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# Methods and Materials in EFL Global Education Classrooms in Japan

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*The following paper is a summary of various methods and materials used in global issues classrooms by some educators in various EFL contexts in Japan. Brian Teaman gives an overall introduction to the article. Martin Darling discusses the implementation of a new global issues curriculum at a girls' high school. Chris Bradley examines stereotypes in EFL textbooks that are produced for Japanese learners. Jane Nakagawa summarizes some ideas about teaching gender issues at the university level in Japan. Alfredo Ferreira explains a unique way of teaching students about environmental issues. Kip Cates writes a conclusion to this article.*

下記論文は、様々な学校で実践されているグローバル・イシューの授業で使われている方法と教材の概論である。Brian Teamanは、その内容について大まかに紹介し、Martin Darlingは女子高校において新しいグローバル・イシュー・カリキュラムを始めるにはどのようにすべきかを論じている。またChris Bradleyは日本の学生用に作られたEFLの教科書に見られる典型例に分析を加えている。Jane Nakagawaは日本の大学生レベルのジェンダー・イシューについての教授法をまとめあげている。Alfredo Ferreiraは環境問題の教授法についてユニークな方法を紹介している。そしてKip Catesは、本論分に対する総括を述べている。

## Introduction (Brian Teaman)

The purpose of this year's Global Issues in Language Education SIG forum at JALT 2003 was to explore with presenters and audience members ways to make positive contributions to the world inside and outside of language classrooms. These brief written summaries of the thoughts of these four speakers are but imperfect reflections of the forum. In the real forum, people laughed, coughed, whispered with each other, asked many provocative questions and offered insights from their own experiences. Adding to the unique nature of this forum was the fact that in addition to four people giving talks of roughly fifteen minutes each, these talks were punctuated by occasional questions, as well as a final discussion session at the end of the forum. This unique format blurred the distinction between presenter and audience. Alas, some of that life is lost on these cold pages. However, it is our hope that in the following four presentation summaries, readers can find something vibrant that will help teachers and students alike contribute in positive ways to solving global problems.

The first summary recounts Martin Darling's experience writing a global issues based curriculum for his high school. It is a prime example of what can be done given the will and dedication that the author demonstrates here. Chris Bradley then examines stereotypes in foreign language textbooks used in Japan. He writes in an exploratory manner rather than prescriptively, in order to enlighten us about an issue that we must face in many different ways every day--inside and outside of textbooks. Next, Jane Nakagawa writes about how she raises the level of gender awareness within her language classes. She brings to these pages years of practical experience teaching this subject within her college classes as well as presenting this

topic to other teachers. In the fourth presentation summary, Alfredo Ferreira writes about his experience making Tokyo Earth Day a truly international event by sponsoring an English table there. Through the author's descriptions, we can learn about a practical experience that learners can apply beyond the walls of the language classroom. Finally, with an excellent overview of the imperative for including global issues as part of every classroom, Kip Cates gives us his insights as a leader in the field of global education. We would all do well to read and learn from these dedicated individuals.

## Introducing an EFL global issues curriculum at the high school level (Martin Darling)

One year ago, the administrators at our high school asked the English teachers to implement a new global issues curriculum for the second year oral communication class. We embraced the idea enthusiastically for two reasons. The first was that we were dissatisfied with the curriculum at that time because it focused on the development of linguistic skills, with little regard for content. Secondly, our third year oral communication class consisted of a curriculum on environmental issues, so we thought that the new global issues curriculum for the sophomores could serve as a natural bridge to the third year class. The obvious link between the two courses fueled our motivation to begin the planning process.

We decided to divide the curriculum into four components: Poverty & Wealth, Food & Water, Human Rights, and Peace Studies. Since there were four English teachers, this division seemed a logical decision. Each teacher assumed responsibility for designing eight 90-minute lessons. The students would spend eight classes studying one component and then rotate to the next subject.

We began the Poverty & Wealth component of the course by having the students define these terms. The students learned to analyze the cycle of poverty and to understand how it is perpetuated by the choices of consumption they make. They also studied fair trade and labor issues, and they learned about squatter settlements. As the core activity of the class, the students were required to design their own NGO whose mission would be to alleviate poverty. Then they wrote, rehearsed and recorded a public service announcement for their NGO, citing some reasons for poverty and offering solutions to eliminate it. In the Food & Water component, a connection was drawn between fast food and obesity. The students learned, too, how raising cattle to supply fast food restaurants in First World nations adversely affects people in developing countries, since enormous amounts of water and grain are diverted in order to feed the cattle. Students also learned about chronic hunger and famine, and thus finished this component having a greater appreciation for their own food and water.

The component on Human Rights began with an introduction to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While teaching this component, we were trying to encourage our learners to focus primarily on gender issues pertaining to Japan and the rest of Asia. With regard to the latter, for example, we had the students critically examine materials related to the sex industry, as well as to the trafficking of women and children. For example, the students did a case study on Maiti Nepal, an organization whose workers attempt to rescue women from forced prostitution. They also learned about issues relevant specifically to the Japanese context, such as sexual harassment and domestic violence. To end this component, the learners conducted Internet-based research on the topic, “The Woman I Admire Most.”

