CROSS-CULTURAL INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO JAPANESE LANGUAGE MAJORS

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Summary. This paper introduces a novel tutorial method for teaching English in Ukrainian universities, focusing on intercultural and communicative approaches. It targets students majoring in Japanese and English, aiming to enhance their English speaking skills and sociocultural competence, particularly regarding East Asia. The method, involving compare and contrast activities, was tested with university students, showing significant improvements in English fluency and understanding of Far East cultures. This approach demonstrates the correlation between innovative teaching methods and enhanced language proficiency.

Key words: tutorial, intercultural approach, English speaking skills, East Asian languages, compare and contrast, teaching and learning strategies.

Studying East Asian languages, especially Japanese, is pivotal in Ukraine’s participation in global cross-cultural exchanges. Ukrainian universities like Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Kyiv National Linguistic University, Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv offer specialized Japanese language programs. These programs are enriched by international academic exchanges with Japanese universities, enhancing students’ competencies in cultural and linguistic aspects of East Asia. The curriculum integrates English language learning for effective cross-cultural communication. Emphasizing intercultural and communicative approaches, the teaching methodology equips students with skills necessary for various professions, from
journalism to international relations. This approach mirrors that of top global institutions like the University of California and SOAS University of London, blending language studies with regional cultural, historical, and political insights. Such interdisciplinary English language teaching at Ukrainian universities aims to foster cultural interaction, address educational challenges in globalization, and reduce student migration for education abroad.

Sh. Okamoto and J. S. Shibamoto-Smith highlight the necessity of comparing languages and cultural contexts in language learning, asserting that this enriches cognitive motivation [13]. Tinghe Jin emphasizes integrating intercultural and communicative teaching methods, advocating for a broader cultural understanding [5]. Similarly, P. Romanowski and E. Bandura stress incorporating intercultural elements into English courses to enhance language education [15]. Research by J. Gregersen-Hermans and K. M. Lauridsen shows that developing intercultural competence is key to successful communication [4]. This aligns with R. Oxford's view that language learning intertwines with cultural experiences [14]. Hence, the research aimed to develop a tutorial focused on enhancing English speaking skills by employing the Compare and Contrast Learning and Teaching Strategy (CCLTS).

English language tutorials for students specializing in Japanese studies encompass a range of definitions and methodologies. Typically, a tutorial in a university context, as defined by the Collins English Dictionary, is a regular meeting between a tutor or professor and one or more students to discuss a subject under study [2].

In contrast, a tutorial can also be viewed as a comprehensive study approach, incorporating lectures, seminars, case studies, and practical sessions. Specifically, at departments focusing on Far East Languages, tutorials usually take the form of a structured training course. This structure covers fundamental aspects such as the alphabet, grammar, vocabulary, writing systems, and sounds of the language.

These tutorials bear a close resemblance to textbooks in terms of the content they cover. For the development of English speaking skills, it is crucial for students to engage in various topic areas. These can range from universal subjects like Food, Numbers, Colors, Family, Animals, and Months, as suggested by LearnJapanese - FreeJapaneseLessons and L-Lingo [8], to more specific themes like Time, Days of the Week, Movies, Music, School, Work, Travel experiences, Motivation for language learning, Local customs and traditions, Personal interests, and Lifestyle philosophies. These areas are also highlighted in resources such as Teach Yourself Japanese and Tae Kim's Guide to Learning Japanese [16].

The "Learning and Teaching Japanese" online tutorial addresses cultural aspects to a certain degree, covering topics like St. Valentine's Day celebrations in Japan, Japanese animated films, and Japanese New Year [7]. However, this resource is not widely utilized in Ukrainian universities.

Recent research has shown a growing interest in the various factors that impact language learning in different cultural settings. Comparative thinking is particularly beneficial for students, aiding them in organizing new knowledge and employing compare-and-contrast strategies to navigate language barriers, as observed by Akhter, J. et al. [1] and Zhou & Lin [19].

To enhance students’ speaking skills, teachers need to explore new resources that foster intercultural dialogue through language. Robert Marzano's model [12]
presents a flexible approach to classroom strategies, advocating for the use of specific teaching and learning strategies (TLS) to facilitate effective knowledge acquisition and skill development across various disciplines. Marzano emphasizes the development of skilled thinking, with comparative thinking identified as a critical aspect of effective learning, as supported by Whitten et al. [18]. Zhou & Lin [19] also highlight the connection between thinking techniques and speaking activities, suggesting that these techniques can help students in describing items, drawing conclusions, completing speaking tasks, summarizing information, and engaging in question-and-answer exchanges.

Recognizing similarities and differences in speaking activities activates students’ prior knowledge on the subject matter, leading to communicative intercultural transactions as described by M. Lustig et al. [10]. This approach enhances cultural sensitivity and improves intercultural relationships in conversations. Consequently, TLS, as utilized in the English language tutorial for students specializing in East Asian Languages (see Fig.1), should be integrated into intercultural exchanges. This integration should focus on methods for attaining communication objectives, as explained by O. Liubashenko and T. Kavytska [9]. Moreover, the Compare and Contrast Learning and Teaching Strategy (CCLTS) should be employed to promote students’ speaking skills through various speaking activities.

Fig. 1. Compare and Contrast Learning and Teaching Strategy in the English speaking tutorial for students majoring in East Asian languages

This strategy, when applied in the context of intercultural investigation of the East Asian Region, can effectively engage students in enhancing their English speaking skills. The use of comparative techniques encourages students to narrate, describe, and maintain conversations, thereby enriching their language learning experience.

This study examines the impact of Compare and Contrast Learning and Teaching Strategy (CCLTS) on improving English speaking skills among Ukrainian students majoring in Japanese. It hypothesizes that CCLTS, incorporating comparison, matching, analogy, contrast, and similarity techniques, significantly enhances students’ speaking skills. Conducted at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, the research involved 48 second and third-year Japanese language
students, divided into control and treatment groups. The treatment group participated in a specially designed English tutorial, aligning with the university's English Language Training Program and focusing on speaking competence through CCLTS. The tutorial included topics (Table 1) like cultural traditions, folklore symbols, poetry, and myths, comparing aspects of Japanese and Ukrainian cultures.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Speaking topics</th>
<th>Speaking competence with applying CCLTS techniques</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Authentic cultural traditions. Food &amp; Drink</td>
<td>Repast ceremony&lt;br&gt;Japanese miso soup and Ukrainian borsch</td>
<td>Describing differences through contrasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Repast ceremony&lt;br&gt;Japanese matcha and Ukrainian uzvar</td>
<td>Describing similarities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Symbols in folklore</td>
<td>Traditional symbols&lt;br&gt;Japanese sakura and Ukrainian kalyna</td>
<td>Narrating applying matching and analogy techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The hidden language of embroidery&lt;br&gt;The symbolism of Japanese and Ukrainian embroidery</td>
<td>Narrating applying matching and analogy techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Poetry and Philosophy</td>
<td>Traditional forms of poetry&lt;br&gt;Japanese Haiku (俳句) and Ukrainian Duma</td>
<td>Describing differences and similarities through contrasting and comparing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National mindset&lt;br&gt;Japanese Ikigai (生き甲斐) and Ukrainian Сordocentrism</td>
<td>Describing differences and similarities through contrasting and comparing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Myths and Legends</td>
<td>Places of mystery&lt;br&gt;Japanese Aokigahara (樹海) and Ukrainian Lysa Hora (Bald mount)</td>
<td>Narrating applying compare, contrast and similarity techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National heros&lt;br&gt;Japanese samurai and Ukrainian karacterniks</td>
<td>Narrating applying compare, contrast and similarity techniques</td>
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</table>

Assessment criteria, adhering to CEFR C1 level standards, evaluated fluency, coherence, vocabulary, grammar accuracy, interaction, and the use of CCLTS techniques. The tutorial's effectiveness was gauged through a comprehensive grading system, with each unit contributing to a maximum score of 12 points and a total potential score of 48. The study's methodology included both quantitative and qualitative analyses, with progress measured against pre- and post-experimental stages using chi-square tests and teacher observations. The research aimed to determine the correlation between CCLTS use in the tutorial and the enhancement of English speaking skills among students, providing insights into the effectiveness of such teaching strategies in multilingual education contexts.

The final results showed a significant difference in English speaking competence between the groups. The treatment group demonstrated an 11.8%
improvement in their total group rating score, significantly higher than the control group’s 2.8% increase. This substantial enhancement, aligning with criteria set by Curran-Everett [3] indicated the tutorial’s effectiveness.

Post-experimental feedback from students in the treatment group affirmed the tutorial’s positive impact. They reported improvements in various speaking skills, such as making comparisons, matching cultural differences, articulating analogies, and using expressive means effectively. The students also appreciated the tutorial’s focus on culturally relevant vocabulary and rhetorical techniques.

The research concluded that the innovative tutorial design, combining speaking exercises with East Asian cultural content, positively influenced the students’ English speaking skills. This was corroborated by their academic achievements and feedback, underscoring the tutorial’s role in enhancing language competence and educational satisfaction.

This research demonstrates the positive impact of a specially designed tutorial on improving English speaking skills among Ukrainian students studying East Asian languages. It advocates for a tutorial approach that integrates intercultural and communicative methods, focusing on expanding knowledge of East Asia, developing English speaking competence, and employing critical thinking techniques like matching and contrasting. This strategy enhances understanding of cultural similarities and differences. Future research will delve into refining competence indicators for intercultural communication. The tutorial, embracing multilingual and comparative elements, enriches students’ communicative competence and deepens their understanding of East Asian cultures through English and Ukrainian perspectives.

References:


