

Describing states of being/actions in progress and supporting your arguments using a reason clause

Language: Japanese, adaptable to any language

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Overall Goal: The main goal for this task is to contextualize learning of the target vocabulary and grammatical structures. Through the listening and speaking tasks embedded in this task, students will come to automatize such language forms. This in turn will lead to having a sense of ownership of their own learning. During the task of information exchange, it is important that students need to rely on their verbal communication only. Identifying words, phrases, or descriptions should not include obvious clues, such as “John Brown.”

This activity was designed to utilize the galleries of the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art. To adapt for classroom or virtual use, two sets of artworks could be used to replicate the contents of a gallery. Works from the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art can be found at:



<https://beach.k-state.edu/explore/collection/>

Language goal for this communication task: After a few minutes of observations, Group A will jointly describe a preselected drawing – in this case *Tragic Prelude* by John S. Curry - from one gallery to Group B **using as many *ています*/teimasu* form verbs as possible**. Group B will do the same for Group A, in this case using an art installation by Charles Lindsay in the *Field Station 4* exhibition.

*This grammatical form is used for expressing what you are always doing on a regular basis or that an action is continuing in time.

Step 1: After working together to decide how to go about describing the art in the assigned gallery, each student will create a description of the work. Each student in the group will take turns to describe the chosen art to the other group outside the gallery. As the group presents the set of their descriptions, the other group may take notes according to the narratives.



Step 2: After each group's presentation, everybody goes to the relevant gallery, and the other group will guess what the art piece has been described. They need to use the physical evidence to support why they have guessed the piece **by using** **ています/teimasu verbs and ...からです/karadesu***.

* Karadesu follows the reason discussed beforehand. It means "so" or "that's why".

Step 3: Wrap up: Debriefing/reflection on the strategies used in terms of how the target language form is used. What has made you become aware of your interlanguage* gaps?

*Interlanguage refers to the systematic knowledge of learners' target language (in this case, Japanese), which is independent of both the their native language and target language (Selinker, 1972 cited in Ellis & Shintai, 2014).

Step 4: Discussion board assignment: Discuss in depth about the impact of visual evidence on your language comprehension and production (i.e., how it assisted your performance).

Here are some of the voices from the participating students on their online discussions:

“From time to time it can be helpful to use your target language in a different setting as an option where visual information is critical to communicate with each other”.

(Freshman in Arts & Sciences)

“Finding the right word to describe something is a great way to learn. It works for me.”

(Sophomore in Computer Science)

“What helped studying Japanese has been searching for the right words on the spot. I usually don't have all the words but searching for the right ones or building up something to get the listener the right idea is challenging but engaging”. (Junior in Fine Arts)

“Studying at the museum helps me to directly connect the target vocabulary with its meaning.” (Senior in Computer Science).

“I enjoyed going to the art museum - class was new and interesting. I really enjoyed finding creative ways to explain things to other class mates and on the other side trying to decipher what the other group was describing to us.” (Junior in Accounting)

“Using Japanese in a museum helps me constructively think of what adjectives and directions of items. It really challenges me to know my vocabulary.” (Sophomore in Fine Arts)

“It gave me the potential to help improve my memory and concentration skills, develop decision-making and critical thinking skills, enhance communication and listening skills, but also encouraged focus and discipline. It helped me to be creative and use my imagination as much as possible. Trying to use the many new vocabulary was tough.” (Junior in Biology)

“I liked studying at the museum. It made it easier to associate certain words with actual things/images.” (Sophomore in Computer Science)

“The museum helped me learn visually. Visual learning helps me to understand more conceptual aspects of the language and have a better understanding of more phrases than I would normally use”. (Senior in Biology)

“Going to the art museum puts the words into context. It also gives us memories to associate with certain words or phrases which can help us to recall them in the future. It also makes it so the classes aren't always the same, which helps to hold focus.” (Sophomore in Fine Arts)