

Introducing Okinawan culture material in English classes —Its significance and how and what to introduce—

Keiko Yonaha

英語の授業に地域教材を導入すること—その意義と方法

与那覇恵子

Abstract

The author often introduces materials on Okinawan culture or society in English classes. Among several reasons for doing this, two main reasons that the author would like to take up in this paper are expressed as the two key words such as "identity" and "authenticity." Establishing an "identity" is the one which should be treasured in learning a foreign language and it is considered to be one of the elements in what we call "Kokusai-jin" (an internationalized person). The author also believes that "Authenticity" is an important element in good Teaching material. In this paper, the author considers the appropriateness of these two reasons to support introducing Okinawan culture in English classes. She also introduces how and what teaching materials can be used in such classes by showing some materials as concrete examples in which these two reasons are reflected.

Key words: Teaching material, Identity, Authenticity, an internationalized person, Local culture

要 旨

筆者は高校や大学の英語の授業において、よく沖縄の社会や文化を取り扱った自主教材を使う。それは何故なのか。幾つか理由があるが、その中でも主要となる2つの理由のそれぞれのキーワードが「アイデンティティ」と「オーセンティシティ」である。「アイデンティティ」の確立は外国語を学ぶ上で大切にしたいものであり、「国際人」の要素の一つであると考えている。「オーセンティシティ」は、より良い教材であるための重要な要素の1つであると理解している。本論では、その2つが沖縄の文化などの地域教材を取り入れた英語の授業を支える理由として適切であるかを検証し、又、実際の現場でどのように、どのような教材を使用していくかをその2つの主な理由が具体的に反映された例として紹介する。

キーワード: 教材, アイデンティティ, オーセンティシティ, 国際人, 地域文化

1. Introduction

I often introduce materials on Okinawan culture in English classes in English classes for two main reasons. One is to promote establishing an "identity" while learning a foreign language, and the other is to use authentic material.

In the first half of this paper, I argue for the

importance of establishing an "identity" while learning a foreign language. In the latter half of the paper, the "authenticity" of teaching material is discussed. Also, how and what kind of materials I introduced in my English classes at high school and university levels is explained in the last part of this paper.

. "Identity" and language learning

With the terms of "globalization" or "internationalization" becoming more familiar to ordinary people, efforts to learn English as a means of communication, as an "international auxiliary language" (2006, Muranoi) have taken a greater importance in the world. Following Korea and China, Japan started introducing English education from elementary school level by putting it in the curriculum as a regular course. In such an educational environment, more and more high school and university students study in English-speaking countries to improve their English abilities.

However, what they learn from such an experience of studying abroad is not only English. We often hear or see students who have changed their personalities after studying abroad. Many of them become more positive and open, and do not hesitate to speak up. Returnees change from shy, passive, and quiet people into positive and talkative people including the author. According to Nakai and Yamaguchi (2000), such a personality change is caused by the activation of another part of the brain through contact with a culture different from one's own. In short, it can be said that the culture behind the language can have enough of an impact on our behavior to change our personality.

Another important benefit that I experienced from studying in the U.S. was the discovery of who I am. It was also the experience of the different culture behind the language that contributed toward this discovery. The different culture made me find myself because of the contrast with my own culture. It was a precious gift that I acquired from my stay in the U.S., even though it was a short stay of only one year. The experience of finding "who I am" can be said to be an experience of establishing my own identity. According to the Longman Advanced American Dictionary, (2000) "identity" is defined as "the qualities and attitudes a person or group of people have that make them different from other peoples."

Some researchers argue that "identity" is shaken when learning a foreign language. For instance, Kubota (1998) says that a focus on communication skills re-enforces the dominance of English and leads the Japanese to reject their own linguistic and

cultural identity. However, McCarty (1999) states that, in the case of adults, learning a foreign or second language can have a positive effect on the development of identity. This applies not only to adults but also to young high school students. Muranoi (2006) also commented on the establishment of identity as a merit of studying foreign language by calling it "enlightenment". He says that understanding our language, culture, and ourselves through learning a foreign language is one of the important forms of enlightenment which enables us to see invisible things. Judging from my 20 years' of experience as an English teacher in high school, I would say that both Kubota's and McCarty's theories are correct. Students with study abroad experience seem to be divided into two types. One group prefers everything related to English culture and likes to act as if they were from an English-speaking country. The other group realizes who they are and becomes determined to learn about their own culture as well as those of foreign languages. In other words, the former is the student whose identity was shaken by learning a foreign language, and the latter is the student who has constructed his/her own identity by learning a foreign language.

