



Ocha o Nomimashō ka: Let's Have a Cup of Tea

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Ages: 15 years old
Level: Beginning
Culture: Nonverbal communication and etiquette in contemporary Japanese society as influenced by the tea ceremony
Japanese: Vocabulary related to the tea ceremony



Objectives

Students learn:

1. Cross-cultural interaction which makes them aware of the problems we have when we look at Japanese society through Australian eyes and make value judgments. It also makes them look at their own Australian culture, which is rarely done.
2. Nonverbal communication which is very important in Japanese language study.
3. How traditional culture can have deep relevance to everyday life and society in contemporary Japan.
4. How the daily manners and etiquette of the Japanese today have been influenced by the rituals of the tea ceremony.
5. That the tea ceremony is a simple activity of making and drinking tea that has been developed and perfected to the level of an art. The general theme is that around A.D.700 tea was introduced from China. In the Muromachi Period tea drinking became a refined pleasure. Sen-no-Rikyu (1522–91), the great master of the tea ceremony, developed and perfected this ritual to the level of an art.

I think the tea ceremony is an aspect of Japanese culture that is very poorly taught. Native speakers of Japanese tend to simply show the ritual to our Australian students but cannot explain why or what they are doing. Australian students find it very boring, especially the boys in the classes. The only thing students comment on is the pretty *kimono* or

the bitter taste of the tea. Australian teachers don't usually understand the tea ceremony and will usually simply prepare a photocopy from a culture book as a handout or possibly show a film or invite a Japanese person to perform it.

This lesson first stimulates an interest in people in general and an interest to start looking at differences in behavior. The behavior of people is quite funny, so I have used cartoons to emphasize this. Young people like cartoons, so this acts as the way to motivate the students to become interested from the beginning of the lesson. Seeing the problems we can encounter with cross-cultural interactions in a funny way makes the students want to know more about the Japanese people and their culture because it is so different to Australia.

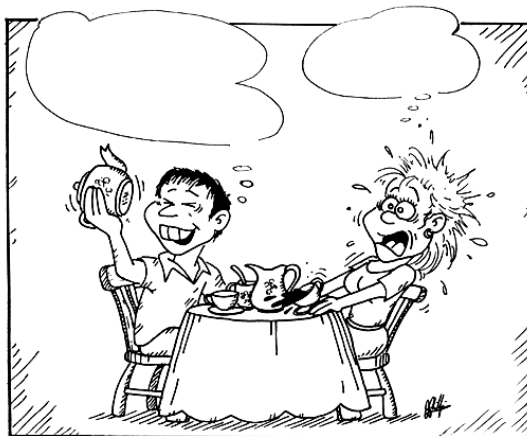
Materials

- cartoons
- overhead projector
- utensils used in tea ceremony, name labels attached
- matcha*, water, etc.





Cartoon No. 1



Procedure

1. Introduction

a. Explain the situation: "Last week some Japanese people came to my house for afternoon tea. After one of them finished drinking his tea, he tilted the tea pot to read the name of the maker (brand)." Looking at Cartoon No. 1 on the overhead projector, ask students:

- 1) What do you think of all that?
- 2) Do you think he wanted to see if I shopped at K-mart?
- 3) What would you say to him ?

Students discuss what should be written in the cartoon speech balloons. (The correct answer is left unanswered until the end of lesson.)

b. Nonverbal communication: Teacher explains, "From this cartoon we can get meaning from what we see. We don't need to talk. The Japanese man is looking under the teapot. The lady is telling him something, isn't she? She is not talking."

c. Cross-cultural interaction: Teacher explains, "The man in the cartoon is Japanese. He is thinking in Japanese as he looks under the tea pot. Let's look at him through Japanese eyes. Do we have a problem? The woman in the cartoon is Australian. She is thinking in English. Let's look at her through Australian eyes. Do we have a problem?"

d. The tea ceremony today (*chanoyu/sadō*): At first glance the tea ceremony is simply the making of green tea (*matcha*-powder green tea) for a guest, a well-known cultural art which is unique to Japan. When we take the time to study this cultural art of Japan, we can see that the daily manners and etiquette of the people of today have been influenced by rituals which are part of the tea ceremony.

The masters of the tea ceremony placed emphasis on the natural love of simplicity and the recognition in the beauty of humility which is still found among the Japanese today. It is said that Japanese are very polite people. The young ladies of Japan learn etiquette and modesty through the tea ceremony. Many phases of etiquette and manners observed in the Japanese people today originated in the *chanoyu*.

2. *Ocha o Nomimashō ka*: Let's Have a Cup of Tea

a. The utensils for the tea ceremony are placed on the table in front of the class. Labels are attached so students know the names of each piece.

