

Building Global Citizenship through an International Studies-themed Study Tour

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グローバル・シチズンシップ構築の為の国際学をテーマにしたスタディツアー

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Abstract :

This paper reports on the researchers' efforts to expand their students' learning to include real world content learning and authentic language practice outside the classroom. The researchers guided a group of six Japanese international studies students on a study tour to Cambodia, during which they learned about the history and culture of the area, while also seeing firsthand how NGOs and the local community are dealing with the issues of rural poverty, rapid development, and responsible tourism. The tour involved visiting an NGO that is attempting to coordinate development efforts, witnessing the installation of bio-sand water filters in a rural village, teaching at a supplemental school, learning about vocational training, and experiencing the history and culture of Cambodia at the Angkor Archeological Park. The students' reactions to their experiences through journal entries are presented and discussed.

要旨：本論では、教室内での学習のみにとどまらず、学生が実際に体験し理解を深め、さらにそこから生きた英語を学ぶ手助けをする研究者の奮闘を報告する。六人の国際学部学生をカンボジアへのスタディツアーに研究者が先導し、学生達はカンボジアの歴史や文化を学びつつ、農村の貧困問題や急速な発展、地域に密着した観光事業等の問題に NGO や地域社会がいかに直面しているかを目の当たりにした。そのツアーでは、開発に尽力する NGO を訪問し、農村部の村にバイオ砂水フィルターを設置する作業を視察し、補足学校で教え、職業訓練について学び、アンコールワット遺跡公園でカンボジアの歴史と文化を体験した。日記を通した学生達の反応や経験が、本論で提示され議論されている。

Key words : experiential learning, content-based language learning, global citizenship

For the past fifty years, language education has steadily kept close to its roots in cognitive psychology by focusing upon the capacities of students' conscious "classroom mind". Much of theory and research is centered on how the brain handles acquisition, linguistic processing, and uses language to connect itself with the world. This journey inward has spawned many more questions than answers, and remains a rigorous and noble pursuit for those set upon knowing more about human linguistic capacities and learning in general. However, there is room in language education for a venturing *out* as well. No theory of learning omits the importance of input

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and stimuli, and so the value of exposing students to new and challenging learning experiences should not be ignored. Experiential learning, therefore, can be defined as any exposure to events or contexts outside of a classroom that seek to support, complement, or enhance classroom learning in a way that classroom learning itself cannot ; the process of learning is stressed over outcomes (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Experiential learning in this way aims to redefine learning not as merely an institutional endeavor but a human one. It should be only fitting, then, that students of International Studies be given ample opportunity to experience real-world contexts. Upon reflection, one might conclude that the very idea of bringing “real-world” issues and content into the classroom (particularly in Japan) is an implicit admission that language education has thus far been focused upon something other than (or at least disconnected from) the real world. What’s more, it has been widely accepted that language study must now be an exercise not only in communication but critical thinking and “real-world” content. A paradox of modern education is that we have our students in a “box” (the classroom), and then within this framework ask them to *think outside of it*. Experiential learning simply *brings* the students outside of the box ; and when it does, the thinking isn’t far behind.

Guiding Principles

For international studies students who are in their classes taking a close look at postwar development, history, religion, economy, language, and culture, Cambodia provides a wealth of real experiences and opportunities to reflect upon these areas, with rich observable evidence of present day transformation. The similarity it bears to postwar Japan is striking : at present, it is one of the poorest countries yet its economy is growing at one of the fastest rates in the world ; it is reshaping its national identity in the wake of a devastating war (attempted genocide at the hands of Pol Pot and his Khmer Rouge) ; it is a primarily agricultural country now seeing rapid growth in cities ; it depends upon foreign influx of tourists and their dollars for much of its economic development and must now reteach itself to handle growth responsibly and efficiently. How Cambodia’s “new era” takes shape within the years to come is still unfolding. It is an exciting time to witness these shifts.