I'm also a believer that establishing identity is important in learning a foreign language and this belief comes from my own experience while studying in the U.S. By establishing my own identity, I felt I could become confident in being myself, which led to an attitude to be fair to others (other people, other cultures, and other languages). I was able to respect myself and at the same time respect others as well. Such an attitude is an important element in becoming an "internationalized person". To be an "internationalized person" is often given as an objective of English language education in Japan. Many people might be surprised to find so many cases in which cultivating an "internationalized person" is mentioned as an objective of learning English. The "Super English language High school" project (2005), supported by the Ministry of Education; Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, "Report of Chuo Kyoiku Shingikai" (2005) and "Language education of Kansai Gakuin University" (2006) are just a few of them.

Watanabe (1995) defines an "internationalized person" as one who can look at the world from view

of his/her own, and try to think about the future of the earth from this view. He adds that without understanding your own culture, or your own way of thinking, you cannot understand other cultures and other views or think about the future of the earth as a whole. On the other hand, Muranoi (2006) defines ethnocentrism as follows:

Ethnocentrism is an attitude that his/her own people or culture is special and superior to others and such an attitude disturbs cross-cultural communication. However, an attitude which sees a certain cultures, for example, American or British cultures, better than others and despises his/her own culture is also one of ethnocentrism.(p.160)

He insists on the importance of learning a foreign language through the contrast between the foreign culture and one's own culture in order not to be ethnocentric. He also comments on the topics used in foreign language education by saying that they should not be limited to the culture of the target language but should cover global issues, including one's own country because without knowing their own regional characteristics, (culture, history and social issues), it is meaningless to turn their eyes on global issues. Therefore, establishing one's "identity" is helpful in facilitating one becoming an internationalized person as defined by Watanabe, and operates against ethnocentrism as defined by Muranoi.

The Council of Europe (2001) also treasures a "sense of identity" enough to make it an objective of foreign language education:

In an International approach, it is a central objective of language education to promote the favorable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture. (p.1)

. Authenticity in teaching materials

In the previous section one of the two main reasons for introducing materials in English classes related to one's own culture have been presented. Such materials are also good as teaching material because

- (1) The topics are close to students and are about the things around them; students

have an affinity for the materials.

- (2) Students often have some background knowledge, so the materials are easier for them to understand.
- (3) Topics often deal with real daily lives, what is happening now, so materials are fresh and timely.

Especially, (1) and (3) are concerned with authenticity. A general definition of "authenticity" is found in the Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (1993) as "the quality of being true or authentic". Following is the definition given by Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992).

The degree to which language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing. Texts which are taken from newspapers, magazines, etc., and tapes of natural speech taken from ordinary radio or television programs, etc. (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, p.27)

"Authentic materials" are defined as "the materials made with the aim of communication" (Morrow 1977:13 and Peacocke 1997 cited in Taylor). Nunan (1999) explains that "authenticity" as "spoken and written texts used in language teaching are generally deemed to be authentic if they were produced in the first instance for the purpose of communication, not for the purpose of language teaching." It is advantageous to use authentic materials to motivate students to learn a foreign language as Lepper & Henderlong (2000) state: "Separating the learning of academic skills from real world contexts can entail motivational cost." From my observation in teaching, students reacted more enthusiastically and were more involved in their activities when I introduced more authentic materials, such as real radio news, or real news articles instead of using news materials made for teaching English. Nunan (1999) also comments on the advantage of authentic materials;

The use of authentic sources leads to greater interest and variety in the material that learners deal with in the classroom.

Authentic material helps bring the content to life, and ultimately makes learning and using language more meaningful and, I believe, easier for students. (p.212)

Regarding authenticity in listening materials, he comments on its advantage by saying "non-authentic listening texts differ in certain ways from authentic texts. They usually contain linguistic features more usually found in written rather than spoken language. There are few of the overlaps, hesitations, and false starts found in authentic texts, and there is very little negotiation of meaning." What Nunan stated here is not only about the conversation texts but that can be applied to the materials which taken from real news programs for example. When real news taken from a radio program is compared with the news written for teaching English, one can understand what Nunan meant. In a real news, a reporter sometimes hesitates, falters, and repeats.

. How and what to introduce

Below appear examples of teaching materials related to Okinawan culture.

(1) Comics serialized in a local paper (material)

A weekly comic strip that describes Okinawan culture, history and daily life in an interesting way. It can be used as teaching material by having students substitute Japanese lines for English ones in the story. One stories describes a strong Okinawan "obaa" (grandmother/older woman), a survivor of the devastating Battle of Okinawa, as strong enough to slap and kill a big cockroach instantly on a hot summer night, which amazed her grandson. In another story, the "obaa" talks to her grandson about her late husband, "ojii", who used to love singing and dancing with his samisen and had displayed the samisen in an alcove as his most precious treasure. In a story dealing with Okinawan history, a boy who doesn't know anything about the Battle of Okinawa tries to imagine what it was like on June 23, Okinawa's war memorial day, commemorating the ending of hostilities in Okinawa.

(2) English version of local newspapers or news from radio program (material)

The English language in local newspapers can be used for students to recognize information focusing on 5W-1H (When, Who, Where, What, Why, and How). News articles are good for

students to get to know what is happening around them and consider the problems society faces. Such materials may also be used as preparatory material for debate classes. Regarding listening material, I used real news (CNN) in which an anchor talks about Okinawan issues.

(3) Okinawan events as topics for "small talk" or other assignments (material)

For small talk topics where an English speaking atmosphere can be made, one can use seasonal or annual events held in Okinawa. For example, class begins with the teacher's question, "So, this month is what season?" The teacher responds to the students' answers, such as "That's right. Now is the season of Shiimii. Our ALT Mr ~ asked me 'What is Shiimii?' How do we explain it to him? Anybody?" Small talk is just a five or eight-minute communication between teachers and students in English, but it works to motivate students to speak English if a given topic is interesting enough.

(4) Magazines and books (material)

Articles and news on Okinawa found in magazines or books on sale can also be used. For example, an article on "Longevity in Okinawa" from *Newsweek* or a speech by an Asian youth talking about Okinawa from *Non stop English* are available. Students were delighted to know that other people in the world were interested in their culture, and it was a good chance to view themselves through the eyes of others. Mr. Allen Nelson's speech on CD is a precious message seeking world peace. It is the view of a person who was stationed on a U.S. military base in Okinawa and who fought in the Vietnam War, resulting in long-term mental suffering from that shocking experience. On the CD is recorded his lecture which was given at schools in various places in Japan including Okinawa.

(5) People from other countries who live in Okinawa (material)

In order to have students understand the role of English as a means of communication with other people in the world, as an "international auxiliary language", it is best to have them communicate with people from other countries in English. Since "authentic materials" are

defined as "the material made with the aim of communication" (Morrow 1977:13 and Peacock 1997 cited in Taylor), we can say that people from other countries are really authentic sources in a way. It is also a good chance for students to learn about different cultures directly from foreign people. Therefore, I think it is useful to take students to places where they can meet people from foreign countries, such as OIC (Okinawa International Center) or to invite American students to Okinawan schools. It sometimes gives students a chance not only to get to know people from other countries but also to get to know themselves. On one occasion, high school students went to a street in Okinawa City and interviewed American people walking from a nearby base. The students were surprised at the result of the interviews. In answer to the question "What do you like about Okinawa?", most answered "the people." and to the question "What do you dislike about Okinawa?", most answered "the traffic jams". One male student was also surprised by the answer "emperor" to the question "What image do you have of Japan?" The boy had never thought the emperor was an image or symbol of Japan. As can be seen in these examples, it was a good chance for students to view themselves through the eyes of others.

Conclusion

As an English teacher, I had enjoyed the materials on our culture in English and have had the impression that my students were also enjoying them. However, it is a conjecture drawn only from empirical support and not from the results of a survey or experiment. I would like to verify the results in a future study. Though it is just a teacher's observation of students' reactions, I believe that the teaching materials on our own culture were attractive to our students and motivated them to study English. I remember many students who said that they had felt ashamed when they were not able to answer questions about their own culture or society when asked by people during their stay in foreign countries. In the present high school curriculum, there is no room for students to study their own

regional culture and society, and it is surprising that students have so little knowledge about themselves their regional culture, history or people. It may be a little easier in colleges, but in high schools, it is hard for busy teachers to look for their own teaching materials on their culture and society and use them while utilizing the presented textbook as well. Though I enjoyed looking for materials and making my own handouts, using them was hard because I was also busy finishing the required textbook material. Therefore, I had to make extra effort for that. However, given that students have no chance to learn about themselves at school now, I realize how important it is for us, teachers, to make time for such teaching, especially given the two main reasons, as mentioned previously, for using our materials related to our own culture.

References

- Chuo Kyoiku Shingikai Report 2005.
www.mext.go.jp/b-menu/shingi/chukyo/chukyo4/gijiroku/007/0307220/005/001.htm-39k
- Council of Europe 2001. Common European Framework of reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
- Kansai Gakuin Daigaku, Language Education Center
理念・目的・教育目標
www.kwnasei.ac.jp/contents?cnid
- Karen Stern, Longman, & Ruth Urbon. 2000 Longman Advanced American Dictionary Prentice Hall College
- Kubota, R 1998. Ideologies of English in Japan. *World Englishes*, 17,3:295-306
- Lepper, M.R., & Henderlong, J. 2000. Turning "play" into "work" and "work" into "play": 25 years of research on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation: The search for optimal motivation and performance San Diego, CA: Academic Press (pp.257-372)
- Longman Dictionary of English Language Culture 1993. Longman Group UK Limited
- McCarty, Steve 1999. 「2言語2文化併用の意義 成人バイリンガルの自己観察」山本雅代 (編) バイリンガルの世界 大修館書店
- Muranoi Hitoshi 2006. 「第二言語習得研究から見た効果的な英語学習法・指導法」大修館書店

- Nakai Hisao & Moriguchi Naohiro 2000. 「二重人格はなぜありにくいのか」高橋 俊彦(編) 分裂病の精神病理 東京大学出版
- Nunan, David. 1999. *Second Language Teaching & Learning* Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers
- Richards, J.C., Platt & Platt, J.,& Platt, H. 1992. *Longman Dictionary of Language teaching and Applied Linguistics* (2nd ed.). Harlow, Essex: Longman
- Taylor, D. 1994. *Inauthentic Authenticity or Authentic Inauthenticity?*
<http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/ejo2/alhtml>
- Watanabe Jun 1995. 「国際感覚って何だろう」 岩波書店

Make good use of local magazine or event.

ねらい：受信するだけでなく、発信の英語が求められている今、自分自身のことを知らなければ、対等な文化理解や交流はできない。その意味でも地域性を大事にしたい。

活用方法：ライティングや英語表現の宿題として活用する。

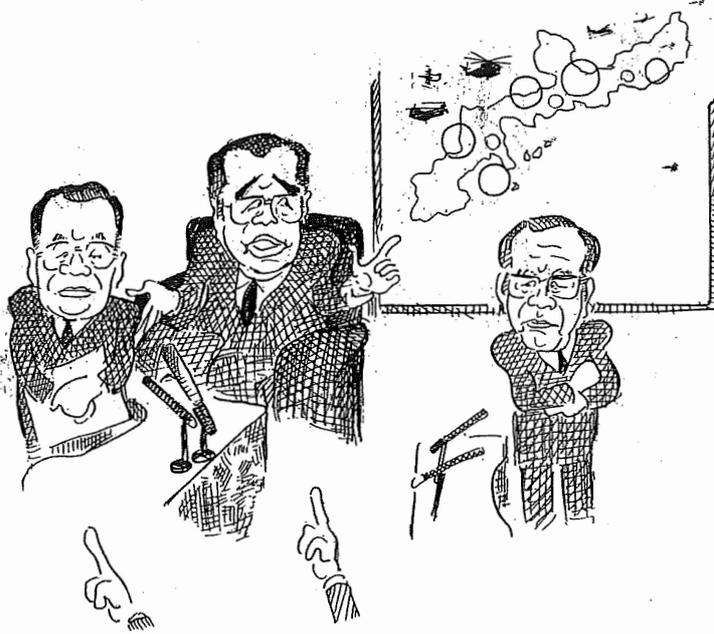
コメント：お盆についての表現など絵入りで、楽しく表現してくれた。



(though)
 1. Oh, it's my grand-pa's samisen isn't it? 2. Nobody plays it any more. 3. He was good at playing it, wasn't he? (Samisen)
 4. He was the best player in the village when he was young. 5. You can play the Samisen, can't you? 6. Now that I think about it I have never seen my father play the Samisen. (what)
 7. How about me? 8. Why don't you give it a try? 9. He used to say that.
 10. Nobody 始める 11. best player = 1st 12. 否定疑問文 13. have never seen 現在完了文 14. How about ~ 15. 試みる 16. 1st = try 17. used to ~ 18. 過去にのみ

class _____ 組 No. _____ 名 Name _____

A slip of the tongue-a shift in defense policy



*1 Norota : Po-TAY-to Obuchi : Po-TAH-to Shimabukuro : Let's call the whole thing off!