Teacher: "We are going to have a Japanese tea ceremony but before we do, let's look at the difference between going to a Japanese tea ceremony and going to an Australian afternoon tea party."

b. Comparison 1

- 1) *Chanoyu*: All the guests arrive at the same time and all stay until the ceremony is over.
- 2) Australian tea party: Guests come and go as



they please.

3) Influence on contemporary Japanese etiquette:

a) Arrivals

If you invite your Japanese friends for dinner at 7:00 P.M. they will arrive on time. Australians know when the host(ess) says 7:00 P.M. they should arrive at 7:15 P.M. to give the host(ess) time to be ready. (Cartoon No. 2)

b) Departures

When you go to a party or a restaurant with Japanese people, be careful: you may find you are the last to leave. When the first Japanese guest leaves the party, all the group usually leave at the same time—leaving drinks and often food unfinished. (Cartoon No. 3)

c. Comparison 2

1) *Chanoyu*: Each guest is served one at a time.

The host(ess) pours and serves the tea to each guest. The guests never serve themselves.

2) Australian tea party: Guests serve themselves from the teapots, coffee pots, etc.

3) Influence on contemporary Japanese etiquette:

In Japan you wait for another person to pour drinks for you and then you pour their drinks for them. Among businessmen, the person of the highest status will wait for others to fill his glass. The glass will always be refilled before it is empty so if you have had enough, leave the glass full or it will not be refilled. (Cartoon No. 4)

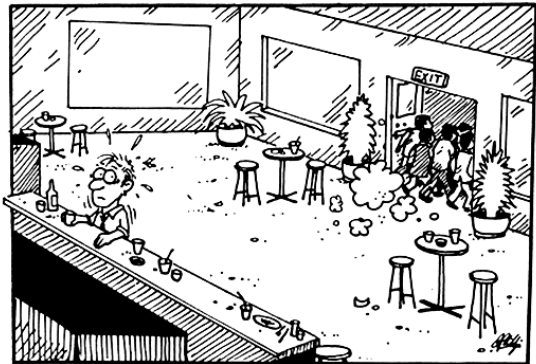
d. Comparison 3

1) *Chanoyu*: During the tea ceremony there is almost no talk between the guests, or even the host(ess) and the guests. It is for the purpose of drinking tea and to cleanse the mind. They concentrate on one thing at a time.

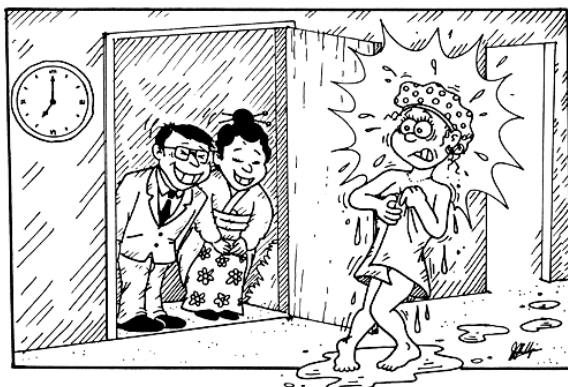
2) Australian tea party: Talking begins as soon as guests arrive and everyone tends to gather more for the purpose of chatting. Background music will often be used.

3) Influence on contemporary Japanese etiquette: The Japanese tend to feel quite comfortable drinking tea without conversation before a business discussion. Australians feel they must

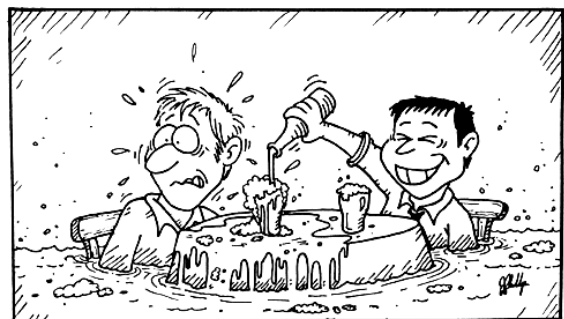
Cartoon No. 3



Cartoon No. 2



Cartoon No. 4





start talking to the person near them as soon as they sit down and throughout the meal. (Cartoon No. 5)

e. Comparison 4

- 1) *Chanoyu*: Only sweets are served to sweeten the palate. Sugar or milk are not added to the tea. The sweets are always eaten before drinking the tea. There is usually only one per person.
- 2) Australian tea party: Savory foods and sweet cakes are served. Everyone eats and drinks when they wish and as much as they like.

f. Comparison 5

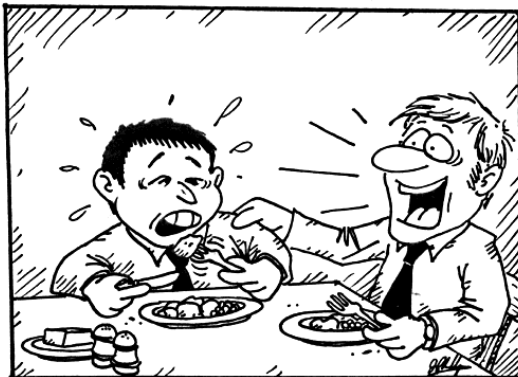
- 1) *Chanoyu*: After drinking the tea, one is expected to admire the bowl by tilting it a little to observe the design and to note the potter's name. This is done so it is obvious to the host(ess). [Note that in doing so, the guest would pardon themselves first by saying something like, "*Chotto haiken sasete....*" or "Please let me look...."].

2) Australian tea party: It is very bad manners to look under cups and plates to read the label of the maker.

- 3) Influence on contemporary Japanese etiquette: Discuss the answer to the question in Cartoon No. 1. Showing Cartoon No. 6, explain that the Japanese man is thinking: "How beautiful." "What lovely pottery." "Oh, this pottery is very famous." The Australian woman is thinking: "How rude!!" If she understood his culture, she would smile at him as if to say, "Thank you for admiring my pottery."

[Please note that even in everyday Japan, although dishes and their design may be admired and commented on, a Japanese host(ess) would probably be aghast if a guest went about turning all the dishes upside down.]

Cartoon No.5



3. Demonstration

- a. Teacher makes the *matcha* in front of the class using the utensils introduced previously. All students are given a cup of *matcha* to try.

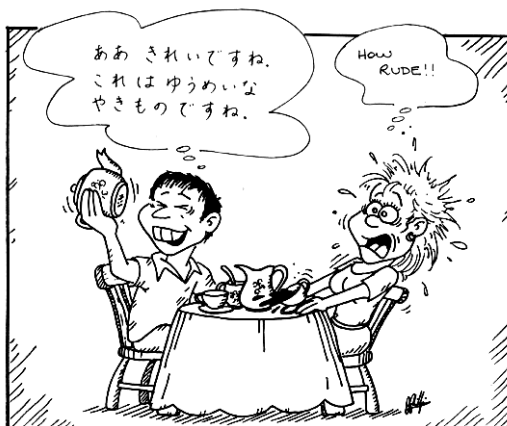
- b. Students are asked to drink and not to talk for 60 seconds. Concentrate on what you see, smell, hear, etc., and see if you notice things you haven't noticed before, e.g. birds singing outside.

- c. Teacher then recites the spirit of the *chanoyu*.

To cleanse the senses from contamination:

- 1) the sense of seeing is cleansed by seeing the *tokonoma*, *ikebana*, hanging scroll
- 2) the sense of hearing is cleansed by the boiling water, dripping water on bamboo, birds
- 3) the sense of taste is cleansed by tasting the tea

Cartoon No.6





- 4) the sense of touch is cleansed by touching the glaze on the pottery
- 5) the sense of smell is cleansed by the smell of *tatami*, wood, tea

4. Optional Extension Activity for the Next Lesson
The boys in the class may still find the tea ceremony very feminine as it is usually demonstrated by a Japanese female in *kimono*. The famous Japanese drama *Gonzō the Spearman* could be shown on a video to the class. The story shows men performing the tea ceremony in the days of *samurai*.

Culture and the Foreign Language Class

I live on a sheep and cattle farm in a small town called Uralla in Northern New South Wales, Australia. My career as a secondary school teacher began with teaching agriculture.

While teaching my senior agricultural classes about Japan-Australia agricultural trade relationships, I became quite concerned about their lack of knowledge and understanding about Japan. Throughout their 12 years of schooling most of the students had almost no knowledge about Japan. The little knowledge they did have was from old information they learned in primary school, for example, "Most Japanese families grow rice," or stereotype information, such as "Japanese people wear *kimono* every day." In many cases their most recent information about Japan came from very negative information sources through the media such as:

"The Japanese were the enemy during the war."

"The Japanese are buying up Australia."

"The Japanese kill whales and cut down rain forests."

This to me was a very serious situation which needed to be rectified. Our area has very important trading links with Japan through the export of superfine merino wool and beef cattle, and I believe that the students and the local community should be much more aware of Australia's number one trading nation and have a greater empathy with the people of Japan.

In 1989 through an Australian Government program grant, I started the first "Japanese Language

Exemplar Continuity Program" in the northwest region of New South Wales. I introduced Japanese language into Year 7 (first year of high school) at my school and into a group of "feeder" primary schools in Years 6 and 7.

The major aim of the program was to provide the students of Armidale with accurate information so that they could broaden their perspectives and values about Japan and become well informed citizens of this local rural community. The best way to understand Japanese culture and society is to learn the language of the country.

My own philosophy is that an understanding of Japan—the Japanese culture and society—is more important to the students from my local community than linguistic competence. My students do not have direct contact with Japanese tourists as those in Sydney or the Gold Coast, but we have considerable indirect contact with Japan through the local agricultural primary production and agricultural services industries.

The Japanese language program that I have developed at Armidale High School is based on this philosophy and the pattern of language study is as follows:

1. Beginners Course (Compulsory Language Study, Years 7 and 8)

All students who begin their studies in Japanese language will not necessarily ever need to make contact with a Japanese person in their work or daily life and so they may never use it. Therefore, sociocultural (aspects of Japanese culture which are not parts of the communication process) outcomes are the main aim of the program, with minimal emphasis on linguistic outcomes (correct use of grammar and vocabulary) and sociolinguistic outcomes (knowledge of how to use the Japanese language in various situations.)

All students are exposed to as much information about Japan as possible so that they can correctly interpret information in the media about Japan and develop personal opinions regarding issues about Japan. For example,

The Kobe earthquake: Where is Kobe ?

1995 is the 50th Anniversary of the end of the



war with Japan: What is Hiroshima Day ?

At Armidale High School I have allocated part of the sociocultural teaching to non-Japanese-language teaching staff. This has led to a greater interest in Japanese studies by the staff at Armidale High School because they can actually have input into the course and they are learning more about Japan as they prepare their lessons. This organization also reduces the need for specially trained Japanese language teachers which are relatively unavailable in country towns.

2. Junior Elective Course (Years 9 and 10)

Sociocultural learning is combined in greater amounts of linguistic and sociolinguistic learning as the course progresses. This group of students will make some contact with Japanese native speakers such as the annual visit from their sister school in Inami Toyama Prefecture. In the early stage of the course, the sociolinguistic component is emphasized—the use of some basic spoken Japanese in realistic situations. I introduce as much realia as possible for motivational purposes at the beginning of the lessons and then around these resources language is developed. Nonverbal communication is emphasized so that students can relate sensitively and appropriately with a Japanese person even if they cannot communicate efficiently verbally. That is, to look at things from the perspective, Why do Japanese do the things they do?, striving to understand the way of think-

ing of a Japanese person.

Students are taught that when we look at Japanese society we make value judgments based on our Australian values and often from opinions with a lack of knowledge about Japanese or the Japanese people. For each aspect of Japanese society we study it (1) through Australian eyes 目 and (2) through Japanese eyes 目.

3. Senior Elective Course (Years 11 and 12)

At this stage the emphasis is on linguistic competence and sociolinguistic competence. Students refine their grammar and vocabulary and show that they can use their language skills appropriately in a variety of situations. Sociocultural knowledge is drawn on for understanding. For example, "*Ginza no Kabuki-za ni ikimashita.*" A knowledge of Tokyo and possibly of *Kabuki* may be necessary to fully understand this sentence. Sociocultural information is discussed in the Japanese language and not in English as in the previous courses.

This group of students usually represents only between 2 to 3 percent of the whole school population. They will usually continue to study Japanese at university level or work in the tourism industry and therefore they will have direct contact with Japanese people. The exit outcomes for Year 12 must therefore be a combination of linguistic competence (survival level) and sociolinguistic competence.



Comments from the Feedback Committee

Educating for Cross-cultural Understanding

Ms. Carlon is to be complimented for so clearly defining the objectives and the teaching methodology. The activity is not presented as an example of historical and different Japan, but as a stepping stone to understanding Japanese people today. This activity is an excellent way of showing how traditional activities such as the tea ceremony can be introduced as an exciting and effective intercultural teaching resource, rather than as just looking and trying. This approach is valuable for other teachers and more effective than just providing handouts.

It is important to emphasize to the students that the tea ceremony is for special occasions. It cannot be performed by anyone, whereas most people can host a tea party. We should also not overemphasize differences when teaching culture. For example, Cartoon No. 1 very much overemphasizes a simple gesture, and if the teacher is not careful this could give the wrong impression to the students.

The food and drink served in a tea ceremony and the number of people who attend reflect the delicate nature of the culture. Tea parties, like the Australian example given, are just as, if not more, common in Japan than tea ceremonies, especially among younger people and students. Just as Tim Tams and coffee go together, so do sweets and *matcha*. The food and drink are suited to each other in both cultures.

Lesson Plan

This is an excellent activity with much originality and a very well organized procedure. The theme is focused. All the steps are easy to follow. Most impressive is the learner-centered method which stimulates the students' curiosity and encourages them to take the initiative and be challenged by the task. Each step guides the students to think and discuss a lot.

Language Learning

From the viewpoint of the communicative approach, this activity shows the importance of learning the nonverbal aspects of language. Some linguistic activities could be added effectively, such as describing how to make tea. There are some words which may be necessary to focus on, such as "make tea," "boil some water," and so on, using a set of illustrated steps.

