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language teachers different from your teachers in your culture? How are they the same? What are the five most important values of your culture? (For example, family) What in your culture are you most proud of? How could you change one thing about your culture, without hurting someone from another culture? Would you ever consider living permanently in a country other than your home country? Why or why not? Do you think "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" is always good advice? Why or why not? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you had to "do as the Romans do"? What do you think is important when visiting another culture? If a group of people just came to your country from overseas, what advice would you give them? What culture besides your own do you admire? Why? If aliens visited your country, what might surprise them? What is the best/most important thing your culture has given to the world? What is the best/most important thing your culture/country has adopted from another culture? What are some things that define a culture? For example, music, language, ... Customs What customs do you practice? What are your favorite customs? What customs do you think should be revised? What customs do you think should no longer be practiced? What customs (from elsewhere) do you think should be included in our culture? If you can think of another good question for this list, please add it. Thanks to Scott Bronner who suggested this topic and contributed the first 25 questions in January 2003. Copyright © 1997-2010 by The Internet TESL Journal The Internet TESL Journal Diane Wattdwatt034 [at] uottawa.caUniversity of Ottawa (Ottawa, Canada) This unit on looking at modern art can be used with intermediate to advanced adolescentand adult ESL learners. Many consider contemporary art simplistic, perplexing,and just plain weird, which makes it a perfect topic for generating discussionand language learning in the ESL classroom. As learners become engaged in the topic they will be developing their language abilities. The unit employs an integrated,four-skills approach embedded in a cultural theme, and teachers can pick and chooseactivities according to student needs and available time. Language and SkillsVocabulary (New words can be recycled throughout the unit)Speaking and conversation practiceWritingReadingListeningCultureStudents will learn about some famous Western artists and theirworks.As students learn about the ideas behind the art they learnsomething about Western thought and culture. This unit can also be used in an intercultural approach to languagelearning. Students are likely to become more aware of their own culture when they come face-to-face with aspects of other cultures. Understanding one'sself as a cultural being is the first step towards attaining interculturalcompetence (See Byram, 1997). Day One: Setting the Stage (1 ½ hours) MaterialsModern artprints (at least one per student)Student dictionariesChart paperMarkersAdvance PreparationBeforeclass, put up the modern art prints all around the classroom. In large letterson the blackboard write, What'sthis?The LessonAs students arrive they soonnotice the art on the walls and will be intrigued. It is best to say as littleas possible at this point. To begin the class, ask everyone to get up and havea more careful look at all of the prints.Then have students sit down and write down their thoughtsabout the art they have just seen. Once they have done this, go around theclass and ask each student to make a brief statement about their impressionsof the art prints. You can be certain that everyone will have an opinion!(E.g., I could paint that! A child could do that. What is it? What doesit mean? It's so simple. That's not art!.)Class Discussion Centered Around Student ResponsesSome ideas for discussion include:The price of these works and why they are so expensive. Is it art? Why or why not? What is art? What's the point?Is it worthwhile?How do these paintings compare to art in the students' own cultures?Which ones do students like? Dislike? Which are the strangest?Vocabulary ActivityDivide the class into groups of three or four. Each group collectively generatesa list of 10 words to describe the paintings in general, consulting a dictionarywhen needed. Challenge learners to find the most descriptive words they can. The word lists are written on chart paper. Each group then chooses what they considerto be their two most original words and explains them to the class. The word listsare posted around the room for the duration of the unit for easy reference. MaterialsAdvance PreparationPut up art prints in the classroom before the students arrive.The Lesson Ask students to imagine that they are going to open their own class artgallery. However, there is only enough money in the budget to purchase a limitednumber of paintings (one per group of four students). Students are then asked to choose one of the prints on the wall. It worksbest if they select one they actually like. One of the great things aboutusing modern art in the ESL classroom is that it is open to personal interpretation.Learners pretend that they are the artist who created the work, and are invited to fabricate the information they wish about their painting (e.g., why theypainted it, what the message of the painting is supposed to be, etc.). Theyhave total freedom to think of something wacky or entirely serious. Studentswith a good sense of humor will have a lot of fun with this. Others will becompletely engrossed in what an artist might actually have been trying tosay through his/her work. Divide the class into groups of four. Each "artist" must tryto convince the other members of the group of virtues of his/her painting giving reasons why it should be the one from their group chosen for the classgallery. The teacher might want to model the activity for the whole classfirst. After each group member has had a chance to present his/her argument,the group must reach a consensus on which painting to put into the gallery.There may be students who are unsure of what to do at first, so it is a good idea for the teacher to walk around and check that everyone is on track,providing help when needed. The teacher also helps students with languageand vocabulary when needed. Once all groups have reached a consensus, one member presents the group'sfinal choice to the entire class, giving reasons why it was selected. As eachwork is presented it is posted at the front of the room. Day Three: Visit to the Art Gallery /or/ a Virtual Tour (2 hours) Materials Worksheets (see below).Pens.Advance Preparation Arrange a guided tour of the contemporary art exhibit at a local art gallery,or find appropriate web sites for a virtual tour.Prepare worksheets. The LessonGuided Tour:Arrange a guided tour of the modern art exhibit of a local art gallery.These are generally 50 minutes long. Encourage students to ask the guidequestions. Many students have never visited an art gallery, so the visitoften makes a real impact on them. If an in-person visit is not possible,students may take a virtual tour of a gallery (see Resources belowfor suggestions).Post-tour Activity:Students work with a partner. They are given 30 minutes to explore anddiscuss the contemporary art exhibit on their own. Students complete theworksheet below (this can also be used for a virtual tour). They list thetitles and artists of 3 works that they looked at together, and write abrief description and response for each one.Worksheet:Art Gallery Visit: Contemporary Art With a partner, take 30 minutes to explore the contemporary exhibits.List the titles and artists of 3 works that you looked at together and discussed.Write a brief description of the work and a sentence describing your responseto it.Painting #1Title-Name of artist-Description of the work-Your response to the workPainting #2Title-Name of artist-Description of the work-Your response to the workPainting #3Title-Name of artist-Description of the work-Your response to the workOptional Lessons Listening ActivityThere are numerous videos available in most local libraries introducingmodern art, or teachers may wish to focus on a particular artist and his/herwork. Pre-teach important vocabulary and have students complete comprehensionquestions after watching the video.Oral PresentationsStudents choose an artist or work of art to research and prepare a shortoral presentation. To work on fluency and accuracy, rather than have one studentat a time present to the entire class, students can give presentations insmall groups of three or four. They then switch groups until everyone hasgiven their presentation three or four times.Alternatively, students could make a presentation on an artist or art fromtheir own culture.Writing AssignmentsStudents research an artist or a work of art (from their host or homecountry) and write a short report.Students imagine that their national government is going to spend one milliondollars on a new painting for its national gallery. They write a letter tothe editor either supporting or opposing this purchase.A Class Debate or Group TaskThe class debates a question such as: The government should continue to spend money acquiring modern art. Arguments against this statementmight deal with how money might be better spent (e.g., on the poor and homeless).To encourage as much speaking as possible, conduct a mini-debate. Studentsare put into groups of four. Two in each group argue as a team in favor ofthe statement and the other two argue against it. Each group tries to reacha consensus, and at the end of the activity one member of the group providesa summary of their discussion for the entire class. Focus on a Particular PaintingBefore going on the visit to the art gallery, introduce learners to oneparticular painting in more detail. Choose the most famous work in the galleryor perhaps the most expensive or most controversial. Provide some backgroundinformation. When students come face-to-face with it in the gallery it willbe more meaningful for them. Reading ActivityFind an article relating to contemporary art at the appropriate readinglevel. Create a jigsaw activity in which each member of a small group of twoor three reads a section and explains it to the other member(s) of the group.Teach new vocabulary from the article. Follow up with comprehension questionsand language activities. Closing Activity At the end of the unit students respond to thefollowing question, first as part of a class discussion and then more privately in writing:Have your attitudes towards modern/contemporary art changed in any waysince the beginning of this unit? For example, do you like it more/less?Do you understand it better? Do you think it is worthwhile or not? Doesit make you think?Note to TeachersTeachers need not be art experts to carry out this unit successfully. The ideas not to "teach" students about modern art, but to discover itwith students, with an emphasis on personal response (and modern art certainlyoffers much to respond to). When looking at art students should be asked tothink about what kind of society produces such works. What does it tell us aboutwhat is valued in Western culture (e.g., creativity, originality, independenceof thought, etc.)? This is often very different than what is found in art fromother cultures and international students often find this fascinating.Some Ideas-in-brief About Contemporary ArtIt is a form of communication.It says something. It's not just pretty.It takes into account our senses.It reflects society.It gives meaning or new understanding to the world.It begins inward and moves outward.It is the spirit of the time.It's about making statements.We know it is art by the discussion it generates.If it transmits a point or message, it is art.We need to understand the context within which the art has emerged to understandit.It makes you think.It is open to interpretation.Understanding modern art is like learning a new language, except there isno Berlitz course.Contemporary art is the art of our times. (From the video, What's This: Understanding Contemporary Art,1998)Resources for Virtual Tours and Background Information References Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicativecompetence. Toronto: Multilingual National Gallery of Canada (1998). What's this? Understanding contemporary art. Ottawa, Ontario. [Videocassette, 29 minutes]. The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. X, No. 10, October 2004 The Internet TESL Journal Anna Franca Plastinaa[nplast [at] tin.itESOL-Italy Local Co-ordinator in Cosenza, Southern ItalyThe present paper is based on part of the work carried out at the University of East Anglia/NILE, Norwich U.K. on a teacher trainer bursary jointly funded by the British Council and the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and was presented as a workshop at the 18th British Council National Conference held in Palermo (Italy) in March 1999. The aim of this work is to design an in-service training (INSET) plan to be run for ESL/EFL teachers and based on the importance of teaching Culture in Literature within the ESL/EFL classroom. Why train ESL/EFL teachers to teach Culture in Literature? Valdes (1986:137) claims:It is simply accepted as given that literature is a viable component of second language programs at the appropriate level and that one of the major functions of literature is to serve as a medium to transmit the culture of the people who speak the language in which it is written. Furthermore, it is possible to agree with Kramsch (1993:1) that:Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing.It is always in the background, right from day one /.../ challenging [the good language learners'] In the literature, theoretical tenets seem, therefore, to underline the urge to escape the language-culture dichotomy which unduly simplifies the issue raised.Didactically, the planning of this course can be justified by the need to use language for successful interaction with members of another sociocultural background. In this perspective, hitherto neglected within the ESL/EFL curriculum, trainees develop awareness of the importance of contextualising language by reference to its cultural connotations. This may possibly shift trainees away from the view of underestimating culture as an adjunct to the four skills towards the social/anthropological values embodied in language.Bearing this in mind, the present work will be divided into three sections:the theoretical framework; an overall model which determines the basic parameters for designing the present INSET plan;the implementation of the INSET plan: the core of the present work which relates the theoretical model to the teacher training situation.Overview: a brief conclusion which analyses the desired outcomes of the INSET implementationSection One - The Theoretical Framework for the INSET PlanThe present INSET plan will be designed according to the following parameters, which seem properly to cover the main issues dealt in foreign language teacher education courses (cf. Wallace, 1991; Woodward, 1991; Richards & Nunan, 1990). 1.1. The Theoretical Parameters Table 1 provides an outline of the main parameters required. Table 1: The INSET Plan ParametersAim:What is the training course intended to achieve?Setting:Where will the course be held?What type of course will it be?What particular need for the course is there? (government/educational policy statements);Target Group:What kind of trainee is the course designed for? (trainee's teaching experience, professional training level, attitude to work situation, background knowledge);What admission requirements are demanded?Content:What are the major strands and the objectives to be dealt with?How do they relate to each other?How is the content organised?Procedure:What is the purpose of each unit of content?How will it be managed? (time, method, activities, materials, classroom management etc.)Which techniques will be employed? (awareness activities, self-assessment, introspection, experimentation, reflection).Feedback:What opportunities will be given to the trainees to evaluate the process of learning? (formative evaluation).Evaluation:What indications of success/failure?How will the trainer evaluate such outcomes? (summative evaluation).Table 1: The INSET Plan Parameters By attempting to answer the issues illustrated in Table 1, it will now be feasible to set up the profile for our case. Section Two: The Implementation of the INSET plan 2.1. The profileAim:To sensitise the trainees to the importance of integrating culture in the ESL/EFL learning process;To develop in the trainees an understanding of the importance of raising cultural awareness and promoting cross-cultural interaction;To encourage the trainees to use English literature for cultural purposes through the study of appropriate texts.Setting:The course will be held in any educational institution (school, university, teachers' association).Course type:Short intensive in-service course designed to meet language education policy, which sets the goal of broadening the ESL/EFL learner's cultural horizons. The course consists of 4 sessions (3 hours each) for a total duration of 12 hours.Target Group:It is intended for a group of 12 in-service teachers with mixed teaching experience in different types of upper secondary schools mainly in a monolingual environment with heterogeneous professional training levels. Their background knowledge about culture ranges from common stereotypes to direct contact experiences.Admission requirements:In-service upper secondary school teachers.Content:The major strands to be dealt relate respectively to the four sessions:Enhancing cultural awarenessWorking with culture (events and institutions)Working with culture (values, patterns and attitudes)Placing culture in context (culture in literature)The sessions are interrelated in that they lead the trainees from the essential exploration of the term culture towards intercultural literary interpretation.Procedures:Approach: task-based; co-operative learning;Materials: OHP, board, handouts, worksheets, photocopies, drawing paper, transparencies, markers, photos/pictures.Classroom management:Individual (I/W)Pair Work (P/W)Group Work (G/W)Plenary (P)Techniques:Brainstorming, elicitation (trainees' knowledge)Problem-solving tasks (trainees' application)Mind-mapping, self-reports, discussions and debates (trainees' reflection)Feedback:Opportunities will be given through discussions, self-assessment, awareness activitiesEvaluation:Brief pre- and post- session reportsEvaluation sheet on course outcomes 2.2. Implementing the plan A sample plan of two sessions - Session One: Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Session Four: Placing culture in context (culture in literature) will now be provided. The purpose of sampling the first and the last sessions of the course is to enable the reader to grasp the overall idea of the course structure which may be represented as in Figure 1. 2.3. Sample of Session One Session One: Enhancing cultural awareness (3 hrs.) Activity No. 1Aim: to develop awareness of the various meanings which can be ascribed to the term "culture".Time: 60 minutesMaterial: OHP, board, transparencies, markersProcedure:P - Introduction: Trainer presents the general outline of the course and its importance (5 mins.)P - Trainer socializes with trainees: Gathers information from each person: name, teaching place and course expectations (10 mins.)Trainer asks the group to focus on the term "Culture" and writes the word on the board as a spider web diagram. (cf. figure 2)Brainstorm: I/W: 10 words/expressions related to the term "culture" (5 mins.) Possible outcomes: music, stereotypes, food, sports, education, government, holidays, beliefs, hobbies, history. (cf. Robinson, 1985)Activities:P/W : share and justify choices (10 mins.)G/W: (four trainees in each group) share information and prepare transparency on their conclusions (20 mins)P : Each group reports ideas and comments to the whole group (10 mins.) Trainees have feedback on their I/W. Activity No. 2Aim: to stimulate discussion about one's own cultureTime: 30 minutesMaterial: no special needsProcedure:Trainer asks half group to list all the positive things about own culture* and other half the negative ones - trainees: (P/W) (10 mins.) Possible outcomes: positive: friendliness, good food, fashionable people, artistic cities; negative: chaotic bureaucracy, "langentopoli", mafia.G/W: Cross-over groups: ideas from the different groups are shared without the need for a feedback session. (10 mins.)P: Awareness activity: Discuss how many of the listed things correspond to common stereotypes about own ethnic group (10 mins.)* In our case Italian culture is considered. Break (15 mins.) Activity No. 3Aim: to reflect on the differences between one's own culture and that of the target languageTime: 15 minutesMaterial: Pictures/Photos of stereotyped British and national* images: Brits queuing up at bus stop, weather in England, tea, Royal Family, Tower Bridge pizza/spaghetti, Colosseum, mafia boss, Pavarotti, Italian fashion.Procedure:P: Trainer elicits information about the images (5 mins.)P: Keywords on cultural elements are elicited and written on the boardAssociations are made to determine cultural areas/patterns (10 mins.)Feedback: Awareness of the elements of culture vs.stereotypes.* In our case Italian images are considered. Activity No. 4Aim: to identify the importance of culture in the EFL learning processTime: 60 minutesMaterial: Handouts: Drawing paper and pensProcedure:G/W: Handout sheet A to one pair and sheet B to other. (Short quotations have been selected to trigger reflection on the issue without involving trainees in excessive reading which may influence personal viewpoints).P/W: discussion on importance of quotation (5 mins.)report to other pair (10 mins.)P: Sharing ideas on G/W (10 mins.)G/W: drawing on the importance of culture in EFL learning (15 mins.)P: Groups comment on drawings (10 mins)Feedback: Trainees design a mind map on culture (cf. Figure 3). The map should be sufficiently articulated at this stage, providing good retrospective reflection and self-evaluation on Session One. (10 mins.) Table 2 Handouts: Session 1 Activity 4 "Culture in language learning is not an expendable fifth skill tacked on, so to speak, to the teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. (Kramsch, 1993:1) 'Culture' is always in the background, right from day one /.../ challenging [the good language learners'] ability to make sense of the world around them". (Kramsch, 1993:1)Table 2 Handouts: Session 1 Activity 4 Cultural Awareness involves...Figure 3 Mind map on Cultural Awareness 2.4. Sample of Session Four Session Four: Placing culture in context (culture in literature) (3hrs) Activity No. 1Aim: to consider literature as a medium which conveys the culture of the target groupTime: (30 minutes)Material: Handouts A & BProcedure:G/W: Handout A to one pair; handout B to other (cf. Table 3)P/W: discussion on quotations (10 mins.)Report to other pair (10 mins.)Feedback:P: sharing ideas on G/W (10 mins.)Expected key points:The link between language-literature-cultureThe selection of literary texts: cultural free vs. cultural boundReading comprehension: linguistic vs. cultural difficultiesMethodology on teaching culture Table 3 Handouts: Session 4 Activity 1 The aim of the language teacher is surely to teach language, not culture. /.../ The solution , therefore, is to select literary texts which are culturally universal or, at least culturally neutral, and which allow us to concentrate exclusively on language. (from Lazar, 1993:66) Our students' comprehension is frequently impeded not by linguistic features in a literary text, but by cultural ones. We owe it to them to help them understand what these might be. Language can never be divorced from culture... (from Lazar, 1993:66)Table 3 Handouts: Session 4 Activity 1 Activity No. 2Aim: to enable trainees to consider cultural aspects when using literary textsTime: 40 minutesMaterial: Transparency of Adaption from Lazar's (1993) list (cf. Table 4). OHPProcedure:Brainstorm:I/W: list 5-10 cultural aspects which ought to be considered fundamental for literary text comprehension (10 mins.)P/W: share and back up choices (10 mins.)P: I/W and/or P/W report list items to whole group (10 mins.)Feedback:Trainer shows Lazar's (1993) list.Trainees check I/W-P/W lists: tick items and/or add. (10 mins.) Table 4 Adapted from Lazar's (1993) list of cultural aspects in textsObjects or products that exist in one society but not in anotherProverbs, idioms, formulaic expressions which embody cultural valuesSocial structures, roles and relationshipsCustoms/rituals/traditions/festivalsBeliefs, values, superstitionsPolitical, historic and economic backgroundInstitutionsTaboosMetaphorical/connotative meaningsHumourRepresentativeness - to what slice of a culture or society the text refers toGenreWritten language statusTable 4 Adapted from Lazar's (1993) list of cultural aspects in texts Activity No. 3Aim: to elicit various strategies to deal with learners' cultural problems with textsTime: 20 minutesMaterial: Photocopy of global strategies listProcedure:P/W: trainees jot down strategies required to help learners overcome cultural problems with texts (10 mins.)P: On OHP build up a list from P/W comparison (10 mins.)Feedback: Photocopy of global strategies listExpected outcomes:Personalise theme/topic of the textGloss cultural information: terms/expressions etc.Stimulate cultural information inferenceBrainstorm cross-cultural comparisonMake associations around cultural connotationsBreak (15 minutes) Activity No. 4Aim: to implement activities 2 and 3 with reference to a sample textTime: 60 minutesMaterial: Sample Text (cf. Appendix A)Procedure:P/W in G/W:1 P/W: go through text slowly and note down cultural problems possibly experienced by learners1 P/W: read text and write down possible strategies to facilitate learners' reading. (20 mins.)G/W:Share P/W discussion (10 mins.)Match strategies/cultural problems related to text (5 mins.)Prepare transparencies: grid (cf. Table 5) on G/W (15 mins.)P: G/W report grid to whole group (10 mins.)P: Follow-Up: Trainer elicits overall course issues by asking: How has culture been considered in relation to literature?Expected outcomes:Literature - medium of cultureFocus on cultural aspects of literary textsStrategies to overcome cultural problems with textsSelecting texts properlyPlanning tasks/activities with cultural awareness of the selected textsEvaluation: Trainer hands out Evaluation Sheet (cf. Appendix B)Table 5 Session 4 - Activity 4. Grid with expected outcomes Cultural Items Overcoming Strategies Ayers Rockprovide gloss plastic chairs/Vast inner spacemake associations dusted coalabath treecultural inference Dreamtime Experiencemake cultural comparisons (e.g. myths) tribal mancultural inference Section Three: OverviewIn the present inset plan an attempt has been made to introduce a range of teaching and learning techniques in order to follow the key aspects involved in the process of teacher education. The outcome of the process is illustrated in figure 4:Figure 4 The process of teacher trainingIn sum, figure 4 gives us an overview of the present INSET Plan. The trainees have worked through the three phases - knowledge , application and reflection to attain professional development. Firstly, the trainee has received new knowledge from the teacher trainer and has bought his/her own background knowledge to the course. New information is related, elaborated and stored in the trainee's schemata. Such acquired knowledge is practically applied and experienced in the course of trainees' teaching.Impressions, intentions, feelings etc. are not left unconsciously stored but trainees have developed an awareness of the learning process, of their professional performance, of the positive and/or negative outcomes. In so doing, trainees reflect retrospectively on the overall process. This process has led trainees to the stage of consciously knowing not simply what, but more importantly, how things have occurred, enriching their professional competence. In this view, it seems that the main thrust of the present INSET Plan has been to adhere to the fundamental principles underlying the reflective approach to teacher training. Appendix A: Sample Text Inside Ayers Rock By Les Murray, Subhuman Redneck Poems, 1996(Editor's Note: This text has not been included since it is under copyright protection. Contact Redneck Press, if you would like the text.) Appendix B: Evaluation SheetPlease completeWhat is your overall impression of the course?Did you expect the course to help you reflect on what you do when teaching?How relevant and effective has the course been with respect to your professional development?Did you prefer any specific activity/session? Why?Did you enjoy working with other members of the group?After a session, how did you review the content and/or process?What would have you added/changed in the course?Which part of your professional competence has the course mainly enhanced? (knowledge, application, reflection, all)Did you back up the course with reference reading?What is your attitude to Teaching Culture after this training experience?BibliographyKramsch, C. (1993). Context and Culture in Language Teaching. Oxford: OUP.Lazar, G. (1993). Literature and Language Teaching. Cambridge: CUP.Richards, J.C. & Nunan, D. (1990). Second Language Teacher Education. Cambridge: CUP.Robinson, G.L.N. (1985). 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