Angkor Wat, the largest religious structure in the world, is at the root of the Cambodian identity and is a key to understanding Cambodia as it existed prior to the presence of the French and the war visited upon it in the 20th century. Like Japan, there are many historical and religious sites within Cambodia that serve as a symbol of history and national pride and are being embraced in the midst of rapid growth and change. Angkor Wat has become the particular symbol that Cambodians most strongly embrace and it is central to the continuously evolving national and cultural identity ; that ancient religious sites provide historical context for a national identity cannot be lost on the curious minds of global-minded Japanese university students.

In light of this, as a guiding principle, the study tour stresses context and content. Just as content-based language teaching seeks to offer rich input and awaken language within the student (Brown, 1994), the study tour aims to awaken students’ opinions on real issues. It also encourages critical thought by placing students within a new context, so that meaningful language use is given a chance to develop within it. Students will not “experience” and “communicate” simultaneously per se, but will rather communicate *within* a unique experience. Experiential learning, in this way, is the ultimate contextualization-and the experienced language teacher is well aware of the necessity of context in the development of language skills.

Procedure

The study tour was advertised to the students in the School of International Studies via a promotional flier and information sessions. Approximately twelve students expressed interest in the tour,

and in the end six signed up, four first year students and two second year. All were female with TOEIC scores ranging from 550 to 715 ($M=637$; $SD=70$). The participants and their parents all signed release waivers. They agreed to attend a series of three pre-departure lessons that would cover the history and culture of Cambodia, issues facing Cambodia today, as well as English that they might use during the trip. The tour itself was scheduled for five nights and six days during the school break. The participants would travel as a group to Siem Reap, Cambodia, meeting up with the researchers who were already in Cambodia for a teachers' conference.

Pre-departure lessons

The pre-departure lessons were held in three 90-minute sessions with the purposes of reducing participant anxiety by familiarizing them with some of the topics they would be learning about on the tour as well as reviewing language that could be useful. The first session began with a quiz game that assessed the participants' knowledge of Cambodia. The researchers used a combination of lectures, film excerpts, and small group discussion to introduce key elements of Cambodian history such as the rise and fall of Angkor and the genocide of the 1970s. The second session explored some of the issues that are facing current day Cambodia, such as the positive and negative impact of tourism and the importance of access to clean water for the rural poor. Finally, the participants were given opportunities to use role plays to practice English in common travel situations including talking to a hotel front desk clerk or asking a tour guide for more information.

NGO visits

ConCert

The first visit on the tour was to ConCert, an organization that centralizes NGO activity in the Siem Reap area by serving as a network for the numerous groups working there. NGOs receive guidance, information, and much-needed oversight for efficient and ethical management of their work (ConCert 2012). ConCert's chairman and founder, Michael Horton, welcomed the study tour group into his office, and introduced students to his family and staff. Through a heartfelt and informative talk, he provided students with a framework for observing Cambodia's developmental issues and a way of approaching and evaluating NGO efforts.

Horton referred to The Hierarchy of Needs, a psychological theory of what motivates human behavior (Maslow 1943). He alerted students to the idea that help in various forms, no matter how well intentioned, in some cases may do more harm than good by aiming to satisfy a need beyond those most urgent. For instance, schoolbooks and educational supplies can be wasted resources if they are sent to a town whose children are at risk of death due to contaminated water. By focusing upon and satisfying the deepest physiological needs (food and water) before all others, human motivation will then "graduate" to higher needs centered on family, security, resources, and even employment. Horton enlightened the students on the importance of keeping specific needs in mind when contributing to the developmental progress.

Students took notes on the information offered, and some of these ideas would later find their way into their daily journals. It was in this context that the learning experience defined for the students how effective development begins and how it becomes sustainable. Later in the tour it would become apparent to the students that nothing in the way of economic stability is remotely feasible

without the very basic needs of survival being addressed. ConCert was an essential first phase in the experience for this reason.

Trailblazer Foundation

The second NGO visited was a group called the Trailblazer Foundation (Trailblazer 2011). Their main activities include providing the technical expertise and support for rural communities to address their basic needs, in particular access to clean water. The participants were given a tour of their office, model garden, and the workshop where they build bio-sand water filters. Our group was able to make a donation to cover the costs for two of these filters and was allowed to accompany the staff while they delivered and installed filters at a rural village. During this portion of the tour, the participants listened to detailed explanation of this NGO's operations and the effects they are having on the local community. By actually going into the rural areas and visiting homes in the area, the participants had the opportunity to experience issues connected to poverty, processing authentic language to understand international issues in a real world context that they will never forget.

Supplemental Education

Savong School

The insufficient number of schools and educational resources in Cambodia, in particular in rural areas, has led a number of NGOs and other groups to open schools that provide supplemental education. Our tour visited one such school called the Savong School and Orphanage (Savong 2011). Approximately 1000 students attend Savong to learn languages (English, Korean, or Japanese) and computer skills. The school has a dedicated staff of Cambodian teachers but also welcomes visiting instructors from abroad, who stop in to teach anywhere from a few hours to a few months. After a tour of the facilities, our group taught lessons to students of all ages in either English or Japanese. While the researchers focused on giving the classes of students chances to use what they were currently studying in communicative tasks, the participants shared activities such as origami or Japanese calligraphy with small groups. However, this learning experience went beyond language education, as the participants were able to witness first hand how the local community was attempting to prepare its children for the rapidly changing tourism-based economy.

Vocational Training

The Paul Dubrule School of Hotel and Tourism represents the latter stages of economic development, as those who enroll in its programs are able to do so after accumulating a relatively sizeable amount of tuition funds (300 USD as of February of 2012) as well as basic foreign language skills. Paul Dubrule, following an eight-month long bicycle journey from France to Siem Reap, founded the school in 2002. Impressive in its design, much of the modernity of the training facilities surpass those of the very businesses trainees may find themselves working for upon graduation. The Dubrule School features large training centers for culinary arts, service and hospitality. It also boasts a digital language library and on-site language training. Students were led on a tour of the facilities and were able to briefly observe a group of hospitality trainees engaged in customer service role-plays.

It is at this stage in development where the vision of organizations such as Savong School begins to take tangible shape. As Savong's language classes are adjusted to respond to the influx of tourists from various countries, Paul Dubrule's training has the ongoing task of keeping up with trends and foreign expectations of cuisine, hospitality, and service. Students' opportunity to observe these two organizations reinforced two very important ideas in understanding the process of development : first, that primary needs such as basic education in language and literacy need be fulfilled in order to move on to training in specific fields ; and second, that the curious sightseeing and shopping whims of nations with the spending power to travel abroad quite literally decide the content of the education and training of "host" countries like Cambodia. In short, students were able to see that when it comes to economics, the borders between nations are nearly invisible-powerful economies have direct effects on weaker ones.

Culture and History

Angkor Archeological Park

The influence of history and religion on the consciousness of modern-day Cambodia is impossible to forget when considering the very size-literally-of its symbols ; the vast "city temple" of Angkor Wat, Angkor Thom, Ta Prohm, and dozens of other ruins comprise Angkor Archeological Park. The gateway to these ancient monuments is located six kilometers south of Siem Reap, the capital city of the province of the same name, which itself a reminder of history : roughly translated, Siem Reap means the "total defeat of Siam ". Angkor Wat is the site visited most often. It was initially constructed in the 12th century under King Suryavarman II to worship the Hindu god Vishnu and remained standing amid war, loss of power, and restoration of the kingdom.

Beyond the majestic architecture towering over even the tallest trees of the surrounding forests and intricate reliefs documenting war and other histories, an invaluable role that the visit to these ancient structures played within the study tour was providing the opportunity for students to see the transformation that one area and group of people have endured over not simply years but centuries ; Angkor Wat, the grandest religious structure known in history, now overlooks a population regarded among the poorest on earth. This irony did not go unnoticed by French explorer Henri Mouhot, who wrote in the 19th century that the breathtaking temple city "presents a sad contrast to the state of barbarism in which the nation is now plunged" (Seng, 2005). For Cambodians, it seems to have taken on a symbol of hope and pride. An image of Angkor Wat can be found not only on the national flag but virtually everywhere in both private and public sectors : banks, schools, hospitals, shopping centers, and restaurants display pictures of Angkor Wat. Not one but two brands of beer also bear its name or a variation of it.

