

CAPE Alumni Internet Connection: English Teacher Talk

CAPE Internet Talk was started as part of CAPE follow-up activities to continue ties with CAPE alumni and those who are interested in professional development in English teaching. It is hoped that this would increase our bond and aloha among former participants, and that the information in the TALK would help our alumni and friends/members review what you know and deepen their understanding of issues of interest in the ESL field.

Source Culture or Target Culture?

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One very important decision that Korean English teachers need to make is what content to use in their classrooms. Often the topic of culture is chosen because talking about culture can be motivating for students. However, which culture(s) should teachers choose to explore? Two major alternatives are to talk about aspects of Korean culture or what Cortazzi and Jin (1999) term the **source culture** or to talk about countries where English is the sole official language such as the United States or the United Kingdom or what Cortazzi and Jin (1999) call the **target culture**.

In order to explore this question, I asked Korean primary teachers enrolled in a CAPE online course the following questions.

1. *Make a list of all of the advantages of using the source culture you can think of and all the advantages of using the target culture.*
2. *Then describe what cultural content you would use with your young language learners.*

The following are some of the response I received.

Teacher A

Culture is soaked in a language. So when you teach or learn a language, you teach or learn the culture too.

Here are the advantages of using the source culture with Korean students and Korean teachers:

1. *source culture and can participate more in the class.* *Students know about the*
2. *say in English because they know about the source culture.* *Students have more to*
3. *teachers to prepare various teaching materials to teach the source culture.* *It is easier for Korean*
4. *speak about Korean culture in English and might like to say something about Korean culture to foreign friends.* *Students know how to*

However, there are also advantages of using the target culture.

1. *The target culture is new*

- and students may have more interest in it.*
2. *Interest in the target culture could encourage students to study English more.*
 3. *Students are curious about the target culture and may ask many questions in English.*
 4. *Using the target culture provides a lot of information on the life, society, and history of the inner circle countries and increases students' knowledge.*

Teacher B

For young students and beginners, I will use the source culture. The advantage of using the source culture is students can learn a foreign language easier. Very young students will have a difficulty to learn a foreign language. It can be too hard if they have to learn about different people, or places, or things they never seen before. With younger students and beginners, I think they can learn English, but we should keep it simple. For example, we should use the source culture and talk about food or people that they already know about in Korea.

On the other hand, with older students and more advanced, I will sometimes use the target culture. The advantage of using the target culture is students who learn a different language can also learn about foreign cultures too. It can be fun and more interesting, and they will get extra practice. But I think the student's age is also important to think about. Older students who know English very well can learn about different lifestyles. They can learn about different countries, cities, famous people, famous places and foods from the target culture. Then we can use the new words to practice speaking. This can be very exciting for them and they will be more interested. Also, sometimes the Korean language doesn't have words that English does. To learn about the target language, we need to learn about the target culture too

Teacher C

Target culture materials

- **Advantage**
Students may be interested in learning more about English-speaking cultures
- **Disadvantage**
Largely irrelevant or uninteresting to some of students
Cultural conflicts for students
Few resources to draw on to help students.

Source culture materials

- **Advantage**
The opportunity to learn more about topics they know something about
Gain English vocabulary to discuss the topics about their culture with others
Even when the teachers are from another culture, they can become an interested listener, creating a real context for students to tell others about their culture in English.

- **Disadvantage**

As students are already familiar with such topics and so they may not be not motivating.

- *Because individuals who learn an international language do not need to accept the norms of native English-speaking countries, the teaching of culture needs to focus on giving students knowledge about rather than suggesting they accept particular cultural values and beliefs.*
- *There is a need to acknowledge that there is a value to including cultural information regarding the students' own culture. Students get the opportunity to learn more about their own culture and to acquire the English to explain their own culture to others.*
- *English belongs to no one culture but rather provides the basis for promoting cross-cultural understanding in an increasingly global village.*

It is clear from these teachers' opinions that both the source culture and the target culture serve a useful purpose in Korean English classes. It is up to individual teachers to decide when and where to use each one to their best advantage.

References

Cortazzi, M., & Jin, L. (1999). Cultural mirrors: Materials and methods in the EFL classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Culture in second language teaching* (pp. 196-219). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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