studying" is not overly prevalent with students, this week's work is very beneficial for many in the class. To keep the students motivated and "on task," a Dengon Game segment is included in the lesson.

1. Photo taking should definitely be completed by this week. The teacher collects the developed pictures.

2. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.

3. Students are asked to take out the magazine pictures they brought for homework.

Students are asked to write physical descriptions of their homework pictures based on last week's work.

4. Students' pictures are collected and placed on tables at the back of the room.

5. Students are then placed in groups of three at the front of the room and told that they will now take part in another round of **Dengon Game**.

Dengon Game that was described in week four, begins.

Dengon Game is completed.

6. Students are given a crossword puzzle that uses the adjectives of personality from last week's class. Students complete the puzzles and compare their answers with their partners.

7. Students are given a practice worksheet to help them prepare for next week's quiz.

8. Teacher reviews answers for worksheet.

9. Students are told that next week's quiz will cover:

Directions, Building Descriptions, Prepositions of Place and Physical Descriptions and their Adjectives of Personality.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Seven:

The subject of the seventh week is the mid-term quiz.

Week seven is devoted to the mid-term test. It is a writing test, which checks the students' knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar and structures they have been working on to this point in the term. As it is the first test of the year, it is of a type that the students are familiar with from their high school days. The most important difference is, after individually finishing the test; the students immediately retake the test with their group members. It is hoped that through this process, the students will not immediately forget what they have studied and that the stronger students will assist the weaker students in the areas of the test on which they did poorly. The homework assignment of this week is a reflection paper, which encourages the class members to look back on what they have done so far in the term. It also gives the students a chance to give the teacher feedback on how they feel about the course and to give suggestions to the teacher. This is part of the ongoing attempt to make the students feel a sense of responsibility for what they are learning.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Students are given some time to ask of each other or the teacher, questions to prepare for the quiz. (English not required)
3. Quiz is given.
4. Students exchange papers and the quiz is graded in class.

Teacher elicits answers from students and encourages students to ask if slightly different answers are acceptable. Students need to learn that contrary to much of what they have learned in their schooling, there is NOT just one correct answer for every question.

Students should try to argue their points in English.

5. After the grading is completed, the quizzes are collected by the teacher to enter in the grade book.
6. Teacher then gives each group another copy of the test and asks them to complete it as a group. (English is recommended)
7. Teacher finishes entering grades and returns quizzes to the students.

Students are asked to check their mistakes against the group test and encouraged to discuss their mistakes and correct answers with their group members. This activity helps the students more fully understand their errors.

8. Homework for Week Eight:

Students are asked to write a letter to the teacher describing what they have learned so far in the semester and how they feel about what they have learned. Students are told that it will not be graded and that they should feel free to say whatever they feel about the course and what they have experienced so far.

Students are told that next week's subject will be: something they want.

If there are no questions, class is dismissed.

Week Eight:

The subject of the eighth week is: something you want.

The four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are involved in week eight's lesson plan. In addition, the students are introduced to the game of Twenty questions.

This game is effectively used in a very enjoyable task, which has the students quickly using the language they study in this lesson.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Students' homework is collected.

3. Students are told that they will be talking about things that they want.

Random students are asked what they want and why. (English Required)

4. Teacher tells students what he/she wants and why.

5. Teacher reads a description of thing he/she wants.

Teacher then elicits any information students retain from the reading.

6. Teacher then gives students a handout describing the thing the teacher wants.

Students are asked to circle the size, shape, color, material and use of the wanted item.

Student handout also includes vocabulary for describing the above characteristics of size, shape, color and material as well as gerunds and infinitives to describe use. (See attachment 2) Students' knowledge of vocabulary is checked and dictionaries used until vocabulary is understood.

7. The use and differences of gerunds and infinitives is explained. for writing to write

8. Students are asked to write a description of the things they want, including descriptions for: size, shape, color, material and use.

9. Teacher holds up items such as stapler, pen, notebook and elicits answers to two types of questions:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1a. What shape is it? | 1b. Is it round? |
| 2a. What material is it? | 2b. Is it made of wood? |
| 3a. What color is it? | 3b. Is it red? |
| 4a. What size is it? | 4b. Is it large? |
| 5a. What's it used for? | 5b. Is it used for writing? |

10. The game of "Twenty Questions" is then explained to the students. The use of only yes-no questions is emphasized.

One student comes to the front of the room.

Teacher whispers the name of an item to the student; for example a Walkman.

Class then asks the student yes-no questions to try and guess the item.

For example: "Is it rectangular?" "Is it made of plastic?" "Is it used for playing?"

The class member who guesses the item then comes to the front of the class and is given another item for the class members to guess. Three rounds of this activity usually prove to be a sufficient amount of practice.

11. In pairs, students ask each other questions about the thing they want and then attempt to draw it. For example: "Is your thing round?" "Is it made of wood?" "Is it red?"

12. Students are given time to discuss the things they want with group members.

(English not required, but recommended)

13. Teacher moves around room, commenting on things students want and asking questions in English.

Students are told that they will be discussing their problems the following week.

14. Homework for week nine:

Students are asked to bring a small item from home. Anything is okay.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Nine:

The subject of the ninth week is: problems.

Week nine is a very active and enjoyable lesson for the students. In addition to using the Dengon Game to review last week's material, the students also take part in what I call a

Walkabout. In this exercise, the students move about the classroom putting into practice this week's material in short conversations with class members who are not part of their group.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Students are told to take out their homework items. Teacher collects them quickly and places them on tables at the back of the room.
3. Students are asked to write descriptions of their items from memory, using terms describing size, shape, color, material and use.

Students are again organized for **Dengon Game**.

Dengon Game is completed.