The Government of Japan is unclear about the strengthening of its defense ties with the U.S. at the same time it is consolidating U.S. military bases on Okinawa. Defense Secretary Housei Norota commented in parliament that Okinawa may be the most affected in case of a contingency occurring around Japan because of the concentrated U.S. military presence on the island. But Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi took

back Norota's comment in the next day's parliamentary session, saying that "the solution of Okinawan issues is still this cabinet's most important task."

Okinawan issues were discussed last Wednesday in the Upper House Special Committee on U.S.-Japan defense guidelines. In consideration was a revision to strengthen defense cooperation by, for instance, the

opening of air and sea ports in Japan to support U.S. military movements. Secretary Norota commented "with respect to both geography and the concentration of U.S. military bases, Okinawa would be entangled in any contingency," in a response to a question put by Souko Shimabukuro of the Okinawa Socialist Masses Party.

Director of Defense Policy Ken Sato, trying to tone down Norota's comments, explained that the relationship between military activities around Japan that would involve Okinawa supporting the U.S. military would depend on the specific case, that it would be impossible to predict the influence on a certain area.

The government's stance in the next day's committee meeting was totally reversed. Norota said, "I was tongued and incorrect," and he apologized. "It was merely a general idea that U.S. Forces in Japan may use Okinawan bases if needed. I did not mean that Okinawa would be forced to bear a heavier burden in case of military cooperation with the U.S.," he added. Prime Minister Obuchi came to the rescue commenting that Okinawa, with seventy percent of U.S. bases in Japan, should have its burden lightened.

Okinawan Representatives Shimabukuro and Social Democrat Kantoku Teruya take the view that Norota's first remarks are the government's true color.

Vocabulary 左の左の相対する語を書き写す。 {

- 1. 口がすわること _____
- 2. 米軍基地の整理縮小 _____
- 3. 防衛庁長官 _____
- 4. 偶発事件、不測の事態 _____
- 5. 国会 _____
- 6. 基地の集中 _____
- 7. 沖縄問題の解決 _____
- 8. 書き写す _____
- 9. 返答で _____
- 10. 姿勢 _____
- 11. 予想する _____
- 12. 打ちあっている _____
- 13. 音足りず _____
- 14. 反響する _____
- 15. 重荷 _____
- 16. 軍事協力 _____
- 17. 防衛政策 _____
- 18. 本音 _____

*1 日本政府は、どくらい矛盾をしていますが？

*2 野田防衛長官は、何と言ったのですか？

~ Bon festival ~

What is Bon festival and How do you celebrate?

Bon festival is closely associated with Ancestor worship.

Bon festival decorate household Buddhist shrine with many fruits and a lantern festival Bonfire.

Bon festival
In Bon festival / ^{we} offer many good foods.

Bon festival / ^{we} prayed departed spirits ancestor for ^{our health} we are always fine.

Bon festival / got together many relative and cousin.

供え子 = offer ... good food
イサ... perform in the streets beating drums
祖先崇拝 (Ancestor worship).

Make a lantern festival Bonfire

お盆 (Bon)

a fire cracker (爆竹)

ウケ (Welcome)

ウケ (say farewell to ~)

仏壇 (house hold Buddhist Shrine)

死んだ人の霊 (departed spirits)

13~15. 日... in lunar calendar decorate ~ with ...

...お盆 (Story)

We decorated household

Buddist Shrine with many fru

We offered many good food

We burned heaven's money.

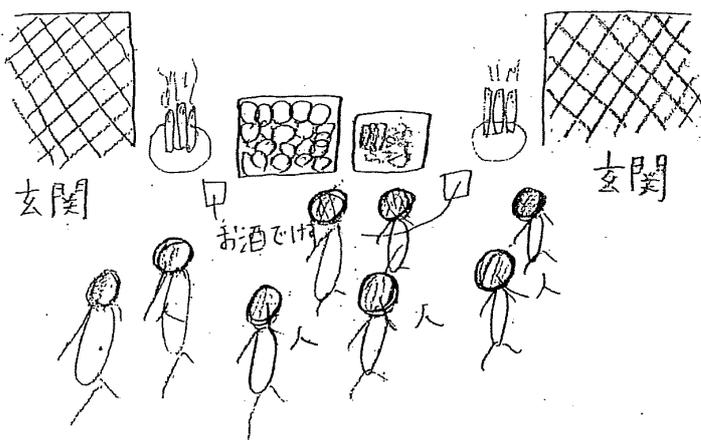
We prayed departed spirit: ancestor for we are alway happy and fine.

We said farewell to depart spirits ancestor.

We ate many goods food.

We were given gift.

What did you do? < picture >



Very Good !!