

## 英字新聞散らしを使用して文化を教える

### Using English Newspaper Inserts to Teach Cultural Awareness

Mark Offner \*

マーク オフナー

*Abstract: Newspaper inserts are useful for teaching cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom. These inserts are filled with a variety of cultural aspects that provide the students with the opportunity to be directly aware of them as they search for information through hands-on exposure to the material. This hands-on approach adds excitement and interest to the lesson enhancing the learning process.*

#### 1. The Inserts

##### 1.1 Collecting Inserts

The main advantage of using inserts is their widespread availability. Many copies can be acquired by going directly to the local store and asking for extra inserts. Most stores are willing to give away 20 or 30 copies, particularly if the sale will soon be over. These inserts can be acquired when traveling in the English speaking country or family members and friends can send them through the mail. It is good to use inserts that are attractively laid out with many colorful pictures depicting the product providing the students with a visual representation of merchandise that may be new or unique to them.

##### 1.2 Varieties and focus

There are many types of newspaper inserts, and each type is especially suited to teaching specific cultural aspects of the target language. Supermarket inserts are useful for pointing out measures, for example, weight, length, and capacity. They can also be used to talk

about distance to shopping areas, bulk shopping, storage space for food stuffs and diet. Clothing inserts can be used for pointing out fashion and styles. These lead naturally to talking about clothing sizes and general dress codes. Lawn & gardening and hardware inserts can focus on the types and volume of merchandise available to the general public and link to the do-it-yourself mind-set. Housing styles and materials can also be discussed. Furniture inserts can be used to show styles of house furnishings, interior decorating and expand to home life styles in general. Real estate inserts can show property size, prices, resale value, amenities and mobility of the population. Drug store inserts can focus on the availability of various medication, types of medical care, and treatment. Toys & games and sport inserts may be used to talk about past time interests, hobbies, exercise practices, national sports, and family entertainment.

##### 1.3 Relevancy

It is important to keep the focus on cultural points that are common enough to provide the students with current information that will help in their efforts to understand the target language. Although bringing up

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\* 愛知工業大学 基礎教育センター (豊田市)

strange and obscure practices may spark some interest, they will only confuse the students and result in distancing the culture of the target language rather than making it less alien and more accessible. The goal is to come to understand differences and in them see similarities creating an atmosphere of openness and acceptance. Any prevalent practice that might be of interest to the students can be focused on to help the students in their awareness of the foreign culture. It is a good idea to not focus entirely on differences. An important part of the lesson is to point out how seemingly different practices are actually quite similar, or developed out of a similar need, but evolved differently due to differences in geographic location, climate, and/or availability of specific raw materials.

## 2. The Lesson

### 2.1 Introduction

As a way to help the students become familiar with the material, it is necessary to go through the insert and explain the various parts. This will aid the students when they search for information to complete the worksheet. This is also a good time to point out unique features of the insert to incite interest and to encourage the students to look more critically at the material. The teacher should take the opportunity at this time to provide some personal information related to the insert. Talking about the experience of having shopped at or visited the store, or briefly relating how the insert was acquired, serves the purpose of further heightening interest in the material making it more immediate.

### 2.2 Pair Collaboration

The inserts are distributed to pairs of students to work on together. This provides communicative practice as the students talk about parts of the material that interest them. Students also take the opportunity to discuss the meaning of questions, where to go to find the information, and how to best write the answers while working in pairs. Furthermore, the students are able to help each other when they are stuck on a

problem and as a result the lesson is more enjoyable. The teacher should make sure to circulate around the class at this time to help the students by providing hints for answering questions and by giving more background information to students who show special interest in a specific area.

### 2.3 Activities

Although the worksheet is the main part of the lesson, there are other activities that can be done for variety and/or as a supplement to the worksheet. These include crossword puzzles, role-playing, rating, and making personal choices. Crossword puzzles are easy to generate using computer software. They are a good way to review or introduce unique cultural words and definitions. Role-playing provides the students with the opportunity for spontaneous conversations as they play roles, such as customer and clerk, using the insert as a prop. It is best to provide lower level students with a sample dialog to follow when role-playing. Rating is appropriate for all level of students when making a list, for example, rating items from 1 to 5 according to a predetermined criterion. The criterion may be items that are the best for your health, the most useful, the most long lasting, etc. However, students will need to have a good command of English to have meaningful discussions when explaining choices and giving reasons. The same applies to the personal choice activity where students will be able to derive more conversational practice from the exercise relative to their command of English. In this activity, students could be asked to make personal choices such as choosing items to buy for a party, items needed to make something, or presents for family or friends, and then move on to discussing and explaining choices.

## 3. The Worksheet

### 3.1 Question Types

The worksheet is an important part of the lesson as it directly determines the effectiveness of the insert. A unique worksheet needs to be specially constructed for each insert and is designed to point the students toward

cultural information. The worksheet contains various types of questions with a total of approximately 10 questions. Each question type serves a particular purpose and should therefore be used in the prescribed order. The first type consist of general questions that introduce the material to the students and give students the chance to familiarize themselves with the prices of the items and overall layout of the insert. The second type is the specific question that requires the students to look more closely and analytically at the material. These include multi-step questions to encourage the students to think more deeply about the information. Following these questions are the point specific questions that focus the students on specific cultural aspects of the insert concentrating on packaging of items, styles, sizes, etc. The fourth question type is the comparison and conversion question which again requires the students to look more carefully at cultural things by comparing and contrasting them with their own country. These focus on such aspects as price comparisons, varieties of items, special features, etc. The final type of question is the open-ended variety that allows the students to make personal choices showing preferences which often leads to interesting conversations. These can also be constructed in a way to prepare the students for the rating, role-playing, and personal choice activities listed above.

### **3.2 Help Page**

It is often a good idea to attach an information help page to the worksheet that students can refer to as they work through the questions. Depending upon the insert

used, this page may include loan words, abbreviations, measures, and unique vocabulary and expressions. It is particularly useful to provide conversions so students can easily convert prices, weights, and measures into units used in their own country.

### **4. Student Feedback**

The teacher should be particularly aware of the parts of the insert that the students are naturally drawn to as they search through it. Questions can then be modified, or new questions made, for future classes that point the students toward these things. A successful variation is to have the students make a few of their own questions about the insert which they write down for the teacher to collect or which they ask to a partner.

### **5. Conclusion**

It is relatively easy to accumulate a variety of inserts for use in the English language classroom. The inserts are fun for students to use as they are able to have direct, hands-on contact with the genuine article. These inserts are also interesting for the students as they learn more about the culture of the English speaking country while practicing the language in a very real and meaningful way. Along with building confidence functioning in the target language, using inserts filled with cultural aspects provides a more holistic approach to language learning better preparing the students for real world interaction.

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