4. Students are told that they will be discussing problems.
5. Teacher tells the students a few of his/her problem and elicits advice.
6. Teacher gives students a handout with modals that are used for giving advice. For example: must, have to, should, ought to, and had better. The use of modals is explained to the class.
7. Teacher plays an audiotape of two people discussing their problems. Teacher elicits from students, any of the problems they heard and the advice. Tape is played two or three times.
8. Teacher then gives the students a handout with the tapes-script dialogue and asks the students to circle the problems and the advice. Students check their answers with partners. Teacher checks the answers.
9. Teacher elicits any other possible advice for the tape-script problems.

10. Teacher asks student pairs to write a short dialogue asking how someone is; hearing of a problem and then offering advice.

For Example: Hi Hiroshi, how are you doing?

Not so good!

Really, what's the matter?

I've got a toothache.

Oh, that's too bad, you should go to a dentist.

11. Students practice with their partners.

12. Teacher asks students to write three problems on a piece of paper. Anything is acceptable. Students are then told to stand up with their name cards and their three problems to take part in the exercise "**WALKABOUT**".

In this exercise, students are told to walk around the room and engage in dialogue with three separate students. They are to ask how the other student is doing and then offer advice. When students have finished the "Walkabout," they are told to leave their dialogue papers at their desks and to repeat the exercise and talk with and offer advice to three students without the aid of their notes.

13. No Homework.

Students are told that next week's topic will be typical Japanese things.

If there are no questions, the class is dismissed.

Week Ten:

The subject of the tenth week is: something typically Japanese.

By week ten, students and teacher should all be feeling quite comfortable with each other. The students have spent over two months together and have discussed many fairly

personal topics with each other and the teacher. This "comfortable familiarity" is essential now as the class begins to delve into the deeper and more personal aspects of individual and group culture. In this week's lesson, the students are asked to look at themselves and honestly say how "Japanese" they are. This can be a very interesting but also a potentially un-nerving task in a culture where the proverb; "The nail that sticks up, is hammered down." is deeply felt. For this reason, the teacher must be very attentive to any student who shows signs of being uncomfortable. By the end of the lesson, it is hoped that all students have seen how unique they are individually .The lesson finishes off with a game of Twenty Questions which serves to help take some of the edge off any heaviness which may emerge.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Students are told that they will be talking about something typically Japanese.
3. Students are asked; "How many of you consider yourselves to be typical Japanese?"
(In the first year of asking this; approximately 90% of the students said they were typical Japanese. In each year following, the percentage has been declining.)
4. Students are then asked; "How many of you want to be considered typical Japanese?"
(The response to this question has always been just slightly less than the first question.)
5. Students are then asked: "What is a typical Japanese?"

In their groups, they are asked to write, in English, a description of a typical Japanese college freshman. They are asked to cover the topics they have previously discussed: kind of house, kind of room, possessions, height, weight, hair, face, eyes, personality, what they want, problems, and anything else they think of, such as hobbies, free time and so on. Two students in each group keep record of their answers.

6. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on the lists and asking questions in English.
7. Teacher then asks one person from each group to take one of the lists and move to another group. Students are told to compare their lists. "Ambassador Students" return to their "home" groups to report on similarities and differences.
8. Teacher elicits from class the similarities and differences.
9. Teacher then asks: "How many of you NOW think you are typical Japanese?"
(Percentage is always noticeably lower than the previous report.)
10. Teacher tells students what he/she thinks is typically Japanese.
11. Teacher asks students what they think of the teacher's ideas of what is a typical Japanese.
12. Teacher then asks students to write a description of their typical Japanese thing using words to describe size, shape, color, material and use.
13. Teacher then chooses one student to come to the front of the room to lead Twenty Questions. Students ask questions as in week eight. For example "Is it round? Is it made of wood?" Students play two or three rounds of the game.
14. Students return to their desks and in groups, discuss their choices of typical Japanese things.
15. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on the choices and asking questions in English.

Students are told that next week's topic will be review for semester final quiz and talking about themselves.
16. Homework for week eleven:

Students are asked to remember to bring the photo of themselves in younger years.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Eleven:

The subject of the eleventh week is "younger selves" and review of semester's work.

As the next week is the final week of the term and the exam, week eleven is the last class in which the students have a significant amount of interaction with each other and the teacher. This week's lesson follows up on the previous week's work of self- reflection. In this lesson, students will discuss what they were like when they were younger. The lesson begins with the teacher modeling the openness and honesty needed for the task. In the course of the lesson, students will use the four skills and will also take part in another round of the Dengon Game.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Students are asked to take out their photos of their younger selves.
3. Teacher gives students a handout with Xeroxed photos of the teacher at different stages of his/her life. Next to the photos are examples of adverbial phrases and clauses such as:

"When I was in college, I was much heavier." "Ten years ago, I had much more hair on my head."

4. Selected students are asked to read the sentences next to the pictures aloud.
5. Students are allowed to make comments or ask questions, in English, about the younger teacher.
6. Teacher then explains adverbial phrases and clauses, for example: When I was a college student... After I finished high school..., Before I came to Japan...,

7. Teacher calls on selected students and asks them to make adverbial phrases or clauses about themselves, for example: During my first year of high school, I had short hair.
When I was a junior high school student, I was very short.
 8. Students are then told to write at least four or five phrases and clauses about themselves based on the photos they have brought.
 9. Students' pictures are collected and placed on tables at the back of the room.
 10. Students are organized for **Dengon Game**. Student A reads sentences such as; "When I was in junior high school, I had short hair." "Four years ago, I was much shorter." Student B must remember and repeat to Student C who then goes to find the picture. Dengon Game is completed.
 11. Students return to their seats and in groups, discuss their younger self photos.
 12. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on the choices and asking questions in English.
 13. Teacher gives students a review sheet handout covering the materials they have worked on so far in the course. The handout has two types of exercises. One has written questions based on the topics the students have worked on in the previous weeks, for example; house, best friend, problems and typical Japanese things. The second type of exercise incorporates oral questions, on the same topics, which students take turns asking each other in pairs.
 14. After students finish review sheet, teacher checks answers.
 15. Students are told about next week's test.
- No Homework other than studying for next week's test.
- If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Twelve:

The subject of the twelfth week is the final exam.

This is the final class meeting of the first semester. In this class, the students will take a written-exam that covers the vocabulary, structures and grammar of the first term's work. After taking the exam, the students will retake the test in groups to better understand what they have learned so far in the school year. At the end of the class, the students are given time to express their feelings on any aspect of the class and to offer suggestions for the second term.

1. No ten-minute free conversation practice this day.
2. Students are given some time to ask questions to prepare for the exam of each other or the teacher. (English not required)
3. Exam is given.
4. Students exchange papers and the test is graded in class.
5. Teacher elicits answers from students and encourages students to ask if slightly different answers are acceptable.
6. After grading is completed, all the tests are collected by the teacher and entered in the grade book.
7. Teacher then gives each group another copy of the exam and asks them to complete it as a group. (English is recommended)
8. Teacher finishes entering grades and returns exams to the students.
9. Students are asked to check their mistakes against the group test.
10. Students are asked to write a letter to the teacher describing what they have learned so far in the semester and how they feel about what they have learned. Students are told

that it will not be graded and that they should feel free to say what ever they feel about the course and what they have experienced so far.

If there are no questions, class is dismissed until the second semester.

SECOND SEMESTER:

Week One Term Two:

The subject of the first week is "Welcome Back" and House and Room.

The first class of the second semester is a casual return to the learning environment they left two months earlier. Students re-familiarize themselves with their classmates and teacher through discussions of their holidays. They then re-activate their knowledge of last semester's work by retaking the final test from the first semester. To help them regain their group familiarity, a group project based on this week's topic (house and room) is used. In this task, the groups design "the ideal student apartment." This is a drawing exercise that is always very popular with the students. In addition to allowing the students to get used to each other again, it also requires the students to recycle a lot of the language they learned in the first semester.

1. The ten-minute free conversation practice for the first week back is about the students' summer holidays.
2. Teacher asks students about their holidays and tells about his/her own holiday.
3. Students are then given the same exam, which they took at the end of the first semester. They are told that the test will not reflect on their grades and that they should just relax and try to recall the work they did in the first semester. The test is checked orally with the students correcting their own mistakes.

4. Teacher places students in groups of four or five students and gives them large A-3 pieces of paper. The students should be divided so that there are an equal number of groups. This is important for the next step of the task. Students are told that, in groups, they are to design the "ideal student apartment." They are told, that in structure, anything is acceptable, Jacuzzi, home theatre, anything. The students are told they will have about twenty minutes and after that will have to describe, in English, their apartments. They will need to explain location, kind of house, cost and furnishings.
5. When students have finished, the groups are divided into pairs, group A and group B. The members of group A go and stand in a circle around group B. The members of group B then explain their apartment to group A. Group A is encouraged to ask questions of group B. The tasks of the groups are then reversed.
6. Teacher then collects all the groups' drawings and hangs them on the board. All class members are then asked to view all the drawings. Students are encouraged to comment on the drawings.
7. Teacher moves among the students and elicits comments on the drawings, in English, from the students.
8. Students then return to their seats. They are told that next week they will see photos or video (in my case, video) of the teacher's house in his or her home country. In groups, the students are asked to imagine what the house looks like. What it is made of, size, style, age, color. How many rooms. What kind of furnishings it has and so forth. Students are encouraged to ask questions that would help them imagine the house; for example; the climate of the teacher's hometown, the size of the family and others. Student groups make a list of their assumptions.

9. Teacher elicits the students' assumptions.

Students are told that they will be getting their room photos the following week.

There is no homework.

If there are no questions, then the class is dismissed.

Week Two Term Two:

The subject of the second week is the teacher's home and the students' houses.

Week two of the second semester continues the topic of house and room. The lesson begins with photos or a video of the teacher's home. As most of the students have never been overseas or seen a foreigner's home, the level of interest in this week's lesson is always very high! Showing the personal living space of the teacher is also a very strong example to the students of the high level of honesty and trust that has been developing between all members of the class. The positive feedback from the students on this lesson is some of the highest for the whole year. This lesson also marks the beginning of the student's having their photos returned to them.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher again elicits the students' assumptions about the teacher's home.
3. Photos or video is shown.

Video is stopped at different points for explanations or student questions.

4. When video is finished, teacher asks students for their opinions and how the house was similar or different from what they imagined.
5. Students are told that they are going to discuss their houses.
6. Teacher hands out students' house photos.

7. Teacher asks students to work with their partners. In pairs, students look for and note similarities and differences in their houses.
8. Teacher asks students to work in their groups of four. In groups, students look for and note similarities and differences of their houses.
9. Teacher collects all student photos and places them on the board. Students are asked to come up and observe the different photos. Students are encouraged to take notes and to make comments.
10. Students return to their seats with their photos and in groups, discuss their house photos and observations in English.
11. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on photos and observations and asking questions in English.

Students are told that they will be getting their room photos the following week.

12. Homework for week three:

Students are asked to write a reflection paper, commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Three Term Two:

The subject of the third week is the students' rooms.

In this week's lesson, the students have their second photo, their room, returned to them.

As stated earlier, Japanese college students seldom visit classmates' rooms. The opportunity to see how their fellow students and the teacher are living is cause for a high level of interest in this week's lesson. The students have the chance to see and discuss similarities and differences among themselves and the teacher.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher collects student reflection papers.
3. Teacher asks how many students live at home and who is living in student apartments.
Teacher asks how those living in student apartments found their apartments.
4. Students are given their room photos.
5. Students are asked to put the following on their desks: their room photo, house photo, neighborhood map, room map and the list of things in their room.
6. Students' desks are then divided into two groups of an even number of desks. The desks are turned so that they are facing each other from across the room.
Students are told that they are all going to be real estate agents. Their task today is to try and sell their rooms to the other students. Students are told that they should talk about the style of building, the room, the location, the furnishings and the cost. These are all subjects that have been covered in previous classes.
7. One half of the students remain in their seats with their photos, maps and lists facing out. The other half of the students line up, one student standing in front of each sitting student. The seated students are real estate agents and the standing students are customers. Teacher tells the students that they will each have about four minutes to negotiate for the homes.
8. Students begin negotiations. After about four minutes, the teacher gives a signal and each "customer" student moves down to the next "real estate agent-student". After another four minutes, the teacher gives a signal and the customer students move down to the next position. This activity continues until each apartment/house has been viewed by each customer/student.

9. Customer students then return to their seats.
 10. Teacher then calls on individual "customer students" and asks which apartment/house they liked best and why.
 11. Teacher then tells the former customer students that they will now be real estate agents and to place their photos, maps and lists on their desks facing out.
 12. Teacher then tells the former real estate agent students to line up, one student standing in front of each seated student. The same process then takes place, with four minutes for each negotiation. After the new "customer students" have viewed all the apartments/houses, they return to their seats.
 13. Teacher then calls on individual "customer students" and asks which apartment/house they liked best and why.
 14. Students then turn their desks into groups of four and are asked to discuss similarities and differences they noted in their classmates' homes and rooms. Discussion should be in English.
 15. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on photos and observations and asking questions in English.
 16. Teacher then asks students to imagine how college students in the teacher's home country live. Teacher then elicits questions from students and describes the student-housing situation in his or her country. If photos are available, they can also be very helpful.
- Students are told that they will be getting their best friend photos the following week.
17. Homework for week three:

Students are asked to write a reflection paper, commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

STUDENT VOICES FROM ROOM PHOTO LESSON REFLECTION PAPERS:

1. *"I thought my house is small and dark and the worst room, but I found that my house is pretty good!!" Hiromi Yoneshige*

2. *"I am interested in live alone since I start learning rooms in this class." Noriko Miyamoto*

3. *"You said American students share houses and many things. I think it's a very good and economical idea. We can learn many important things if we share the room and live together." Kyoko Hamabe*

4. *"I was surprised of your room. I thought that your room (in Japan) is more like an American room, but you showed us your room, it was 100% oriental room." Narifumi Matsumoto*

5. *"What I learned about myself through this project was I am disorganized." Yuko Harada*

6. *"I learned not only room, but also the character for life through this unit." Hiroyuki Murota*

Week Four Term Two:

The subject of the fourth week is the students' best friend.

In this, the fourth week of the second term, the students receive their best friend photos.

The language they learned in the first semester pertaining to describing people is

recycled in this lesson. A round of DENGON GAME is played to help the students use

and retain the language. The topic of dating is begun and the cultural similarities and differences between Japan and America are discussed.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher collects student reflection papers.
3. Teacher returns week three reflection papers with comments attached.

Students are given time to review comments on their reflection papers.

4. Students are told that they will be discussing best friends in today's class and are given their photos of their best friends.

5. Students are asked to take out their notes from the first semester about describing best friends. Students are then asked to write descriptions of their best friends: age, height, weight, hair, face, eyes and personality.

6. Student photos are collected and placed on tables at the back of the room.

7. Students are again organized for **Dengon Game**. Students describe their best friend to person B, Person B describes the friend to Person C, and Person C finds the picture. If Person C returns with the wrong picture, Person C must ask Person A why it is wrong. For example: "No, my best friend has longer hair. or "My best friend is shorter." Person C returns to the photo table to find correct picture.

If Person C cannot find the correct picture, then teacher may intervene by asking Person A questions like, "How heavy is your best friend?" Teacher may continue asking questions until Person C finds the correct photo.

8. When the **Dengon Game** is completed, students return to their seats.
9. Teacher then calls on individual students to ask them whose best friend they found.

Teacher then asks the student to try and recall some of the physical characteristics of the photo. For example: "How tall was the person you found?" "What kind of hair did that person have?" The student's responses are checked with the photo's owner.

10. Teacher puts students in groups of four or five members and asks them to discuss dating in Japan, for example, how one asks another for a date. After ten minutes or so, teacher elicits responses from groups.

11. Teacher then explains how people in the Teacher's home country ask for a date.

12. Teacher then plays a cassette tape of people asking others for a date. Students are asked what information they can recall. Tape is played two or three times.

13. Students are then given the tape-script and the tape is played again.

14. Students are asked to circle the event, the time and the meeting place in the tapescript.

15. Teacher then gives the students a handout with a basic two-person dialogue for asking someone for a date:

A. Would you like to ____ (event)____, this ____ (day)____?

B. Sure, where and when should we meet?

A. How about at the ____ (meeting place)____ at ____ (meeting day and time)____.

B. Okay, see you at ____ (meeting place)____ at ____ (meeting day and time)____.

OR, IF THE ORIGINAL PLAN IS NOT POSSIBLE:

A. Would you like to ____ (event)____, this ____ (day)____?

B. Oh, I'm sorry. I'm busy then. How about another time?

A. Okay, how about ____ (different time or day)____?

B. Sure, where and when should we meet?

A. How about at the ____ (meeting place) ____ at ____ (meeting day and time) ____.

B. Okay, see you at ____ (meeting place) ____ at ____ (meeting day and time) ____.

16. The above student handout also has a blank appointment book page included. (See attachment 3) Students are asked to fill in the week's pages with real or imagined events but to be sure to leave two nights free.

17. Students then practice asking their partners for a date using the appointment book and dialogue.

Students are told that they will continue talking about friends the following week.

18. Homework for week four:

Students are asked to write a short story about their best friend. They are asked to write about how they first met and why they became friends.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Five Term Two:

The subject of the fifth week is the students' best friend.

In this week's lesson, the topic of best friends is continued. The students review the work of the previous week and use the language in another WALKABOUT exercise. The rest of the lesson deals again with cultural differences concerning friendship. Video clips and personal stories from the teacher help to explain and demonstrate these differences.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.

2. Students are told to take out their "Making A Date" dialogues and their "appointment books" from last week's class.

3. Students are told that they will be doing a "**WALKABOUT**" (see lesson 9, semester one) Students are told that they should move around the room with their dialogues and

appointment books. They are to speak to three separate students and attempt to make dates.

Teacher also should move around the room engaging random students in the dialogue.

4. Students return to their seats and teacher asks individual students what sort of "dates" they have made and with whom.

5. Students are then placed in groups of four and asked to discuss friendship in Japan.

They are asked to consider: what is a friend, how often they meet their friends, what they do with their friends, where they go with their friends.

6. Group representatives report to the class.

7. Teacher talks about the same issues for his/her home country.

8. Teacher then shows a brief video clip from the American sit/com "Friends."

First, the video is shown without sound. The students are asked to observe such things as personal space and body language. Second, the video is shown with sound. Students are asked what they understand and don't understand.

9. Students are encouraged to ask any questions about differences in friendships between East and West.

Students are told that they will be getting their "things they want" photos the following week.

10. Homework for week five:

Students are asked to write a reflection paper, commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

Week Six Term Two:

The subject of the sixth week is something the student wants.

In this week's lesson, the students' photos of something they want are returned to them.

At the beginning of the lesson, the students review and recycle the language they learned in the first term concerning this topic. A round of DENGON GAME is played to help the students use and retain the language. The rest of the lesson consists of discussions on the cultural differences and similarities between American and Japanese college students.

By this time in the school year, the students' ability in the target language should be high enough for them to take part in fairly long discussions.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher collects student reflection papers.

Teacher tells students that they will be discussing something they want.

3. Teacher hands out the students' photos of something they want.

Students are asked to write descriptions of the desired items. They are asked to describe the size, shape, color, material, use, country of origin and what company it is made by.

Students are told not to use their notes from the first term. After attempting the description without notes they are told to check their answers against their notes from the first term.

4. Student photos are collected and placed on tables at the back of the room.
5. Students are again organized for the **Dengon Game**. Students describe the thing they want to person B, Person B describes the thing to Person C, and Person C must find the picture. If Person C returns with the wrong picture, Person C must ask Person A why it is wrong. For example: "No, the thing I want is bigger" or "The thing I want isn't square." Person C returns to the photo table to find the correct picture.

If Person C cannot find the correct picture, then teacher may intervene by asking Person A questions like, "What size is the thing you want?" Teacher may continue asking questions until Person C finds the correct photo.

6. When the **Dengon Game** is completed, students return to their seats.

7. Teacher then calls on individual students to ask them whose desired item they found.

Teacher then asks the students to try and recall some of the physical characteristics of the photo. For example: "How big was the thing you found?" "What is it used for?" The students' responses are checked with the photo's owner.

8. Students are then put in groups of four and asked to discuss their photos. They are encouraged to talk about similarities, differences and why they want those things.

9. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on photos and observations and asking questions in English.

10. Teacher then asks the groups to imagine what American college students want.

Teacher asks representatives of each group to report on the group's responses. Teacher talks about the things that college students wanted in his or her day and what they seem to want now. Student comments are encouraged.

11. Homework for week six:

Students are asked to write a reflection paper, commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.

12. Students are told that they will have an oral quiz the following week. They are asked to bring their photos and to be prepared to speak about them in groups of four or five.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

STUDENT VOICES FROM PHOTOS OF THINGS THEY WANT:

1. *"Etsuko was sitting next to me. We hardly have spoken before, but by showing our pictures, we became friends. I want to know many peoples' favorite things."*

Noriko Miyamoto

2. *"In this class we learned how to explain about our want thing. It was difficult because I had never done work like this. But this exercise was good for me. So I think we should do this work more."* *Hiroyaki Murota*

3. *"What I learned about myself through this project was, I have my own taste and I happy with this."* *Yuko Harada*

4. *"We Japanese can do or have almost everything we want thanks to the abundance of Japan. I realized again how lucky and happy we are now."* *Toshikazu Wakabayashi*

5. *"I wondered what the difference between Japanese students' want things and American students' ones. Are they same or not? Is there a national character?"*

Tomoko Tsuchida

6. *"This has taught me how different ways of view we have. Everyone has each way of thinking and we are all different. It is quite natural, however, this is one point which I can re-discover at this time."* *Etsuko Matsumura*

Week Seven Term Two:

The subject of the seventh week is the midterm oral quiz.

In the seventh week, the students have a sort of "test" which they probably have never had before. The oral exam, which is explained below, is the format for all the evaluations they will receive in the second term.

1. Students enter the classroom in groups of four or five and are asked to place their photos on their desks. Teacher then asks questions about the photos based on the class-

work to date. As the students are usually a bit nervous, the format should be relaxed and casual as if a group of friends were discussing photos. Students are asked to discuss their photos as well as the photos of the other group members. Depending on the size of the class, each group should have close to fifteen minutes for their discussions.

2. As the students leave, the teacher collects student reflection papers and returns the previous week's papers.

No homework is assigned.

Students are told that they will be discussing their problem photos in the following week.

Week Eight Term Two:

The subject of the eighth week is the problem photo.

