

We're going to Englishland! Class trips abroad at home

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There's a classroom in the mouse!

The most famous theme parks in Japan are those of the Tokyo Disney Resort, a popular destination for memorable high school trips but perhaps not the most obvious location for educational enlightenment. Scratch the surface, however, and a wealth of language learning opportunities become apparent:

Motivation

Because of the natural appeal of the parks, preliminary in-class activities in preparation for the trip and post-trip debriefing sessions can draw from an unparalleled level of intrinsic motivation.

Noticing

While the SLA camp may debate precisely what kind of noticing is necessary for language acquisition, few would deny it is easier to learn from things that we notice and remember. English dots the landscape of such park settings as the American West and 1911 New York, contributing to adventures and waiting to be noticed.

Media literacy

Just as a skilled viewer of film or reader of fiction is able to identify such common plot elements as character, inciting incidents, and conflict, critically thinking park visitors can read the architecture. Background information on the creation of the parks reveals the architects and designers are quite literary in their own fashion (Dunlop & Abrams, 1996). Every building

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A theme park at the Tokyo Disney Resort may seem like a dubious choice for a university English class trip, but a bit of structure can make virtually any outing into an educationally worthwhile experience that promotes class bonding and provides contexts for learning new language and increasing fluency. This article will show how, drawing from the author's experience organizing two kinds of park trips, one based on student-recorded (and later transcribed) conversations and the other on English-only scavenger hunts. Students' perspectives on the trips and activities will be provided in the form of survey data and quotations from journals.

東京ディズニーリゾートのようなテーマパークを英語クラスの旅行先に選ぶことには、懐疑的な見方もあるかも知れない。しかし少し工夫をすればどんな小旅行も、クラスの絆を強化し、新しい言語を学び、流暢さを増す状況を与えるという、実際に教育的価値のある経験となり得る。本論は、学生が録音した(後で書き起こした)会話と、英語のみを使用したscavenger hunts(ごみ集め競争)という、2種類のテーマパーク旅行における著者の経験に基づいた実例を示す。旅行やアクティビティに関する学生の見解を、アンケート結果や学生の旅行日記からの引用の形で提示する。

tells a story, from the signs on the walls to the knickknacks on the shelves, to the scuff marks on the floor. For the keen eye rewards await.

Authentic material

Attractions like *The Enchanted Tiki Room*, *Magic Lamp Theater*, *Stormrider*, and *Microadventure!* offer subtitles or alternate soundtracks in English, making it possible for these attractions to offer all the language learning opportunities of any authentic material, though the experience of encountering language in such an environment is arguably more likely to create salient memories that enhance learning.

Creativity

Making language is a creative act, and the parks are nothing if not creative. They invite visitors to take on roles of jungle explorers, treasure hunters, and space adventurers, providing unique opportunities to use language that gives voice to the imagination.

Land of fantasy?

In the abstract, any sort of class trip sounds like a good idea. Bring the students outside the classroom, find a way to interact with the real world, and have fun! But the reality of the class trip is often so challenging as to make trip planners (otherwise known as *teachers*) rue the day the thought ever crossed their minds. Aside from difficulties with transportation, scheduling, and keeping students safe, the *task-in-action* is often drastically different from the *task-as-workplan*. Whatever the planner's intentions for the trip, the limitless stimuli of the outside world and the novelty of being in this environment with classmates will often distract students from the supposed educational purpose. Still, with sufficient planning, measures can be taken to ensure that any class trip can provide valuable language learning opportunities. In addition, as Dornyei and Murphey (2003) note, trips offer shared experience that can be a foundation of group bonding.

In the following sections I will detail practices I have found useful for maximizing the value of class trips to the Tokyo Disneyland parks by centering the visits on specific activities – student

presentations followed by recorded conversations in the first instance, and scavenger hunts in the second.

And now, presenting...

The power of class trips to motivate language learning can be harnessed long before anyone takes a step outside the classroom. Prior to the trip, group presentations and related writing assignments can capitalize on students' natural interests and yield opportunities for engaging language practice. For a class trip to the Disney resort, these presentations could cover a range of topics, from critical interpretations of the politics of Disney to assessments of park designers' effectiveness at creating immersive experiences. In my class, students formed groups according to attractions they were most interested in and used English language websites such as Wikipedia, official sites, and fan sites (including sites associated with other Disney parks around the world) to find information. Group members negotiated to organize this information and come up with subtopics to be distributed among the presenters, such as (a) the story of the attraction, (b) different versions of the attraction around the world, (c) controversies related to the attractions, and (d) secret information (a broad category encompassing such things as hidden Mickeys, other often-overlooked details, and rumors of hauntings by guests who have met their untimely demise while on holiday). In addition, each group made a supporting handout which would later serve as a handy reference during the actual trip. On presentation day, the members spoke for about one minute each on their particular subtopics, making reference to their handout, after which the other groups brainstormed questions for the presenters to answer according to their research.

Survey data shows that the students felt pre-trip presentations of this nature were valuable for their language development: 83% rated *giving the presentation* as a 5 on a scale of 1-5 for usefulness, with the remaining 17% giving it a 4. In addition, though student presentations can often become tedious for the listeners, the survey responses indicate that this was not an issue. 79% of the students gave listening to their classmates' presentations a 5 for usefulness, and the remaining 21% gave it a 4.

The trip itself took place after school, taking advantage of a significantly reduced price for evening tickets. The first 60 minutes were dedicated to structured activity in which students broke into pairs to record two-minute conversations in front of each of the attractions they had seen or given presentations on, conversations that were facilitated by having the students refer to the presentation handouts, collected as an unofficial class guide to the park. Having students record conversations of this nature appeared to have a positive impact on their use of English during the entire trip, for survey responses indicate that 23 out of 25 students used English at least 80% of the time during this structured activity portion of the trip, and 19 reported that they continued to speak English at least 60% of the remaining time spent simply enjoying the park together.

During the next class, the students transcribed the recordings, reflected on features of their own language use in terms of strengths and weaknesses, and got feedback from the teacher, all of which can be important steps in raising awareness and helping improve the fluency, accuracy, and complexity of their speech (Stillwell et al., 2009). Of course, because transcription requires a great deal of listening and re-listening, it is ideal for the language to be related to something of great interest. That was arguably the case in this instance, given the fact that the recording helped the students relive the experience of the class trip, with the ambient noise of the attractions themselves providing an evocative background.

Scavenger hunts

Beyond the typical park activities of riding, shopping, and eating, the parks' fantasy environments offer limitless avenues for exploration and stimulation. Perhaps the best approaches to class trips to the parks will align with students' natural interests while simultaneously providing the occasion for them to employ skills in a simulated real world not to be found in the classroom. A scavenger hunt approach can give students the freedom to enjoy the park in small groups while addressing shared challenges. If researched and written with care, questions can promote learning by prompting students to notice language and storytelling features of the park and come

up with creative solutions to challenges, skills that will be of great use in future independent study. Scavenger hunts also lend themselves to taking photos, which can facilitate engaging post-trip presentations in the classroom and also foster class bonding.

The primary drawback of scavenger hunts, of course, is that the planner has to go to some lengths to design a viable hunt in advance. Questions with specific answers, such as *What business is at 4 Pequot Street?* require the teacher to become a park expert in advance of the trip, and can be risky insofar as the features of the park can change unexpectedly when seasonal decorations change the scenery or temporary walls go up for refurbishments. In addition, students may lose motivation for the task if they feel they lack the resources to find the answers in an exercise of *Guess What the Teacher is Thinking*. Open-ended questions, on the other hand, are easier to write and can weather minor changes in the park landscape. They invite a range of points of view and thus promote negotiation between team members, and they are better suited to creative responses. In addition, they can allow the teacher to take on a stimulating new role, acting as a co-explorer rather than an expert.

In my scavenger hunt trips, I have found a number of uses for open-ended questions, including:

- *Noticing*: Take pictures of two sentences with new English words and be ready to explain your guesses about the part of speech and meaning of the words.
- *Critical thinking*: Look around McDuck's Department Store. What does the building tell us about the owner? Take two pictures and be prepared to explain your answers.
- *Class bonding*: Take a photo of your team escaping a volcano eruption.
- *Simultaneous translation*: Find two differences between the soundtrack for the *Magic Lamp Theater* and the text on your personal subtitle viewer.

Before you go

It is a good idea to use class time to make sure all instructions and ground rules for the hunt

are clear, for the park environment is designed to monopolize attention. Basic practices of classroom management can prove quite effective, such as:

- Randomly assign students to groups of 2 or 3 and have them distribute roles such as *Question Reader/Time Keeper*, *Map Reader/Photographer*, and *Answer Writer* in advance. Roles such as these can promote cooperative learning and help the students keep one another on task through positive interdependence (Johnson & Johnson 1994).
- Have students set their own targets for English language use during the trip (*How much English do you plan to speak during the game? ___%*), which they will later assess (*How much English did you speak during the game? ___%*). Make sure they understand this is something they will later be asked to reflect on (*Write a journal to reflect on your experience using English outside the classroom*).
- Establish protocols to support the *Englishness* of the environment by having teams use a fixed greeting when they run into one another during the game, e.g. *Hey, howya-doin'*? Also, requiring that students refer only to English maps can enhance students' immersion in this English experience.
- Make sure the activity will not be disruptive to employees or other guests. Rule out running and shouting, and let students know that they are not to ask cast members for help.

There's a mouse in the classroom!

The final step is to bring the bounties of the hunt back to class in a fashion that promotes reflection, compounds learning, and validates the trip as educationally worthwhile. In my class, a show and tell approach started with the students rejoining their teams to finalize answers and explanations, after which they mixed into new groups in jigsaw fashion and took turns sharing their answers and their photos. During each presentation of a group's answers, the listeners used a score sheet to rate the responses and come up with an overall score. Students finally returned to their original teams to average the scores for the other teams, after which all scores

were gathered and the winners declared. The winning team then had the chance to get a bonus presentation grade by making a group presentation of their answers to the whole class, with their photos projected on the wall. A presentation of this sort provided additional opportunities for learning, as the teacher could direct students' attention to areas of interest such as the team's use of strategies and target language forms.

Student reflections

Unsurprisingly, students' journals show they enjoyed visiting the parks. What was interesting is the extent to which they were also aware of the benefits for their language learning, as was demonstrated in these excerpts from seven different students' journals after a scavenger hunt trip:

Friends like us

- Having this special class was good to get to know each other more. I could talk with my classmates who I didn't talk with a lot in a class so I bet that this special chance made me more comfortable to study with my classmates.
- It was a first time to speak English with my friend outside a school.

Noticing

- I knew about [the park] but... I didn't notice that English was used (written) in so many places. I thought that [it] is one of the great places where people can study English.
- I think finding English words in the park and thinking about the meaning of them is the enjoyable way to practice English.

A whole new world

- [It] is like another country (even though it is located within Japan), so we can act as if it were foreign country.
- In the usual class, I often use the dictionary and stop the conversation if I meet the strange words for me. However, in [the park], I didn't have much time to use that. Therefore, I was trying to talk in English without the dictionary. When I didn't recall English words, I tried to explain that in other

way in English. It's the natural conversation. It's the good way for English practice, I thought.

Trips like these can instill a spirit of fun and utility to language learning that many learners rarely encounter otherwise. As one student put it, such activity "could be good practice, because we can use English in our real life and learn it cheerfully and merrily." Because the trips place language-learning activities in exotic environments, they create situations where learners can glimpse, if only for a moment, the thrill of using English abroad, but without ever really leaving the comforts of home.

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Presenting naked with slides: How thinking like a designer can help—Garr Reynolds



In this presentation Garr Reynolds will layout ten fundamental design principles and go in depth with many examples and before/after samples. The lessons in this talk are not about dressing up presentations or decorating slides, they are about understanding and embracing concrete design principles that will help make your presentations clear, powerful, and memorable. The material in this presentation will help you become a more compelling presenter, but the lessons can also be applied to other aspects of your career where visual communication and graphic design matter.

Garr Reynolds is author of the award-winning and international best-selling books *Presentation Zen* and *Presentation Zen Design*. A sought-after speaker and trainer, he has spoken for firms worldwide such as Amazon, Microsoft, Google, Hewlett Packard, P&G, and many more. A writer, designer, and musician, he currently holds the position of Associate Professor of Management at Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka. He is the former Manager of Worldwide User Group Relations at Apple Inc. in Silicon Valley and spent most of the '90s as a Corporate Trainer for Sumitomo Electric Industries, Inc. in Osaka.

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