The fourth and final component was the unit on Peace Education. The aim of this unit was for the students to develop a greater understanding of the causes and effects of conflict in their own lives and throughout Asia. They learned to analyze the root causes of conflicts and to propose strategies for peaceful resolutions. Activities in this component included, among others, group brainstorming on the meaning of peace, discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an information gap activity using maps of Asian nations, and an exercise adapted from Peaty (1997) in which the students were encouraged to view Japanese culture through the eyes of resident foreigners. This unit culminated in a project in which the students worked together in groups to conduct research on the Internet on areas of conflict throughout the world (e.g.: civil war in Sri Lanka) In the last class, each group presented the results of its research to the class, and proposed solutions to the conflict on which their particular group chose to conduct its research.

Developing a new curriculum requires a tremendous amount of preparation and is an ongoing process. It has been challenging to try to maintain an appropriate balance between imparting substantial content and encouraging linguistic development. Nonetheless, the students have responded very favorably to the new curriculum. They enjoy learning about global issues, particularly when language support is provided for the activities.

Next year, for logistical reasons, we will combine the Food & Water component with the unit on Poverty & Wealth. It is hoped that by doing so, we will help raise learner awareness of the interconnectedness of all of the components. At our high school, we have laid the foundation for a global issues curriculum. Next year will bring new challenges as we refine and further expand the curriculum.

## Stereotypes in “Made in Japan” EFL materials (Chris Bradley)

The following is a brief summary of research I have carried out intermittently over the past four years, in which I have attempted to critically examine some of the stereotypes in textbooks published for college-level and adult EFL students in Japan. Tomlinson (1998) holds that many materials developed for the global market of ESL and EFL learners have little affective value, since, in trying to appeal to the greatest possible number of learners, the topics they introduce are generic in nature. He thus calls for the writing of locally produced materials that tap into the interests of English learners in various regions of the world. Japan has, in recent years, seen an explosion in such materials.

Unfortunately, however, some of these materials perpetuate stereotypes. For example, despite the fact that the majority of speakers of English in the world use English as a second or foreign language (Kachru and Nelson, 1996), many EFL course materials designed for college-level and adult learners in Japan feature primarily characters from the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain.

Also disturbing is the tendency of some textbook authors not to emphasize the ethnic diversity of native speakers of English. The textbook, *Passport* (Buckingham and Whitney, 1995), for example, features 37 dialogs between native speakers of English, only one of which involves a non-Caucasian character. To the credit of the authors, however, it should be added that subsequent textbooks they wrote (e.g., *Passport Plus*, 1997) feature a much broader representation of non-Caucasian characters who speak English as their mother tongue.

Given one of the socio-cultural realities of Japan – namely, that Caucasians have tended to hold a higher position in the Japanese psyche relative to that of other races - it should not be surprising that there are stereotypes in EFL materials. Animated movies in Japan have tended to idealize Caucasian characters. To cite a further example of the idealization of Caucasians in Japan at the expense of other races, former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (cited in Schilling, 1997) linked the social problems of the U.S. with the high population of Hispanics and African-Americans. In my view, it is at the same time disturbing and surprising that according to Schilling, while Nakasone’s remark drew howls of protest from many members of the American public, it garnered little attention within Japan itself. Perhaps, though, the following assertion made by a representative of a prominent Japan-based publisher to a former colleague of mine will illustrate why Nakasone’s remark may not, after all, have been too surprising. When my co-worker asked this representative why Caucasian characters were featured in such disproportionately high numbers in their textbooks, the reply was simply, “It sells here.”

Fortunately, in the last five to seven years, some bright lights have appeared on the horizon. The text, *Marathon Mouth Plus* (Shimizu and Gaston, 2000), for example, contains a chapter in which students are challenged to think beyond common stereotypes. In addition, the textbook, *Talk a Lot* (Martin, 2003), which is printed by small publisher based in Saitama, features Japanese characters traveling to countries such as South Korea and Thailand, and using English as the *lingua franca* to interact with nationals from these countries.

In challenging teachers to examine textbooks critically, Small (2003, p. 12) encourages them to ask themselves the following

questions: “Does the text tend towards sensationalism, presenting popular movies, advertisements, or pop stars? Or does the text present the student with the opportunity to gain meaningful knowledge about the world?” I would add, too, that we as teachers should become aware of our own cultural biases as a prerequisite for the critical examination of EFL textbooks.

It has not been my intention during the course of my research to give either a blanket endorsement or a condemnation of any of the textbooks mentioned here. Rather, I would like to encourage all of us who write materials, whether for our own learners only, or for the large publishing firms, to learn from the process, and thus, to begin to raise our awareness (and that of our learners) vis-à-vis the cultural diversity of speakers of English.

