

Chinese, Japanese and Korean Numbers & Luck!

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Purpose:

To introduce my seventh and eighth grade Introduction to Foreign Language students to basic numbers in Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Along with the pronunciation and writing of the numbers 1-10, we will discuss how certain numbers are associated with fortune or misfortune in Chinese, Japanese and Korean cultures. This will lead us to a small origami number project.

State of Ohio Foreign Language Content Standards (8th Grade)

Cultures: Gain Knowledge and Understanding of Other Cultures.

01. Observe, identify and discuss behavior patterns of the target culture peer group.
04. Reproduce artifacts from the target culture.

Essential Questions

1. How do you say the numbers 1-10 in Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Korean?
2. Are there special symbols for the numbers?
3. Do they use the numerals "1,2,3, etc.", too?
4. What numbers are considered lucky and unlucky by certain people in the U.S.?
5. What is the significance of each of the numbers 1-10 for many people in China, Japan and Korea?
6. How do these beliefs about numbers still play a role in modern Chinese, Japanese and Korean society?
7. What is origami?

Rationale

For most of the middle school students who take the eighteen-week Introduction to Foreign Language class, it is their first time in a foreign language classroom. It is very important to expose them to more languages than one might expect in this type of class, basically Spanish and French. My students often express to me a sincere interest in many Asian languages. For most of them, these languages are a mystery. Students in this class will work with numbers in a variety of languages, including Spanish, German, French, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Korean. I would do this lesson after completing a lesson on basic Mandarin Chinese, Japanese and Korean Language comparisons.

Teacher Preparation Before Starting Lessons

- have an overhead outline map of Asia
- find websites which contain the numbers 1-10 in Chinese, Japanese and Korean along with audio clips of the pronunciation. (I've suggested some sites in the resource section at the end of this document.)
- practice this until you feel comfortable with the pronunciation
- find websites which contain information on the importance of numbers in Chinese, Japanese and Korean society.
- print an origami pattern of a "fortune teller" (sometimes referred to as a "cootie catcher"), and have copies and instructions ready for students

Day 1 Students will . . .

- be greeted at the door in Chinese (Ni hao!)
- be asked whether they think the following numbers are lucky or unlucky? 7, 13, their birthday number, etc.
- discuss whether or not these numbers are considered the same way around the world
- predict how people in China, Japan and Korea feel about the numbers 1-10
- hear an explanation of what we will do for the next few days
 - practice writing and saying the numbers 1-10 in Chinese, Japanese and Korean
 - discuss feelings about the numbers 1-10 in China, Japan and Korea
 - make a number origami fortune teller
- look at the numbers 1-10 in Chinese
- listen to and repeat pronunciation of each number
- write down how to say each number phonetically
- create a chart for the Chinese numbers 1-10, with room for writing each number character multiple times

- if time, when finished with their charts, practice counting orally from 1-10

Day 2 Students will . . .

- review Chinese numbers 1-10, both oral & written
- look at the numbers 1-10 in Japanese
- discuss how they compare to the Chinese numbers 1-10
- listen to and repeat pronunciation of each number
- write down how to say each number phonetically
- create a chart for the Japanese numbers 1-10, with room for writing each number character multiple times
- when students have finished, look at the numbers 1-10 in Korean
- discuss how they compare with the Chinese and Japanese numbers
- listen to and repeat pronunciation of each number
- write down how to say each number phonetically
- create a chart for the Korean numbers 1-10, with room for writing each number character multiple times
- if time, when finished with their charts, practice counting orally from 1-10 in Japanese and Korean

Day 3 Students will . . .

- review Chinese, Japanese and Korean numbers 1-10, both oral & written
- discover how some people in Asia feel about the numbers 1-9.
 - 1 - it can represent unity or loneliness
 - 2 - represents the complimentary forces on yin & yang, "easy".
"good things come in pairs"
 - 3 - liveliness, growing, the lucky primary number
 - 4 - death
 - 5 - "not" (it can be bad or good - depending on which number you put it with)
 - 6 - profitable (it's twice 3, which is lucky)
 - 7 - certainty, togetherness, can also mean death (be very careful which number you put next to it)
 - 8 - prosperity, potential, growth, sudden fortune
 - 9 - eternity, power, longevity (also the onset of decline)

- Odd numbers are generally considered to be more lucky. They are considered "yang" - growth and prosperity
- Even numbers are generally considered to be more unlucky. They are considered "yin"
- 3 digit numbers are preferred over 2 or 4 digits because 3 is a yang number representing "liveliness"
- Couples pay careful attention when choosing a wedding day. Having an 8 in the date is an advantage
- When giving a gift, it would be bad to enclose a sum that contains 4.
- Hotels usually don't have a room with a 4 in it, or any floor with a 4 in it.
- 14 is one of the most unlucky numbers. Some people think it means certain death
- 9 used to be reserved for the Chinese Emperor. Ordinary people couldn't use it. The doors of the imperial palace are all decorated with (9X9) 81 brass knobs to signify the majesty of the Emperor.
- 666 is considered one of the luckiest numbers. It means that things are going smoothly
- people will spend money to get special numbers on their license plates & cell phone numbers.
- 888 is prosperity times 3!
- The Summer Olympics in Beijing will begin on 8/8/08 at 8:08 pm.
Do you think this is just by chance?
Do you understand the symbolism of this?

- be asked to explain what origami is
- make an origami "fortune teller". After it is folded, students will label the different sections with numbers in either Chinese, Japanese, or Korean. Encourage them to write out the phonetic pronunciations. Inside they can write something about the number - whether or not it is lucky and what it symbolizes.
- Homework: to play with this fortune teller with someone who does not have this class. Try to teach them how to count from 1-10 and teach them a bit about what the numbers symbolize.

Here's a list of resources to help you with this lesson.

China Between Numbers and Obstacles, the Long March Towards the Olympic Games Goes On. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=1855>>

China Counts 800 Day to Olympics. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411319/733243>>

China: Dim Sum: Writing and Counting to 10 in Chinese Lesson. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.newton.mec.edu/Angier/DimSum/Numbers%20to%20Ten%20Lesson.html>>

Chinese Numbers. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.mandarintools.com/numbers.html>>

Chinese Numerology. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://ww.chcp.org/numbers.html>>

Cootie Catcher. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.billybear4kids.com/holidays/ChineseNewYear/CootieCatcher.shtml>>

Feng Shui and Chinese Numerology. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.feng-shui-architects.com/articles-fengshuinerology.htm>>

Korean Language Practice - Numbers. Online. 22 April 2007.

<<http://www.lifeinkorea.com/Language/korean.cfm?Subject=numbers>>

Korean Numbers. Online. 8 April 2007.

<http://www.uwsp.edu/it/staff/dberger/tkd/korean_numbers.html>

(Please note that there is a typo for the number 6 at this website. It says "Yasot", but it is "Yosot." The pronunciation isn't the best, but it's challenging to find a website with sound files for the numbers.)

Learn Basic Japanese. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.amphi.com/~psteffen/fmf/language.html>>

Lucky Number Eight. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.radio86.co.uk/explore-learn/learn-chinese/988/the-lucky-number-eight>>

Numbers in Chinese Culture. Online. 8 April 2007.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numbers_in_Chinese_culture>

Numbers Korean Phrasebook. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://wikitravel.org/en/Korean>>

Yasutomo Projects and Ideas. Online. 8 April 2007.

<<http://www.yasutomo.com/project/fortuneteller.html>>