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Book Review

Cecilia Ikeguchi & Kyoko Yashiro (2008). *Beyond Boundaries: Insights into Culture and Communication*. Pearson Longman, v + 113 pp. ISBN978-4-342-55090-4 C1082. ¥1800. (hardcover). Reviewed by Samuel Nfor.

Cecilia Ikeguchi and Kyoko Yashiro in *Beyond Boundaries* persuade readers that inter-cultural competence is the fundamental of using the English language to communicate with people across cultures. The text contains numerous nonverbal modes of communication that can help students acquire a good understanding of the background of different cultures.

Reading through *Beyond Boundaries*, one gets the idea that Cecilia Ikeguchi and Kyoko Yashiro wrote this text because they want to encourage students to gain tolerance of the habits and customs of other people. In fact, that they want students to cease distrusting and fearing each other's differences.

The larger merit of the text is that teachers can count on it to plan invigorating EFL/ ESL lessons that explore gestures, body movement, facial expression and eye contact to inspire students to become more active participants in ESL/EFL classrooms.

The text is divided into fifteen chapters. It has a student CD, and a Teacher's Manual in Japanese and English that provide a great source of further information. Each chapter on culture and communication is recorded on the CD. Students may playback the CD (at their convenience) allowing them to be prepared for classroom discussions. Students can develop and master listening, intonation and pronunciation skills with the help of the CD.

All chapters of the text follow the same format. Each chapter opens with a photo or cartoon caption and warm up exercises that teachers may use to brainstorm with learners on the visual context of the culture and the communication framework of the lesson. Keywords and expressions that are used in the Reading section in each chapter are modeled carefully. The authors supply students with numerous opportunities to match English words or expressions with their Japanese equivalent. This activity may help to improve students' vocabulary. Additionally, it can improve their understanding of the meaning of the passages that they are required to read.

Further practice exercises accompany all reading passages in the text. These proof-of-understanding exercises help to check and confirm the students' knowledge and understanding of the text. Proof-of-understanding exercises also reinforce the linguistic context of the main focus of the language lesson. All comprehension passages chosen by the authors are refreshingly illuminating. They have embedded practical, contrasting, and thought-provoking culture and communication issues in their reading passages that can ignite animated discussions and debates in ESL/EFL classrooms.

Using examples from the text, I have shepherded students through delicate and complex areas. I taught students to mime cultural variations regarding Facial Communication and Eye Contact (chapter 1). We explored Space and Distance (chapter 3), Time in Communication (chapter 4), and Barriers to Communication: Prejudice (chapter 14).

I have encouraged students to create effective role play activities (skits) on the aspects of Gender and Communication Style (chapter 5). We tried Conflict Management (chapter 10), Ethnocentrism represented in (chapter 12) and all worked out well.

Skits are performed in class and following each presentation, I challenge students to interpret the meaning of the skits they have just witnessed. Students have a lot of fun watching their peers perform before them in class and are noticeably motivated to speak up about what they are learning from the skits. As students stand up and walk about and role-play during our sessions, they learn a great deal. This is a significant shift from the strain of the grammar-translation method of learning a foreign language.

How one teaches using this text is open to debate in view of the fact that teachers use different approaches to breakdown learning material. How long it takes to complete a single chapter will depend largely on a number of factors that may include but are not

limited to the teacher's teaching style and his ability to keep students motivated. My experience is that beginner students may not be ready for the debate sections as intermediate students because the diction and style of the authors' texts, and more importantly the syntax and semantics all require a considerable amount of foreign language skills which may be beyond beginner students.

Although the authors have covered culture and communication issues relevant to Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America profoundly in the text, they have missed out to address culture and communication issues in Africa, sadly. Sad because, in my work with Japanese students, I have discovered an astounding number of them have never read a book on Africa. Many more have never had the opportunity to get to know or speak with someone with African roots. The vast majority of them will not visit Africa in their lifetime. Unfortunately too, the authors' oversight not to address culture and communication issues relevant to Africa in a text designed basically to increase Japanese students understanding of intercultural competence is conspicuous and has prompted students to approach me with questions. They use my personal knowledge of Africa and African issues to fill this gap.

Overall, *Beyond Boundaries* is a fine text that would come to life if it is properly

Nfor, S. (2009). [Review of the book *Beyond Boundaries: Insights into Culture and Communication*]. *OTB Forum*, 2(1), 48-49.

utilized to plan ESL/EFL lessons. Interactive activities in the text could provide a physical and emotional outlet for students who sometimes are required to sit through 75-minute ESL/ EFL classes. The text seems to support the student-centered approach to Second Language Acquisition and Teaching that puts added emphasis on competence in communication. *Beyond Boundaries* can be a useful tool for teachers who want to divert from the traditional top-to-bottom, teacher-to-student instruction method that foreign language learners find boring.

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Lee, W. R. (1965). *Language teaching games and contests*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

About the author: *Samuel earned a Master of Arts in Theater Studies in his country of ancestry (Cameroon) where he worked for many years as a theater director and actor.*

In April 2001, he moved to Japan on a scholarship awarded by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of the Government of Japan.

He studied Kyogen and Noh and since then has been able to share the combination of his knowledge and artistry with different theater troupes in Japan. In addition to his participation in the theater movement in Japan, Samuel teaches English at Tsukuba and Saitama Universities where he utilizes the theater approach to Second Language Teaching/Learning.

Movie Reviews

“Baruto no Gakuen” (2006). Director: Deme Masanobu. Main actors: Matsudaira Ken, Bruno Ganz. Reviewed by Manami Morikawa.

In 1914, many German soldiers were captured by the Japanese army, and lodged in some prisoner camps during World War I. German soldiers received bad treatment by Japanese soldiers in many of the camps. However, only in the Bandō prison camp, German prisoners received humanitarian treatment, because the camp's commander,

Matsue Toyohisa, had a belief that all humans are equal. Therefore, the German prisoners opened their minds to the commander. What is more, by the commander's conduct, the German prisoners mixed well with the locals. They taught to each other their cultures and techniques. When Germany lost the war, emancipated Germany soldiers played