During this week's class, students receive their problem photos. In the course of the lesson, they have a chance to recycle the language they learned in the first term, which is connected with the problem photo. In addition to taking part in tasks that require them to use the four skills, they also have a WALKABOUT session in which they interact with many members of the class using the language they have learned.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher returns student reflection papers from the previous week.
3. Teacher tells students that they will be discussing their problem photos.
4. Teacher then hands out the students' problem photos.
5. Teacher explains about "Advice Columns" in American Newspapers.
6. Teacher hands out an example of an Advice Column with three to four problems. In groups of three or four, the students are asked to think of some advice to solve the

problems. Students are allowed to use their notes from the first term to refresh their memories about modal verbs used for advice.

7. Teacher then elicits student advice for the problems. Class discusses the group advice.

8. Teacher then asks students to write their problems on the back of their photos.

9. Students are asked to take out their advice dialogues from term one, week nine.

Example: Hi name, how are you doing?

Not so good!

Really, what's the matter?

I problem

Oh, that's too bad, advice

10. Students practice with their partners.

11. Teacher then shows photos of his/her problem and asks different students for advice.

12. Teacher then tells the students they will be doing a **"WALKABOUT"**.

In this exercise, students are told to walk around the room and engage in dialogue with three separate students. They are to ask how the other student is doing and then offer advice.

13. When students have finished the "Walkabout," they are told to leave their dialogue papers at their desks and to repeat the exercise and talk with and offer advice to three students without the aid of their notes.

Teacher moves around the room engaging in the same dialogue with students.

14. Students are then put in groups of four and asked to discuss their photos. They are encouraged to talk about similarities, differences and why, what is shown in their photo, is a problem.

15. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on photos and observations and asking questions in English.

16. Teacher then asks the groups to imagine what problems American college students have. Teacher then asks representatives of each group to give their answers. Teacher talks about problems college students had in his or her day. Teacher then discusses problems that college students seem to have now. Student comments are encouraged.

17. Homework for week eight:

Students are asked to write a reflection paper, commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

STUDENT VOICES ON PROBLEM PHOTOS:

1. *"If I can push myself a little bit more, I can solve my problem myself. That's what I have learned from this class." Toshikazu Wakabayashi*

2. *"If we live in a poor situation, such as lack of food or houses, we will not say; a TV set, a bathroom scale, and so on are our problems. We can change our thinking, we can see things in different ways. It is interesting to compare with things to know things better." Takako Miyazawa*

3. *"I think Japanese students' problems are not so serious and are easy to solve. I wonder if we think about our problems seriously?" Kazue Takamura*

4. *"Some said time is their problem. When I heard that, I thought they think about time seriously and think much of their daily life. It seems that they live their life with all their might. I was deeply impressed with that and it made me think about myself. So, this lesson about problems was a good chance to learn about myself." Hiromi Yoneshige*

Week Nine Term Two:

The subject of the ninth week is the family photo.

By the ninth week of the second term, the school year is close to its conclusion. By now, the students and teacher have spent a great deal of time together, sharing a lot of personal information. This week's lesson, the family, is probably the most personal topic to be discussed. For this reason, it is kept until this late in the year. The class level of familiarity and fluency makes this potentially sensitive topic less threatening. As in previous lessons, the teacher modeling his or her family description in an open and honest manner is very reassuring for the students. Nevertheless, the teacher should be aware of any student feeling uncomfortable during the lesson. If any students should show signs of hesitancy in discussing their family, they should be gently told that it is perfectly all right to not partake in the discussions.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher returns student reflection papers from the previous week.
3. Teacher tells students that they will be discussing their family photos, and asks students to take out the photos of their families.
4. Teacher then gives the students a handout with a Xeroxed photo of the teacher's family along with a vocabulary sheet of relationships such as brother, sister, niece, nephew and others. The handout also includes sentences describing the teacher's family such as:

My father is in his late sixties, is tall and a little heavy. He is a retired teacher and likes to make furniture. My brother is in his mid forties, is married and has one child.
5. Teacher asks students to read the descriptions silently.

6. Teacher then asks the students questions based on the information.
7. Students are encouraged to ask any questions they like about the teacher's family.
8. Students are then given a crossword puzzle of family relationships. For example:
3-across: your sister's husband is your _____?
3-down: your mother's sister's son is your _____?
9. Students check their answers with their partner.
10. Teacher then orally checks the students' answers.
11. Students are then asked to write descriptions of their family members in the photos.
12. Students then exchange photos with their partners and ask and answer questions concerning their family photos.
13. Students are then put in groups of four and asked to discuss their photos. They are encouraged to talk about similarities and differences.
14. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on photos and observations and asking questions in English.
15. Homework for Week Nine:
Students are asked to write a reflection paper commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.
If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

STUDENT VOICES ON FAMILY PHOTOS:

1. *"Through the study of FAMILY, I realized how little I knew about the field."*
Kazue Takamura
2. *"I found some families live without fathers or husbands because of their jobs. I wondered if Americans have this case frequently or not."* *Takako Miyazawa*

3. *"My father owns his company, so he's busy and I have no opportunities to see him much. But when I see him at my home, he always gives me spending money...anyhow, he's a busy man since I was little, so I have no memory with having a good time with him. That's pretty sad!" Narifumi Matsumoto*

4. *"How happy and lucky I am. This is what I learned about my family." Yuko Harada*

Week Ten Term Two:

The subject of the tenth week is the typical Japanese thing photo.

In week ten, the students take part in writing, listening and speaking tasks connected to the topic of typical Japanese things. These tasks give them the opportunity to recycle the language they learned in the first semester. A round of DENGON GAME is played to help the students use and retain the language. A cultural component has the students discussing stereotypes and their own perceived levels of "typical ness".

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher collects student reflection papers from the previous week.
3. Teacher tells students that they will be discussing their typical "Japanese thing" photos.

Teacher hands out the photos to the students.

4. Students are asked to write descriptions of their typical Japanese thing. They are asked to cover: size, shape, color, material, use and why they think it is typical. Students are told not to use their notes from the first term (term one, week eight). After a few minutes, students are then told they may use their notes if needed.
5. Student photos are then collected and placed on tables at the back of the room.
6. Students are then lined up for the **Dengon Game**.

7. **Dengon Game** is completed and students return to their seats.
8. Students are put in groups of four and asked to discuss their photos. They are encouraged to talk about similarities and differences.
9. Teacher moves around the room, commenting on photos and observations and asking questions in English.
10. Teacher then asks individual students to explain their choices of "typically Japanese" and elicits comments from other students. Teacher may question choices to motivate the students to further consider what is typically Japanese. For example:

For a choice of kimono, teacher could ask how many of the females have a kimono or have ever worn one?

For a choice of black hair, teacher could quickly survey the class to see how many students dye their hair.

For a choice of chopsticks, teacher could ask what other countries use chopsticks.
11. Teacher then shows his or her own photo of what the teacher feels is typically Japanese. Students are encouraged to comment on the teacher's choice.
12. Teacher then asks the groups of four to imagine what is typically American, or French, or Chinese.
13. Teacher may then briefly talk about stereotypes and their fallacies.
14. Teacher then asks again; how many students consider themselves to be typically Japanese? (The number has always been less than when the same question was asked in week ten, term one)
15. Time permitting, student photos are collected and put on a table. All the students are asked to view them.

16. Homework for Week Ten:

Students are asked to write a reflection paper, commenting on their observations. They are told to write how they feel about what they saw and how they can explain it.

If there are no questions, then class is dismissed.

STUDENT VOICES FROM TYPICALLY JAPANESE PHOTOS:

1. *"I thought chopsticks were typical Japanese things. But one of my friends said, "They are used in China too. I was astonished to hear that." Yoko Takamoto*

2. *"I thought the typical Japanese thing must be an old and traditional thing. So, a Walkman was a great shock to me. Thanks for your idea, my way of thinking may be changed." Kazue Takamura*

3. *"Mr. Cosgrove said in class that he thinks a "monk on a motorbike" is typical Japanese. I agree with him. People who are grown up in different cultures can understand Japan more clearly. That is interesting, isn't it?" Noriko Shirane*

4. *"I found that I have been too accustomed to Japan to realize what is typical Japanese thing." Kazutomo Morita*

Week Eleven Term Two:

The subject of the eleventh week is preparation for the final oral test.

Week eleven's class is devoted to giving the students time to prepare themselves for next week's final exam. The exam is an oral exam much like the mid-term.

1. Ten minute free conversation practice on one of six new topics.
2. Teacher collects student reflection papers from week ten and returns papers from week nine. Teacher tells students that they will be preparing for their final test.

3. Students are told to take out all their photos and fold a piece of blank notepaper around them. They should then write their names on the paper.
4. Teacher collects all the photo packets. The packets are then exchanged with students from the other side of the room. This exchange should be done so that students receive a packet of photos from someone with whom they have not usually been paired.
5. Students are told to open the packets and look at the pictures. Students are then told to write on the paper three or four questions about each photo. This should amount to a total of about twenty-five questions.
6. Teacher moves around the room checking grammar and appropriateness of the students' questions.
7. When the students have finished they are paired with the owners of the photos. In their new pairs, students ask each other the questions they have written.
8. When the students have finished asking each other their questions, the teacher asks individual students if they have learned anything interesting about their new partner.
9. Students are then told that next week's test will be similar to the mid-term test. Four to five students, at one time, are tested, by sitting with the teacher, discussing their photos and those of the other members of the test group for approximately fifteen minutes.
10. Homework for week eleven:
Students are asked to write a brief evaluation of the year's course. They are asked to comment on the materials used, the class style, the role of the teacher, good points and bad points of the course, anything they would suggest changing.
If there are no questions, then the class is dismissed.

Week Twelve Term Two:

The subject of the twelfth and final week is the end of year oral test.

1. Students enter the classroom in groups of four or five and are asked to place their photos on their desks. Teacher asks questions about the photos based on the class-work to date.

As the students are usually a bit nervous, the format should be relaxed and casual as if a group of friends were discussing photos. Students are asked to discuss their photos as well as the photos of the other group members. Depending on the size of the class, each group should have close to fifteen minutes for their discussions.

2. As the students leave, the teacher collects the course evaluations and returns reflection papers from week ten.

STUDENT VOICES FROM COURSE EVALUATION:

1. *"I could be aware of my narrow view." Etsuko Matsumura*

2. *"In this class, I was able to see myself from outside." Kyoko Hamabe*

3. *"I have thought I was very shy, but I observed another side of me." Hiromi Yoneshige*

4. *"I realized a lot about myself, maybe for the first time. And I noticed I'm different from everybody else." Noriko Fujiura*

5. *"I think that if one doesn't express their feelings, one gets nothing and can't make any progress. I think it is important for me." Haruko Nagai*

6. *"I think it is important to know myself and express myself." Yoko Takamoto*

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

All EFL teachers, regardless of the country or context in which they are working, are faced with a variety of challenges to being effective language instructors. However, teachers in Japan, due to its centuries of cultural isolation, face difficulties quite different from what their counterparts encounter in European countries or countries with long histories of contact with European culture. Cultural attitudes regarding teaching and learning are very different between East and West and are, I believe, a major hurdle to effective foreign language learning.

As stated earlier in this paper, the Japanese spend a vast amount of time, energy and resources to improve their English ability. However, despite the many years of English instruction and the various efforts of the Ministry of Education, the level of speaking ability of Japanese students is quite low when compared with students of other countries. So, quite obviously, the particular challenges presented by Japan have not been effectively understood nor remedied by the present approaches to teaching English. In my early years in Japan, I found myself as part of the system that was not working. I also found that many of my colleagues felt stymied, frustrated and ineffective. Due to different approaches to education, foreign teachers, like myself, have been approaching our classes with our own cultural biases and then not understanding why we were so

unsuccessful. Ethnocentric attitudes towards learning create an impenetrable wall with teachers and students crashing into it from opposite sides. The resulting low results and high frustration should not be surprising. In terms of my own personal way of dealing with this wall, it was my time at SIT which was most helpful. From my studies and interactions at SIT, I learned to step back and away from my own culturally induced perceptions and attitudes and to open up to the realities of the cultural context in which I was working. At first, this was not an easy task but it has become easier with time. But my growing acceptance of the cultural context in which I am working has turned into a very freeing experience that has not only changed me but also my approach to teaching. In Chapter Three of this paper, my stated purpose for designing this course was to find a different approach to teaching, something new and relevant that would engage my students in their own learning. I was looking for a system of teaching which was effective in language learning, cross cultural training and was interesting and stimulating enough to engage Japanese college students. This is not to say that what I have presented in this paper is the only effective means but after using and refining this course for over ten years, I believe that all of the aforementioned goals have been met.

I strongly feel that the use of the student-generated photographs provide interesting relevancy, cognitive pegs, and an active and enjoyable learning environment which can engage even the most apathetic of students. I believe that the course format and style effectively meets the challenge of the realities that Japanese college students bring into the classroom. By documenting their own lives, the students become personally invested in and responsible for the subject matter of their learning. The relevancy of the material is obvious and much more pertinent to them than generic

textbooks. The style of the class is relaxed, casual and enjoyable and designed to create a safe and comfortable learning environment.

In terms of dealing with culture, which is an integral component of language learning, I feel this course is also very effective. According to Louise Damen, "*Learning how to learn about a new culture is the primary skill needed for effective inter cultural communication.*" (Damen 1987)) This is a much easier task for students in an ESL setting as opposed to an EFL setting because ESL students have the daily contact with the host culture as a model. However, for the EFL students in the self proclaimed "heterogeneous" nation of Japan, this is much more difficult. With a very small number of resident foreigners, the Japanese really have few opportunities for cross-cultural observation.

In dealing with this issue, I find that having the students learn how to observe their own culture, via their personal photographs, to be very effective. The skills of cultural observation that the students learn from observing their own culture can be transferred to their contact with other cultures in the future. In addition, working with a teacher who shows and discusses photographs from his or her home culture, gives the students experience in understanding foreign concepts related to the same topics, which they have photographed.

It has been almost ten years since I started using and refining this approach to teaching in Japan. In that time, I believe that I have become a much more effective teacher and that my students have become much more effective learners. By allowing the students to create their own learning materials and engage freely in their conversations, I have successfully stepped back from my own culturally based habit of feeling the desire

to provide them with what I think they need and should be doing. I am now more a facilitator and guide than the director and taskmaster I was in the past. In stepping away from my former habits, I have allowed the students more responsibility for their own learning which has consequently given them more interest in it. This new personal perspective has allowed me to better view the students' needs and progress. In all the classes in which this program has been incorporated, there has been a marked increase in attendance, attitude and performance. The students in this program take pride in the photos they have produced and are genuinely interested in and excited about discussing them with their classmates. Due to the casual and enjoyable atmosphere of the class, the students are not as hesitant to express themselves and the relevancy of the personal materials keenly holds their interest. By early in the second semester, it is common to see students excitedly chatting away in English about their photos. From the ongoing sessions of in-class discussions, the students develop a higher level of communicative ease and over time, the accuracy needed for effective language use.

The result of this program and the opportunities and enthusiasm it creates, are classrooms of students who now have the desire, confidence and ability to freely discuss many aspects of their lives. The difference in the mood and energy of the classrooms now, as compared to before I started this program, is striking. Before, there was a frustrated and fatigued teacher facing a room full of shy and apathetic loner students. Now, both the students, and I eagerly begin each week's lesson, working together in a mutually enjoyable ninety minutes of language and culture learning. As much as I feel the students are learning from this course, I feel that I too am constantly learning. Though I may use this program in multiple classes in a year, each class is quite different.

Due to the wide variety of individual photographic interpretations of the topics, each class is unique and presents learning and teaching situation that is quite different from the others. I have learned much about the culture and mindsets of my students from their photos and discussions. These insights have aided me greatly in understanding my students and altering the way in which I relate to them. By sharing their photos, they are demonstrating how they view the world and how they wish to express their feelings about it. As a result of this process, the students and teacher work together, learning from each other.

Although this course is presented to the students as a regular English conversation class, it becomes apparent to the students early on, that what they are learning is more than just language. The "student voices" presented in this paper give a good indication of how effective the program is in terms of both language and cultural study. These comments are probably best demonstrated by one student, Rie Watanabe, who wrote, "*I think this class was not just an English class. Other than language, we learned to have confidence about who we are and to appreciate other culture.*"

CHAPTER 7

EXTENSIONS

The format and topics presented in the lesson plans of this course are ones that I have found effective in teaching in Japanese universities. These are meant solely as models that have been effectively used for ten years. Individual teachers may wish to use different topics and formats. In addition, this course was designed for Japanese students studying English in an EFL context. There is nothing about this course that would preclude teachers of other languages and in other contexts from using it.

An interesting extension for this course would now be possible with recent advances in Internet technology. As stated earlier, an essential aspect of this course is the cultural component. When this course was first designed, the Internet was in its infancy and access to computers was less than it is now. With the recent growth in Internet use and the advent of affordable digital cameras, there is a new and exciting possibility for cultural exchange in this course. It would now be possible for two schools, one in the country of the target language and one in the country in which the language is being studied, to digitally exchange photographs, letters and even voice transmissions as part of the lesson formats. This sort of arrangement would provide students in both countries with a much more relevant and interesting opportunity for both language and cultural learning.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I would appreciate any feedback from those who implement the approach demonstrated in this paper or the abovementioned approach using the Internet.

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