

Teaching British Culture, Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Academic Skills*

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イギリス文化教育を通して学ぶ異文化理解と アカデミックスキル

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要旨

本論では平成 29 年度（西暦 2017 年度）大東文化大学外国語学部英語学科 3 年生必修科目「ゼミナールⅢA」で行ったイギリス文化研究の授業内容と、独自に行った学生へのアンケートのコメントから学生の学習効果を分析した。まず、イギリス文化や英語のアクセントの違いが顕著に表れる映像作品などを活用し、どのように授業を構成・運営したか、そして、学生がどのようにレポートを作成し、発表を行ったかを例示した。アンケートのコメントでは、1・2 年次に大学図書館で本を探す機会がなく、発表やレポート作成をしてこなかったと答える学生がおり、専門教育が深まる前の段階で学術的調査や発表方法を習得する機会が少ない、あるいはない、という問題点が浮

* This paper has been revised and expanded based on a draft presented at the 4th International Conference: Aspects of Language Contact and Conflict, American Society of Geolinguistics in Tokyo 2018, Daito Bunka Kaikan, Tokyo, Saturday, 7 April 2018.

かび上がった。その一方でアンケートの結果から、学生が自国の言語や文化とは異なるイギリスの事情を理解しようと自主的に図書館を活用し学術的な調査を行い、それを論理的に文章化し授業内で発表する過程を経験することで、学生の異文化理解が深まり、さらに、授業で得た学術調査の手法を就職活動の情報収集に応用した学生もいたことが明らかになった。

Introduction

Students in the Department of English Studies, Faculty of Foreign Languages at Daito Bunka University may select courses such as English, English Education, Social Science, Culture and Tourism and introductory classes starting in their second year of study. They begin taking research classes beginning in the third year. Also, they have a chance to take Introduction to British and American Literature for as a required class in the first year, and Culture in the English-speaking Countries as a non-compulsory class in the second year. Hence, many students may have a basic knowledge of British and American culture and literature.

Second-year students think about the seminar class entitled ‘Seminar III AB’ that they will take in the winter, and then in the third year, the seminar classes start. My seminar topic in 2017 was British Culture and Literature, with a focus on British culture in the first semester and British literature in the second semester. Some students choose my seminar because they want to improve their presentation skills, whereas others want to study British culture or literature. The backgrounds of the students who choose the Seminar III are different. The point is that students’ English skills and interests vary.

In the seminar, I show a lot of images taken from websites, such as the ramen shop home page, the YouTube channel, film cover, musicians’ and chefs’ home pages and online news and television channels, in order to introduce the sort of material that can be said to reflect the culture of Britain. When I introduce a topic for a class, I seek updated information from websites, as information nowadays changes quickly, so a combination of academic books and up-to-date Internet sources is useful for

providing introductory material to students. Regarding contemporary British culture, Peter Childs says,

Contemporary culture, like contemporary life, is changing faster than ever before, which means on the one hand that many of the traditional staple elements of ‘British life’ are no longer central to a definition of a contested national identity, and on the other hand, because the speed of movement is so great, a snapshot of current cultural practices is inevitably going to be blurred. So assessing the contemporary is the hardest historical problem of all; but it is also the most exciting, perplexing, tantalizing and, we believe, the most fascinating.¹⁾

As this passage explains, it is quite hard to grasp what British culture is, because it is changing rapidly. For example, Childs expressed this idea in 1999, which is already 19 years ago. Things can easily change in 19 years, and people can see the differences. Nineteen years ago, people had different things, such as phones, televisions, music and so on. And changes will likely continue to occur over next 10 or 20 years. Therefore, it is difficult to study culture, as Childs mentions.²⁾ However, this also suggests that investigating contemporary British culture with students often gives instructors some insight as well.³⁾

In order to explore how British culture can be taught, this paper focuses on the first semester of my Seminar III, looking at the class structure and organisation. Then, I explain the assigned tasks students must do in the class. Finally, the paper

¹⁾ Peter Childs and Mike Storry eds., *Encyclopedia of Contemporary British Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), p. xiii.

²⁾ For a more detailed introduction to the study of British culture, see Susan Bassnett ed., *Studying British Cultures: An Introduction* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1997); Michael Higgins and Clarissa Smith and John Storey eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); David Morley, and Kevin Robins eds., *British Cultural Studies: Geography, Nationality, and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

analyses the comments on the questionnaire.

Class Structure and Organisation

1 st Semester Schedule	
Quarter 1	Quarter 2
4/11 Class Orientation	6/13 Class & Politics ①
4/18 British Culture?	6/20 Ethnicity & Language ②
4/25 Introduction	6/27 Religion & Heritage ③
5/2 Places & Peoples ①	→ NZ EPP Experience
5/9 Education, Work & Leisure ②	Room 30208
5/16 Gender, Sex & Family ③	7/4 Future Britain ④
5/23 No Class (Friendship Walk)	7/11 Interview ※Library Study
5/30 Youth Culture & Style ④	7/18 Paper Exam & Discussion
6/6 Interview ※Library Study	7/25 Review

Item 1 Class Schedule

Item 1 is a slide that I show to students at the beginning and the end of the class. In the first semester, the students read *British Cultural Identities*, which is a Designated Book in the library so that nobody can borrow it and the students in the course can all have an equal opportunity to read. The first-semester class schedule is organised according to the order of the content in *British Cultural Identities*. The numbers in circles in the illustration in Item 1 are group numbers, indicating which group is in charge of making a presentation.

³⁾ For example, David P. Christopher introduces studying culture in this way. ‘the study of another culture may provide a useful comparison with one’s own. It should be a liberating experience which improves understanding and imagination, and helps to provide new perspectives and thoughts’. David P. Christopher, *British Culture: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p. xiv.

Class activities start by reviewing what the students did during the previous week. The students are asked to answer questions such as ‘What did you do last week?’ in English. If they cannot answer, I give them many chances to speak, such as saying, ‘Do you remember some keywords you learned from last week?’ This activity is intended to place emphasis on students’ independent abilities, which should encourage them to try to express in English what they think and have discovered. Many students find it difficult to speak in English, but in this situation, I give them hints, such as the first letter of keywords or a person’s name. The instructor should not give negative reactions such as ‘No’ or ‘Wrong’ in this activity. Instead, reactions such as ‘Close! But...’ and ‘Mmmmm!?’ provide opportunities to encourage students to think and answer. Then I introduce the topic and explain what sorts of problems the topic raises by using PowerPoint slides.

Report and Presentation

After a review and introduction by the tutor, students make a presentation based on their reports. The kind of reports students are assigned can be seen in Item 2. As this image shows, first, students need to choose and focus their research topic, and then find a quotation. After this, they introduce the quotation and interpret it. Importantly, they must write down which reference source they used. By doing this, students can learn how to write a paragraph based on using academic books step by step. I often employ an image of a hamburger, for example.

Report 1 (Research Field: _____)	
Topic (Summary of your Report)	Memo
Topic Sentence/ Background Information/ Quotation/ Introduction	
Quotation	
Explanation/ Another viewpoint/ Interpretation and Conclusion	
Reference	
Question, Opinion, etc. ...	Points
	/10
	Tutor's Sign

Item 2 Report Format

You need to have a delicious and high-quality filling, or content. This is your good quotation and the body, or supporting sentences. But you must also carefully cover the filling with a decent-quality bun. This is the introduction and the conclusion of the paragraph, or the essay structure.

Through writing their report, students can prepare for making their presentation. The tutor does not allow students to make a presentation without a presentation draft. Reading a paper may not seem difficult for students. However, many of them find it is not easy. Unless instructors pay close attention to students' presentation delivery, they can easily forget to use eye contact and their voice may become weaker and weaker as they go on speaking. The tutor sometimes stops students during their presentation and points out what they look like. In this way, they can learn how to make a basic but proper presentation. After finishing their presentation, the students need to answer questions. The audience must also ask questions. If nobody raises his/her hand, the tutor will automatically point to three or four students to ask questions. This means that, while presenters should understand everything related to their research topic, the audience must also carefully listen to these talks and think critically about the content.

After finishing the presentation and discussion activities, students watch a film related to the class topic.

Week	Class Topic	Film
1	Class Orientation	
2	What is British Culture?	<i>Vikings</i>
3	Introduction	<i>The Englishman Who Went up a Hill but Came down a Mountain</i>
4	Places & People	<i>Riff Raff</i>
5	Education, Work & Leisure	<i>The IT Crowd</i>
6	Gender, Sex & Family	<i>About a Boy</i>
7	No class (University Event)	
8	Youth Culture & Style	<i>This is England</i>

9	Group Interview & Library Study	
10	Class & Politics	<i>The King's Speech</i>
11	Ethnicity & Language	<i>Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels</i>
12	No Class (Department Event)	
13	Future Britain	<i>Trainspotting</i>
14	Paper Exam & Discussion	
15	Review	

Item 3 First Semester Class Schedule and Films Watched

The diagram in Item 3 shows what films the students actually watched in the class. Students have to view the films and answer questions about one film on the written exam, so they are expected to carefully watch each film.

Questionnaire and Analysis

A questionnaire was conducted on 15 January 2018 in the Japanese language, and six students responded, but the answers were translated into English. The diagram in Item 4 and 5 below shows how Students A to F answered questions 1 to 7.

	Q1. Does this seminar meet your expectations?	Q2. Did you find <u>British Culture and Literature</u> interesting?	Q3. Do you now understand how to do <u>academic research</u> ?
A			Acquired some knowledge, but couldn't do it properly. So I'd like to do it more next year.
B	Was good that the tutor dealt with a number of British literature works.	Didn't know about British literature, so I only knew Harry Potter, but the seminar gives an opportunity to understand what interesting stories British literature has.	

C	Could understand British culture I didn't know and could get deeper knowledge about the culture I knew before.	Was surprised that <u>people who use the Queen's or BBC English are only a few percent.</u> In Tokyo, you can hear mainly standard Japanese language, but <u>in Britain, you hear a wide variety of accents depending on people's background.</u>	<u>Never had such an experience,</u> so it was quite a good opportunity to do academic activities. <u>When I research the company representatives' opinion on business articles, I use academic research skills.</u>
D	Am personally interested in British culture, and the second-year required seminar class by teacher Hasegawa made me choose this seminar to <u>improve my writing and presentation skills.</u>	Found it interesting <u>how British people's preferences in sports, music and school differ based upon class divisions.</u> Could learn <u>the difference between British and Japanese people in the way of thinking as well as cultural differences by reading British literature.</u>	<u>Have never used the OPAC system in the library</u> and made a bibliography, but by using these I could understand how to refer to and compare other critics to improve my argument.
E	Wanted to study British literature so I find this seminar enjoyable.	Every week I find interesting topics to explore.	I understand how to write academic reports with the sample our tutor provided.
F	Could study many British literary works.	Could touch upon <u>what the authors wanted to tell by reading literary works, which is special feelings I have never felt before.</u>	It is still <u>difficult to find a reference and academic resources.</u>

Item 4 Questionnaire Q1-3

	Q4. Any comments on the class organisation?	Q5. Did you try to deal with class preparation and essay writing?	Q6. Did you try to find how to improve your class performance?	Q7. How would you describe this seminar?
A	Wanted to watch films			This seminar gives a chance not only to read books but also

	more!			to learn historical background with regard to contemporary society. You can get an enthusiastic attitude by doing discussion activities.
B				You can learn interesting British literature as well as improve writing and presentation skills.
C	Wanted to watch films more!	Didn't know personally, but tried to make my presentation clearer.	Should have asked questions more at the discussion sessions.	Through this seminar, you can get a chance to access British literature you didn't know much about. In addition, you will experience the following things: literary research is not just reading but also referring to others' viewpoints, summarising your ideas and expressing them. These activities cannot be experienced when you are in the first and second years. I think this Hasegawa-Seminar makes you think, 'I am doing the seminar.'
D		Could try not just to do research but also read literary works critically. By doing this, I could find out how to improve my writing.	When making a presentation, I couldn't answer questions properly, so I should have investigated the topic thoroughly.	You can learn about Britain that you don't really know about, and how to make an academic presentation in a logical way. Although it is not so easy, you find it useful to experience discussion and interview activities.

E	The seminar contents were so many to cover in 90 minutes, so the time management was difficult, but I could learn many things as well.	Did my best, such as considering how to improve my report.	Should have prepared more.	Let's learn about Britain more!
F	Would be a more interesting class if all students prepared the same materials beforehand.	Made me like British culture and literature more and more.	Should have prepared to submit reports in advance.	Let's become 'A Man of Literature'!

Item 5 Questionnaire 4-7

Based on the answers given on the questionnaire, this chapter analyses how the comments apply and what students need. Student D's answer to Q1 deals with academic skills, showing that some students feel that they choose the seminar classes in order to improve their academic output skills such as writing and speaking. In this case, it is important to give them decent feedback. It is a hard task for instructors to point out students' inadequate performance, such as voice clarity and English pronunciation. Nevertheless, many students want their tutors to correct and improve their skills.

Student C's answer on Q2 indicates how students learn about British culture, which reflects one of the stereotypes that many Japanese students have regarding British people. Students, even in the third year in the English department, tend to regard most British people as speaking received or standard English. When they

realise British English has a variety of accents, they are astonished that there is considerable variation in these accents, as can be found in English in Cockney, North, Welsh, Irish, Scottish and so on. When teaching British English, it is useful for instructors to show how pronunciation differs from the upper class to the middle class to the working class by showing YouTube channels such as ‘BBC Learning English’, ‘English with Lucy’ and ‘Learn English with Papa Teach Me’. English pronunciation is one of the major British cultural aspects to explore.

In Q2, Student D’s remark about British culture focuses on how the student perceives the relationship between class and sports in Britain. In addition to Student C’s comments, Student D also mentions British people’s preferences and their differences based on class. In the first semester, the students had a chance to study the British class system by reading the book *British Cultural Identities*. The students also watched the beginning of the film *Riff-Raff*, directed by Ken Loach, whose films often deal with class issues. A realistic portrayal of the working-class people in *Riff Raff* can be of interest to students.⁴⁾ Student C also noticed through examining literature the different ways of thinking among British and Japanese people, which suggests that literary works can offer opportunities for students to compare how people think.

Q3 asks how students acquire academic skills. Student C’s comment, particularly ‘never had such experience’, shows us that some university students do not have enough opportunities to do academic research in their classes. This may suggest that students can graduate from the university without engaging in any academic activities unless instructors and tutors provide them with the chance to do such work. Student C’s unique point makes the connection between academic skills and job-hunting skills. This suggests that research skills can be useful not only for academia but also for finding a job. Student D’s comment is also important for university instructors. Students should be able to regularly use the Online Public

⁴⁾ For another example, see Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class, With a New Preface* (London: Verso, 2016).

Access Catalogue (OPAC), to search for academic books and articles, but as student D's comment shows, there are some students who have never used it by the time they are in their third year.

This shows the reality of the university educational and class organisational system, and perhaps points to one of the causes of the decline in reading books among students. For example, the Department of English Studies at Daito requires seminar classes in both the first and second years. In these classes, instructors are in a position to assign academic activities or homework requiring students to use OPAC or the university library. As the comment by Student D shows, by devoting themselves to report writing through doing academic research, students can independently compare others' opinions and arguments. Academic assignments at least encourage students to read books critically. Additionally, as the comment by Student F indicates, identifying academic books and articles is a difficult task for students, so instructors may find it useful to take students to the library and give them an assignment that requires them to create a bibliography. By studying British culture or literature, students can acquire academic skills as well as research skills that also apply to job hunting.

Conclusion

Examination of the seminar schedule, course structure, activities and the responses to the questionnaire shows clearly that students can learn British culture, cross-cultural perceptions and academic skills at the same time. For Japanese students, studying Britain requires an objective viewpoint as what happens there is often quite different, despite similarities between Britain and Japan. As the questionnaire responses indicate, a number of students experienced some difficulty in researching British culture. Nonetheless, some of them enthusiastically tried to tell about what they had learned. In order to attempt to be objective, academic research activities are a useful tool. Thus, we conclude that instructors should encourage, or even compel, students to use the university library for academic

purposes as well as to acquire good cross-cultural understanding.

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