

Culture of Britain Course proposals

What we have done

In Jan 1998 and Jan 1999 Pilgrims ran a course on the Culture of UK for teachers from the Cultura Inglesa language school chain in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

These two courses combined a journalistic, anthropological and sociological look at how Brits live and think they live.

The course included these elements:

- **BRIEF INPUTS OF CULTURE THEORY**, drawing on the work of people like Schweder, Trompenaars and systems like the Bateson's Logical Levels.
- **NEWSPAPER + VIDEO DOCUMENTATION**: participants worked with some some 150-200 press cuttings collected in the late Major and early Blair period covering areas like transport/ consumer affairs/ housing/ the state of the political parties/ agriculture/ the family/ women's matters/ imperialism/ social class/ re-imagining Britain etc....
- **BOOKS** on culture thinking and on UK , including a guide to UK prisons, Welsh poetry and naïve writings from the Kentish Isle of Sheppey.
- **PROCESS VISITS**, where the participants witnessed a sequence of events, eg a day moving between the 14 criminal courts of the Old Bailey half a morning watching the beer-making process.
- **INTERVIEW VISITS**, where the participants interviewed a person in their own work "habitat", eg a consultant in his hospital, a mechanic among his pools of oil, a librarian among her books.
- **TALKS AND SEMI-INTERVIEWS** with people involved with farming, age care, prevention of suicide, sports training etc and with foreigners settled in UK who can give a view from outside the archipelago: eg a Hungarian who came in 1956, an Alberta Canadian, Japanese university students, all of whom view UK from different base-lines.

■ **WORK COMPARING TARGET AND HOME CULTURES**

eg: participants were given a set of US/UK advertising keywords and ask to come up with an equivalent set for their home culture.

■ **INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS** : each participant chose an area of UK life to investigate and collected print, audio-recorded or video-recorded data on this.

One person investigated the workings of Canterbury City Hall, another interviewed 4 single mothers (she was one herself), a third did a project on the UK social class system.

■ **TUTORIALS WITH TUTOR**: participants had the chance to discuss their personal impressions of UK with the tutor in the privacy of a one-to-one situation.

■ **CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE TUTOR**: a kind of tutorial but this time via the written page.

■ **STORIES**, the situation of Wales in UK was presented to the participants by a brilliant South Walian story-teller who narrated her childhood for three enthralling hours.

■ **HOST FAMILY HOMEWORK**. In this activity participants asked their hosts about a topic and brought the responses to class. A typical assignment was to get the host to draw a map of UK and add in the motorways s/he was most familiar with. Another was to describe which house she had lived in she preferred.

It takes more than three weeks (the length of the course : six clock hours per day) to turn an excellent language teacher into a journalist an anthropologist or an expert camera person, but we had a damn good try.

Other models we would like to try:

1. In-depth study of a Microcosm

Take single small UK community, internet and library research it. Interview people from outside the community about it. Look at the community from at least these

angles: geological

archeological

historical

political

economic

sexual

leisure

knowledge of the outside world, from inside this community etc.....

Interviews with people of the place would focus initially on getting life histories and then following the main themes that come up from detailed discussion of these life histories.

(a course like this would be much more focused, but possibly narrower, than the very broad brush course done for the Sao Paulo people.)

2. The Seven Ages of Man

This course design would be rather like an animal behaviour film, say of the grisly bear, taking the participants through a UK life cycle from birth to death.

The first readings, visits and interviews would be around pregnancy, womb life, midwives, health visitors etc.....

The last area of work would be with the dying, hospice workers, priests and undertakers.

The epilogue could be with some one claiming to be in contact with people beyond the grave.

This approach would much more coherent and much simpler than the design at the head of this document.

It would also be a firmly person-focused course.

3. Culture of UK via NLP thinking.

This design would have as its aim to introduce people to Neuro-Linguistic Programming as a tool for investigating the culture of UK. Some of the main NLP presuppositions such as the very simple but very complex “ the map is not the territory “ are absolutely central to Culture thinking.

This would be a very complex course to get one’s teeth into and huge fun to work on. What intensely motivates tutors can often have energy surging through participants.

This course kills two birds with one stone: participants learn about UK culture and about NLP.

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