Landmine Museum

As important as witnessing the wonder of the ancient Khmer civilization was to experience the terrible civil war and genocide that still affects Cambodian society today. During our visit to the Landmine Museum, the participants were able to see displays of hundreds of defused land mines and munitions while learning about the efforts of people like the museum's founder, Aki Ra, a former child soldier and mine layer, to rid the country of the more than 5 million land mines that remain today (The Landmine 2012). While touring the museum, the participants spent a full hour at-

tentively reading about the history of the war and the issue of land mines in English, despite the fact that Japanese translations were available. Nothing can bring home the impact this issue like reading about it while surrounded by real mines and real survivors.

Discussion

Student journal responses

That experiential learning is meant to awaken the minds of students and reach them on a deeper level that goes beyond simply language, the entries into their journals serve as evidence of just how deeply these experiences are integrated with their previous understanding of development, culture, and the work of NGOs. The following are some of the written comments that display transformations and shifts in knowledge toward a heightened understanding. It is worth noting that self-reflection permeated most of the entries ; students had gone beyond simply commenting and documenting what they saw and sought to articulate changes within themselves.

In comments such as these, it is apparent that students grew to embrace the experience and began to value the realities that await them beyond the conventional context of the classroom.

- “I enjoyed this Cambodia Study Tour very much, and I learned a lot. I felt a lot of feelings and had thoughts that I can’t feel or think in Japan.”
- “These experiences are really important. We can’t see the reality until we go to Cambodia and see it.”
- “This study tour was a priceless experience for me.”

It is encouraging that students at times were motivated to follow up and seek out activities beyond the scope of the study tour, which is an essential part of becoming a global citizen. Although experiential learning is defined in this project as a focus on the process of learning over the outcomes, positive outcomes should be acknowledged :

- “Before the trip, I was looking forward to seeing Angkor Wat most, but now I think visiting NGOs was more impressive for me . . . I want to know more about NGOs in Cambodia . . . I want to find what I can do to help them.”
- “When I’m in Japan I feel like 100 yen is like ‘just 100 yen’, but for many people in poor countries the value of 100 yen is pretty big. I can buy them soap to clean their hands . . . I can save them from disease. Even small money can make a difference. I’ve never thought like this.”

It is also worth noting that in a very large part of these journal responses seemed to take on the role of observer, active participant, and even detective in their efforts to develop an understanding of Cambodia’s issues. Additionally, the tone of the writing seemed to show an intention to do more ; many entries gave evidence that students were not only intellectually stimulated by what they saw but also motivated to act. One wonders how often or how frequently classroom learning, comparatively speaking, can succeed in achieving such a result.

For next time

In the future, we intend to improve two areas of the Cambodia study tour in particular : the writing tasks and pre-departure and post-tour lessons. On this tour, the participants were asked to journal about particular topics, but generally given a fair amount of freedom. Next time, we would like to continue to encourage free response entries, but also include more structured tasks in order to reinforce their learning experiences and aid the researchers in gathering relevant data. The pre-departure lessons were useful in both lowering anxiety and preparing the participants for what they would encounter, but it is likely that more time preparing would be even more valuable. In addition, we would like to add sessions after the participants return to give them more time to reflect on their experiences and share them with others through the medium of English.

Conclusion

The field of international studies brings together such diverse areas as international relations, economics, business, language, and culture. Our students study these subjects while also trying to improve their proficiency in one or more foreign languages, and they may even take content classes offered in a language they are studying, but how often do they get the opportunity to really use a foreign language in the real world to experience the issues they have studied at school? An international studies-themed study tour can provide this kind of contextualized learning of not only a country, its people, and the issues their facing, but also valuable chances to use the foreign language they are studying in a meaningful way that will surely help them along their path to become global citizens.

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