

Things I Wish I'd Known about Culture When I Started Teaching

Stephen M. Ryan
Sanyo Gakuen University

Having more than one set of expectations about teaching and learning in play in the same classroom is a salient feature of EFL teaching, especially for those of us working outside the environment in which we ourselves were taught. In this largely autobiographical presentation, the presenter will outline the evolution of his understanding of and approach to this issue. Beginning with an attitude that “a student is a student and a classroom a classroom,” he charts his growing awareness that culture plays a role in expectations about what will happen in and around the classroom, his pursuit of ever deeper insights into his students’ culture, and his subsequent realization that thinking of his students as products of their own culture had become the single greatest impediment to learning and teaching in his classroom.

Stephen M. Ryan teaches at Sanyo Gakuen University, in Okayama, where he learns more about his students every day.