Using Postcards and Greeting Cards in the LCTL Classroom

Sample Lesson Plan Overview

Levels: Beginning through advanced

Aims: Develop literacy skills; expand cultural knowledge base

Class Time: Variable (30 min-several class periods)

Preparation Time: Variable (20 min-1 hr.)

Resources: Postcard and greeting cards

Postcards and greeting cards are a readily available and low cost source of authentic materials. They are also are particularly adaptable for a wide variety of teaching purposes. For example, they can be used to develop students’ literacy skills and to acquaint students with important sites, monuments, and attractions in the target culture. They can also be used as a springboard for class discussion of humor, holidays, etc. in the target culture.

The following two lesson plans provide ideas for using these formats in the LCTL classroom.

- Happy New Year!—Celebrating holidays through greeting cards
- Dear Susy, I’m having a great time in Venice…—Using postcards to introduce letter writing
Happy New Year!—Celebrating holidays through greeting cards

Level: Beginning-low intermediate

Aims: Practice literacy, learn holiday greetings and cultural icons

Class time: 30 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resources: 4-5 holiday greeting cards

Discussion of holidays in the LCTL is an important teaching practice since knowledge of the origins of local holidays and the customs and practices associated with them is an integral part of students’ cultural competence in the target language. This entertaining lesson, aimed at beginning to low intermediate students, uses greeting cards to focus on the language used to celebrate holidays in the target culture.

Procedure:
1. Before class, do the following:
   a. Locate 4-5 greeting cards;
   b. Make overhead transparencies of the cards;
   c. According to the number of students, make sets of the greetings on slips of paper;
   d. Prepare a worksheet for the activity (see appendix).
2. Using the overheads, present the greetings and practice reading the greetings with the class.
3. Pass out the slips of paper and have the students stand up, move around the room, and simultaneously read out their greetings until they find the other students with matching greetings. The other students with matching greetings are now their new group mates.
4. In their groups, give them the original copy of their card and ask them to use it while filling out the worksheet.
5. Follow up by asking each group to present details about their cards.

Caveats and Options:
1. If you do not have an overhead projector available, you can write the greetings on the blackboard.
2. For more advanced learners, make the worksheet activity more complicated.
3. If students have already learned holiday greetings, this can be a warm up activity before having students write a holiday letter.
Appendix

Holiday Greetings!!!

1. What holiday is this card for?
   a. __________

2. What colors are on the card?
   a. __________
   b. __________
   c. __________

3. Name the main items on the card (e.g. boy, girl, dog, etc.)
   a. __________
   b. __________
   c. __________
   d. __________
Dear Susy, I’m having a great time in Venice…—Using postcards to introduce letter writing

Level: Intermediate-advanced

Aims: Learn letter writing forms, practice writing short notes

Class time: 30-40 minutes

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Resources: Several postcards from the target language area or greeting cards, set of sample text cut up

Postcards are an excellent means of acquainting students with major sights and attractions in the target culture. They also provide an excellent point of departure for simple letter writing activities. In this introductory writing lesson, students are familiarized with the genre of postcard writing through an information exchange activity.

Procedure:
1. Before class, do the following:
   a. Locate several postcards or greeting cards;
   b. Write several sample letters which correspond with the cards, cut them up, and put the pieces in an envelope (see appendix).
2. Put students in groups of three and pass out an envelope to each group. Have the students arrange the parts of the letter in correct order.
3. Once the letters have been arranged, ask volunteers from each group to take turns reading their complete letters.
4. Highlight the different greetings and closings used.
5. Ask students for alternate greetings or closings they already know; list these on the board.
6. Hold up the original cards and have students guess which letter goes with which card.
7. Give each group its matching original card and ask them to write their own letter using the greetings and closings presented.

Caveats and Options:
1. If the letters are significantly different, you may pass out the parts of all the letters to all the students in the class and have them move around the classroom to find the students holding the matching parts of their letter.
2. As a follow up writing assignment, have students find their own postcard and write a greeting to a friend.

Acknowledgments:
This lesson plan was inspired by Andrea Kahn.
Appendix

Sample letters:

Hi Sam,

I’m sending you a postcard from the beach. My brother and I went swimming yesterday. Have you gone swimming lately?

Have a great summer!
Yours truly,
Ted

Dear Shirley,

Happy New Year! I celebrated the new year with my family in Detroit. As we do every year, we spent all day in the kitchen making food. I hope you’re having a great time with your sisters and brothers in Grand Rapids.

Best wishes,
Martha