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ABSTRACT

This report presents a description of a seminar in American culture and English-as-a-second-language which allows the students to learn what they want, at their own rate. The teacher serves as a guide and helps the student plan and evaluate his studies. Students may also assume the function of communicating knowledge or ability to each other. Instructional materials depend on the interests of the participants. Basic and constant in the course is a textbook designed to promote language fluency which provides resource material for group discussions usually lasting 20 to 30 minutes. A variety of 15-minute tapes, ranging from simple dialogues to complex lectures and directions, are also used; each tape includes comprehension questions and answers. Each student maintains a folder to record his classroom activity. Students spend at least half their seminar time on cultural "adventures" outside the classroom. In the classroom, they record their impressions and ask any questions. The teacher listens to the tapes and makes suggestions for language development. A list of suggested cultural activities is provided.
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AN INDIVIDUALIZED SEMINAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE AND
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT THE
CULTURE LEARNING INSTITUTE, EAST-WEST CENTER

Paper No. 11

January, 1972

AN INDIVIDUALIZED SEMINAR IN AMERICAN CULTURE AND
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT THE CULTURE LEARNING INSTITUTE,
EAST-WEST CENTER¹

By: Larry E. Smith

Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes (Politics, 11, 2, 4) and the Apostle Paul that a body is a unity of different members (I Cor. Xii, 12-30). Every language teacher knows that no matter what testing or homogeneous grouping has been done, his class is a unity of members who differ in their motivation, learning styles, energy levels, attitudes, previous learning and complex personality factors. In the culture and language seminar of the East-West Culture Learning Institute, the participants also differ in cultural and language backgrounds, in scholastic aptitude, in educational needs, in rates of learning, in language ability and in the time they can attend the class. What is good for one will possibly not be good for two and certainly not good for all. Should we decide in our teaching strategies to aim at the hypothetical, non-real average, we will probably succeed in "fitting" no one.

¹The East-West Center--formally known as "The Center for Cultural and Technical Interchange between East and West"--was established in Hawaii by the United States Congress in 1960. As a national educational institution in cooperation with the University of Hawaii, the Center's mandated goal is "to promote better relations and understanding between the United States and the nations of Asia and the Pacific through cooperative study, training and research." The Culture Learning Institute is one of five problem-oriented institutes in the East-West Center. It was established in July, 1970 and, has an interdisciplinary membership of (1) professional participants from the worlds of industry, government and the arts in Asia and the Pacific; (2) senior scholars from Asia, the Pacific and the United States who are already established in their respective academic fields; and (3) their junior colleagues who are still at the thresholds of their careers, who receive Institute scholarships and who study for higher degrees in departments of the University of Hawaii.

In an attempt to assist each of the participants as he develops a broader understanding of American culture and increases his proficiency in English, we have organized our culture and language seminar to individualize instruction or, more accurately, to encourage personalized learning.

Nature of the Instruction

Individualized instruction is a popular but ambiguous term. Some believe it to mean that the teacher is to keep all 25-30 of his "charges" busy doing different things. Others see it as a mechanical dream world where each student visitor simply "plugs-in" to his appropriate socket. Still others feel it is to turn all responsibility for learning over to the student. In our seminar, we accept none of these as being accurate. We believe that with individualized instruction there is no ONE way or ONE sequence in working with people nor any ONE special set of materials. Our interpretation is that it is an open-end process of helping each person find the best sequence for his personal learning style using the most suitable materials for him that we can obtain.

The Teacher as Resource, Guide and Catalyst

The teacher also helps him plan his program of study and helps him evaluate his progress. We believe the teacher must be responsive to and supportive of individuality. He must know that an individualized program is not necessarily different for each learner, but must be appropriate for each. He must realize that individualized instruction does not require each student to work individually at all times. He must also believe that he is only one of the possible "teachers" in the classroom and that he too can be an active learner. We feel that machines and electronic equipment have an important place in the classroom but that emphasis must be placed on the human element-- that students are human. We believe the best teaching device is another

human, not because humans are always fast, accurate and efficient but because they can understand actions and motives of people since they have at some time experienced and shared them. Each (one) knows what it is to be angry, frustrated, sad, and how it feels to have a close friend. Most have experienced times when they want to be quiet as well as times when it is good to "talk it out."

Participants as Teachers

This approach also recognizes that the people involved can and do learn from each other as well as from the teacher. Since the participants in this seminar are at different ability levels and work in each of the language skills, peer-teaching has been effective. For example, participants have taught others how to operate a tape recorder, how to take a bus to the nearby beach at Waikiki, as well as the importance of non-verbal communication in their respective cultures. Peer-teaching, like individualization, is not new. It was practiced in 1st Century Rome and has existed since ancient times in Hindu schools. In 19th and 20th Century American one-room schools it was easy to find one student teaching another. If language is primarily communication between persons, peer-teaching should provide effective instruction, since the primary rationale for it is that there is no more thorough learning than that gained by communicating knowledge or ability to another.

Bank of Materials

This approach demands that there be an ever increasing bank of materials designed to facilitate individualized programs for all levels of ability in each of the language skills along with a large selection of cultural activities. Almost any regular classroom material can be used but some lends itself to adaptation more easily than others. Programmed

texts may be useful but in themselves cannot provide individualized instruction. They provide for differences in rates of learning but do not offer opportunities for students to ask questions of real concern to them, to make choices and plan, to evaluate and think independently, and to develop individual interests and commitments.

The material in the culture and language seminar varies from time to time depending on the interests of the participants, but two things remain the same. At registration each participant receives a copy of Developing English Fluency, by Ruth Crymes, et al. and a Record Folder. The textbook is used as resource material for the group discussions which usually last twenty or thirty minutes. In these discussions, one participant is the moderator. He chooses the speaking activity, answers questions, directs the discussion and provides a summary statement at the end. The Record Folder (see Appendix A) is provided so that each participant can record his classroom activity. This serves two primary functions: it provides the teacher with a view of the student's activities and indicates his progress; it also helps the participant know "where he is" when he returns after an absence since it is not always possible for him to attend on a regular daily basis.

Equipment

For equipment we use three cassette tape recorders with ten headphones, and a supply of short taped selections which range in content all the way from simple dialogues and radio advertisements to complex lectures and directions. Each of these tapes lasts approximately fifteen minutes and includes comprehension questions and answers at the end. A typewriter and a typing book are provided for the students so that they can either learn to type or type instead of write, any assignment.

To add to the apparent confusion, we even have tapes of songs which the participants can listen to, answer questions about, and sing along with if they desire.

Situational Experience

The participants spend at least half of their culture and language seminar time on cultural "adventures" outside the classroom. These cultural activities (see Appendix B) are provided so that the participants can experience some of the situations that help to give a language its meanings. They offer opportunities for them to participate in the everyday life of the speech community--from going to church to seeing a pornographic movie. Upon their return to the classroom, they record their observations on tape and ask any questions that they might have. The teacher listens to the tape, and then answers questions and makes comments or suggestions about pronunciation, sentence structure, hesitation phenomena, etc. This is done on tape in order that the participant can listen to his own voice, try to correct his own mistakes and thereby become a more effective monitor of his own speech. However, individual conferences between participant and teacher are also provided on a regular basis in order that each participant can discuss the cultural observations as well as any classroom activity or problem.

Preliminary Results

The results thus far have been encouraging. A comparison of the pre- and post-test scores indicates improvement in English proficiency. But of more significance, we feel, is the attitude of the participants toward this type of program. When asked to comment on the procedures of the seminar, five had this to say:

Mr. Pyungsoon Kim, Teaching Assistant, Hanyang University, Seoul, Korea:
"For learning English and culture, I think the procedures are excellent. It is very helpful in that it provides us with good opportunities to improve our English speaking and listening ability. The class is too short for me."

Miss Kanya Lautrakool, Instructor, Faculty of Education, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani, Thailand: "For me, I think it is very helpful because we have Mr. Smith to help us correct our mistakes and guide us. The cultural observations offer us opportunities to learn about the people, the city and the culture. We also get better acquainted with our classmates when we go to observe together. I enjoy this class very much and we have a very good time exchanging ideas about everything."

Mr. Venasio Sele, Teacher, Samoana High School, Utulei, American Samoa:
"I think the procedures are very effective in helping us reach our objective. The materials we are using for discussions gear us to this aim. Through discussions, I have gained more insights into the member's behavior and their cultural backgrounds. It also improves our oral communication."

Miss Bernabela T. de la Cruz, Instructor III, Northern Luzon Teachers College, Laoag City, Philippines: "I think the procedures used are very conducive to individual learning and they are psychologically sound. Each one of us is encouraged to work at his own pace. Listening to the cultural observations of other nationalities provides us also with a better understanding of one another."

Mr. Mikio Matsumura, Lecturer, Hiroshima University, Hiroshima, Japan:
"The procedures, I think, are both appropriate and successful, particularly since in the past we have had few chances to be exposed to English as it is used in daily life. I appreciate this class very much. We can easily take part in this class and brush up our own English without any particular knowledge in any particular field. Therefore, anyone can gain a handsome profit if he is eager to do so."

Conclusion

It is our belief that each language classroom is a unique environment for learning. It cannot be otherwise since each teacher is unique and each combination of individuals who make up a class is likewise unique. Accepting this, individualized instruction or more accurately, personalized learning, may be one of the solutions to a complex teaching problem. In utilizing this approach, the teacher must accept that he is to be a developer of persons, rather than a doer of things. He must be careful to see that the

language learning activities represent honest interactions between persons and that attempts are made to confront realistically what students feel are for them meaningful problems.

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The EAST-WEST CENTER *Honolulu, Hawaii 96822*

EAST-WEST CULTURE LEARNING INSTITUTE

APPENDIX A

Hi!

Welcome to the Culture & Language seminar, designed especially for you. The classes will consist of classroom activities and cultural observations in the community.

In the CLI classroom, the first thirty minutes will be spent working together using Developing English Fluency by Ruth Crymes, et al., and the rest of the time will be individualized. That means you will be free to decide what you want to learn and how you want to study. I will be with you to help and advise when you need it.

For the cultural observations, you will go to see Americans working, studying, shopping, and playing. In order that you will "see it like it is," you should go alone or with only one other person. A list of places you may visit is included in this RECORD FOLDER. Also provided are the questions you are to answer on tape after each observation.

If you are interested in improving your ability in reading, writing, speaking, or listening in English, you may find the material in the classroom helpful. Sometimes you may want to bring other English material (newspapers, magazines, textbooks) to study. If you wish to study some special aspect of English, American culture, or something directly connected with your personal project or school assignment, please feel free to talk with me about it.

This RECORD FOLDER is to help me know what you are studying and how much progress you are making. You may not be able to come everyday. By keeping your RECORD FOLDER up to date, it will be easy for you to return to class and begin your work where you left off. Therefore, please record your work in this RECORD FOLDER each day you are here.

Good luck with your study program. I hope it will be a challenging and rewarding experience for you.

Sincerely,

Larry E. Smith

Listening Comprehension:

Listen to a tape and answer the questions. Compare your answers with those given on the tapes and discuss any questions that you have with the teacher. Then record the following information.

Date	Title	No. of Times Listened to	No. of Correct Answers	Comments

Reading for Speed:

Before you finish this series, (SRA Rate Builders, Blue first, Rose second) you should be able to read each article in one minute with only one mistake in answering the questions. Record the information below.

Date	Color	No. of the Selection	Correct Answers	Time

Following Directions:

There are four books in the classroom called Following Directions. You should complete each one of them (beginning with A-B) as rapidly as you can, writing your answers in this folder, NOT in the books. The answers are given in the books, but if you have any questions, certainly feel free to ask the teacher. As you finish the books, fill in the information below.

Book Series	Date Begun	Continue on Page	Date Completed
A-B			
C-D			
E-F			
G			

Comprehensive Reading Series (G, H, I, J, K, and L)

These workbooks should be completed as rapidly as possible. The answers are to be written in this folder and compared with the ones given in the book. If you have questions, they should be discussed with the teacher. As you work in the books, fill in the following information.

Book	Date Begun	I'm Working on Page No.	Date Completed
G			
H			
I			
J			
K			
L			

Reading Improvement Exercises for Students of English as a Second Language:

You should do most of the exercises in this book. The answers are listed in the back and you may check your work with them. If you disagree with the answers given, check with the teacher and explain your reasoning. As you work in this book, write your answers in this folder, NOT in the book, and record the information asked for below.

Date	Exercise	Time	Correct Answers	Date	Exercise	Time	Correct Answers
	8				13		
	9				14		
	10				15		
	11				16		
	12				17		

Dear Abby and Dear Ann:

If you like, read some of the articles in the "Dear Abby and Dear Ann" folders, then write/type a summary of each problem that is asked and answered. Record the following information.

Date	Topic	Comments

Speaking:

This may be done with the teacher or with a group of friends. The topic may be about something you have heard on tape, something you have read in class, or something you have a question about. After each discussion, record the following information.

Date	Topic	With Teacher	With Friends	Comments

Writing/Typing:

You may want to write or type a report, an essay or paper here. Certainly you are free to do so. The teacher will help you with them if you need any assistance. As you do this, record the following information.

Date	Topic	Comments

Cultural Observation:

After an observation, please record the following information.

Place	Day and Date Visited	Amount of Time Spent	Accompanied By	Mode of Transportation	Comments

Other Activities:

There are several other books in the classroom and you may bring anything else you feel you want to work with or need help with. As you work on them, record the following information.

Subject	Date	Topic	Comments

APPENDIX B

This is a partial list of places you may go to observe Americans. You should take the bus whenever possible and observe as you go and return. The questions, listed below, should be answered after your observation and you should be prepared to discuss them with me. Since everyone will go to the same places at different times, we will work together to decide who goes where when. Not more than two groups should ever do the same thing at the same time. I hope this will be fun, interesting and informative.

1. Visit Ala Moana Shopping Center, check the cost of a similar item at Sears, the Ritz and Liberty House observing the shoppers in each place.
2. Go to the State Capitol, talk with a staff member at the Legislative Reference Bureau about current legislation or observe the spectators in the House and Senate Galleries. Then visit City Hall and compare the two places.
3. Attend the Kodak Hula Show--talk with a person sitting close to you and to one of the performers. Observe the audience, the performers, the sales personnel, etc.
4. Compare the people at the International Market Place in the morning (8:30 - 10:30) with the ones at night (8:30 - 10:30).
5. Sit in the lobby of the Princess Kaiulani Hotel and observe.
6. Go to the Bishop Museum. Learn about Hawaii's past, but also about the people who are learning about Hawaii's past.
7. Visit Hotel Street. Observe the people who frequent the bars, movies, and book stores.
8. Take a bus to the airport. Observe in the main lobby for 15 minutes, then watch at the gates as people arrive and depart.
9. Attend a U.H. campus activity. What's the purpose of the meeting? Are the people well informed? Are they students?
10. Observe the people and the animals at the zoo. How do people talk to and about the animals?
11. Go to the blood bank. Sit close to the desk so you can hear the conversations.

12. Go to the Fort Street Mall (downtown), sit on a bench and observe. Compare it with the Ala Moana Shopping Center and the Kahala Mall.
13. Go swimming at Waikiki and observe on a weekday and during the weekend. What differences do you see?
14. Compare the Kahala Mall with Tamashiro's Market.
15. Sit in the EWC lobby and observe. Are most people EWC students? What are the majority of the people doing?
16. Compare the people in the Hamilton or Sinclair Library with those in a state public library.
17. Visit the Chinatown market (downtown), buy something and observe.
18. Go to the Honolulu Academy of Arts. Look at the pictures and the people.
19. Compare the people in the EWC cafeteria to the ones at Hemingway or Gateway House or the Snack Bar.
20. Visit the maternity ward of Queen's Hospital. Notice how the visitors talk to and about the babies.
21. Compare the clientele and the banking facilities at the University Branch of the First Hawaiian Bank with its main office downtown.
22. Do your laundry at a local laundromat and observe the people who are doing the same. Pay attention to the depth of the conversation.
23. Compare the food, the service, the atmosphere, and the prices at a local pizza palace, a drive-in restaurant and the La Ronde.
24. If possible attend a funeral or a wedding.
25. Visit a music store and a book shop in Ala Moana Shopping Center. Draw conclusions about the kinds of music Americans listen to and the kinds of books they read. Observe how they react to one another in these places.
26. Survey the Saturday edition of the Honolulu Advertiser or the Star Bulletin and report on the kinds and numbers of religious services offered in the city. Also check the "Yellow Pages" of the Hawaiian Telephone Directory for listings of churches. Visit one Catholic church and one Protestant church at least three times each and compare your observations.
27. Go to the pet food section of Star Supermarket. Tell me what kinds of things you find there as well as the people you see. Then visit the Humane Society. Draw a conclusion concerning the status of pets in American life.

28. If you can drive and would like to have an international driver's license, go to the appropriate office in the city government and make an application. Report on how long it took you to find out where to go and once there how long it took to find the correct place. Report further on the behavior of the clerks and the other people waiting with you. Compare the process--if you can--with a foreigner getting a driver's license in your country.
29. Read the 'Letters to the Editor' section of either the Honolulu Advertiser or the Star Bulletin for five consecutive days. What are your observations on the kinds of things people write about? Is there any pattern? What seems to be the main issue, if any, that people are concerned with?
30. Watch a "soap opera" on TV for at least five times and report on the kinds and quality of the advertising. Record frequency, duration, "gimmick" used, etc. How does this compare with television advertising in your country?

These questions, when applicable, are to be answered after each observation:

1. What was the nationality, age, and sex of most of the people you saw?
2. What was the common type of clothing?
3. What socio-economic level did the majority of the people belong to?
4. Were the people friendly to one another? to you?
5. Were most people alone? in pairs? with groups?
6. Describe an incident you saw which pleased, insulted, disgusted, amused, or surprised you.