## **Gender issues in the EFL classroom (Jane Nakagawa)**

### ***Why teach gender issues in the EFL classroom?***

Gender issues are inextricably linked to many social and global issues such as war, violence, inequality, illiteracy, poverty, and, according to the eco-feminist view, even environmental destruction. In recent years when my undergraduates have a choice of global issues themes for English projects, gender issues prove extremely popular.

### ***Approaches to teaching gender issues in the classroom***

Although there are many approaches to teaching gender issues, my approach blends stimulus-based teaching (Woodward, 2002) student-centered learning (Campbell and Kryszewka, 1992) and cooperative learning (see Sharan, 1999).

A short newspaper article, essay excerpt, poem, photo, dialogue, scene from a film, or song lyric serves as a springboard (“stimulus”) for language activities. Students themselves provide the content of discussions, role plays, and other activities. Cooperative learning is used to create structured peer interaction enabling students to collaborate in a supportive setting.

Example activities appear below (see also Nakagawa, 2001a):

1. The students or teacher choose a short work with a gender issues theme. The work should be within the linguistic ability of small groups of 3 to 4 students working together.
2. The material is copied and distributed to (or viewed by) each student.
3. Vocabulary is explained by the teacher, or the students can take turns looking up difficult words and explaining the meanings to group members, if necessary.
4. Students create summaries of the work which are compared both within and between groups. Alternatively, learner-created comprehension questions are exchanged with other groups for completion, or each group proposes a question that will be contributed to a set of questions designed by the class as a whole.
5. Students identify themes in the chosen work. Subsequently, learners create open-ended discussion questions about those themes. The class can work with one set of questions, or each group can use its own set of questions they have devised or which they have received after swapping questions with another group. These questions are discussed in small groups with each team member giving their answer to each one. Later the results of the discussion are reported to the entire class.

6. In lieu of or in addition to group discussion, students create role plays based on the material. Each group member creates a distinct and interdependent part to perform, with each person having equal, specified speaking time. Groups then perform these role plays in front of the class.

7. Other activities can include interactive journal writing, or the composition of poems, lyrics, or collaborative stories. To encourage perspective taking, learners can be encouraged to write from the imagined point of view of a character (for example, a rape victim, a person with an eating disorder, a battered wife, a closeted gay person) rather than from their own point of view.

### **Materials for teaching gender issues in the classroom**

Textbooks such as Day and Yamanaka (1999) and Yoshihara, et. al. (2002) feature short readings on gender issues. Another option open to teachers is the use of authentic materials. For ideas on using poems please see Nakagawa (2003a); for ideas on using songs, see Nakagawa (2001b); for ideas involving materials spanning a wide range of creative genres, see Nakagawa (2003b).

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps increasing Japanese media attention given to issues such as domestic violence, teenage prostitution, divorce, sexual harassment, falling birthrates, and others has fueled my students' keen interest in gender issues. Even once taboo topics such as gay rights have recently become popular among my students. Understanding gender issues is crucial in today's world. The good news is that there are many materials and approaches available to language teachers who wish to include gender issues in their classrooms.

## **English language and environmental education at Earth Day Tokyo (Alfredo Ferreira)**

The need to connect classroom lessons with the outside world is a recognized principle of global education. While environmental issues appear to have entered mainstream language teaching, their treatment may be glossed as generally *indoor* and *hands-off*. For several years, I ran educational eco-tours for international English language students in Australia and Canada. In Japan, my first attempt at mixing language teaching with environmental education occurred during Earth Day events in Tokyo on April 19 and 20, 2003. The idea was to provide environmental activities primarily in English. These activities would draw upon participants' environmental interests as well as the latent interest in the English language presumed to be held by members of the Japanese public. Following is an outline of the planning and delivery of the program. It includes recommendations for analogous projects.

My pitch was enthusiastically received by Earth Day Tokyo organizers. They referred me to their English-language liaison, who felt that the idea had value beyond just one event. Together we started a social/environmental e-mail group, "ecotok", whose members individually planned and offered, through e-mail postings, outdoor activities related to environmental and global issues. Donations from participants for activities such as camping trips and outdoor English workshops were in turn forwarded to environmental organizations, or were used to pay for special "ecotok"-sponsored events such as the booth at Earth Day Tokyo. After several events we raised sufficient funds for a booth. Six volunteers were on hand at the booth.

I developed an activity program for the ‘Nature and English’ language booth at Earth Day Tokyo 2003. I tried to include tasks for participants of all ages and levels of English language proficiency. Thus, Japanese translations of most activities were available. While a few activities could be carried out at the booth, most were designed to take place in adjacent Yoyogi Park. I also sought to include tasks that emphasized various aspects of environmental and foreign language education, such as content knowledge (e.g.; threatened species, descriptions of leaves), personal expression and interpersonal relations (poetry writing about nature, story telling, games), and linguistic development (giving directions, count/non-count nouns).

Dynamics that are unique to the outdoors include, for better or for worse, rain, which fell on both days. Few visitors came. