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ESOL Examinations
FROM CLASSROOM TEACHING TO WORLD-WIDE LEARNING.

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This presentation describes the efficacy of using classroom audio-visual teaching combined with wide-reaching off-campus activities that enhance learning English, particularly for speakers of other languages.

For the M.A [English] Phonetics classes I have been able to make very effective use of the CDs accompanying Peter Roach’s English Phonetics and Phonology. These are combined with the CD-ROMs of the Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary and the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary. Since the Language Laboratory has provision for individual monitors in the student booths, the learners can see the required text/phonetic transcription at close quarters. Whenever there is a need for board work, the study material is projected onto an acrylic whiteboard. Screening the film version of My Fair Lady also helps during the Literature lectures, I have been able to screen several films either based on the texts or closely associated with them. Among these are Jane Eyre, A Passage to India, A Tale of Two Cities and Crime and Punishment. Grapes of Wrath can be supplemented with Mr and Mrs Iyer and Shortcut to Happiness makes Doctor Faustus more interesting. Instinct and Invictus can be associated for study of human behaviour across several texts. The most impactful text has been Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. It has been supplemented with Apocalypse Now, Hotel Rwanda and the documentary Shake Hands with the Devil. Availability of the Internet in the Language Lab helps to bring the wide world into the classroom.

For learning beyond the classroom we encourage our M.A. students to participate in seminars, conferences and cultural/ co-curricular events organised by the University departments or local colleges/ institutions. However, the demands of the choice based credit system syllabus structure make this a rather daunting task now. It has been easier and more effective to implement the classroom-cum-worldwide learning combination in the Study India Programme for the students of the International College for Cultural Relations, Nihon University, Mishima, Japan. The Study India Programme of the Goa University is hosting the fifth batch of Japanese students from September 2010 to February 2011. The present batch of nine students comprises of five boys and four girls. The Basic Orientation in English Course is conducted for five weeks at the beginning of the programme. The students do have some knowledge of English. The course is aimed at improving the communication skills of these students to develop their confidence and enable them to participate in the subsequent modules covering various topics concerning India. It can be sincerely asserted that here is truly a case of English for Empowerment. The skills they develop not only aid them during the successive courses but also help them in communicating with a wide spectrum of people during their semester here and consequently in availing of better career options later. Though there is an approved syllabus, the individual teachers are at liberty to follow various methodologies which obtain the desired results. At every activity we keep in mind that these Japanese students must develop the ability to speak English as well as learn through their experience.
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2 Self Introduction
At the inaugural function the students are welcomed and urged to introduce themselves. Usually they read from a prepared text. When I begin my classes I encourage them to make an impromptu and more elaborate introduction of themselves, impressing upon them the fact that they would have to repeat the introduction for almost every subsequent teacher. Besides using the material of MA Phonetics classes on a lesser scale, I also use several videos for language development. My Fair Lady is of course always enthralling. This year we could also add The Japanese Wife to point out the nuances of translation from first language to English. Though other teachers use the Grammar and Vocabulary books, I find the Pronunciation in Use set helpful. The Language in Use videos are used to initiate conversations and descriptions by the students about similar situations in Japan or activities / cultural practices they are familiar with such as festivals or adventure sports.

3 & 4 Some of the materials used in the course
The Interactive exercises from the Cambridge Test Your English CD are introduced to them in the class and exercises assigned for homework. Follow-up is done in the classroom by showing them the possibility of various sentence structures for the inappropriate alternatives in the multiple choice questions.

Music and songs have also been incorporated into the programme. Initially the students would sing only one verse of the Happy Birthday song in English and Japanese as that was all they knew. Involvement of the faculty members in celebrating their birthdays has resulted in their learning additional verses as well as more birthday songs.

5& 6 Interaction with MA students
Interpersonal interaction with our MA students has proven to be one of the most effective ways of teaching the Japanese students. The students discuss various topics such as Festivals, Cuisine, Educational systems, Music, etc. While clarifying use of language the students also build up vocabulary relating to these various fields. Since both sets of students come from varying backgrounds they have much to learn from their mutual exchanges. The atmosphere is very informal and being of the same age group they can share even personal opinions about life and relationships [e.g. about their boyfriends / girlfriends]. Some of the friendships continue through email much beyond the programme duration. A scheme of ‘Teaching Assistants’ involves assigning one MA student to help three to four SIP students. Besides aiding them with their studies these Teaching Assistants also guide the Japanese students when they go out shopping or sight-seeing.

Outdoor learning is usually preceded by some orientation in the classroom [through Slideshows, Google Maps and You Tube videos] so that the
students can have a better understanding of the places or institutions they visit during the field trip. Thus they are also able to interact with the people they meet during such visits. This helps in fulfilling the dual objectives of improving proficiency in English as well as comprehending cultural nuances. For convenience I may speak of just a few of these learning experiences in the campus, visits to places of tourist and historical interest, exhibitions and homes.

7 Campus Walk, 8 Dona Paula, 9 Shoreline
A campus walk familiarises them not only with the location but also with the vocabulary related to the nomenclatures and functions of the university infrastructure. Learning can be enjoyable when the ambience is one of relaxation. And so a visit to the famed Dona Paula made them curious to explore the legends of love and tragedy associated with the statues. Of course, across the river they could have a view of the Marmagao harbour from where ships were laden with iron ore for their homeland Japan.

0 Rachol Seminary, 11 Basilica housing relics of Francis Xavier
The initial visits to churches and produced expressions of awe and reverence. Since Francis Xavier is a fairly well known historical figure in Japan they could associate some locations in Goa with his presence in Japan. Such visits also provided scope for further discussions of beliefs and rituals in various religions including Buddhism and Shintoism.

14 & 15 Menezes Braganza Pereira Mansion
A visit to the 350 year-old Menezes Braganza Pereira mansion was also an inspiring learning experience combining history with meeting the living descendants. Mrs Braganza Pereira graciously declined accepting any visiting fee in the form of monetary contribution. For the students this was a lesson in value education, as they experienced generosity rather than capitalism.

12 Raia Church altar, 13 Pilar, Stained Glass Indian art by Angelo Fonseca
Interactions with locals at the sites enabled them to obtain more information about native practices or explanation relating to art, architecture and inculturation. We reached Raia church on a Sunday just after a Baptism ceremony. They could meet the family members of the newborn children. Since there was to be a wedding later that day they could also witness the preparations that were being done in the church for the nuptials. At the Pilar Seminary they were fascinated with the German-made stained glass windows designed by a Goan artist Angelo da Fonseca. The uniqueness of the Indian art design was impressive for them in contrast with the usual depiction of Christian art as western.

13 ITM Goa 2010, 14 Restaurant
Visits to exhibitions such as the International Travel Mart, Goa, 14-17 October 2010 enabled the participants to interact with representatives from trade and industry. They could later visit the establishments which had put up stalls here and purchase books/articles which they found personally interesting and useful. Visits to restaurants permitted them to try out their capability for ordering dishes they had heard about or for seeking explanations about them from the staff. Visits to homes allowed for interaction at family level and insights into domestic hospitality. Such visits also gave them opportunities to learn and taste food preparations not available in the hostel.
15-18 Home visits

On one such occasion the students learned the complete vocabulary and hands-on process of making Chapattis and Rotis. In return they explained and demonstrated the preparation of Japanese noodles dipped in soy sauce.

Back to the campus and the classroom:

19 Free time in the campus

20 Reporting learning experiences

After every activity in the classroom or outside, the Japanese students have to report what they have seen or learnt in that session or through their encounter. While some of the above may seem like descriptions of excursions, they are, in fact, all directed towards empowering the students to develop their communication skills in English.

Select Bibliography


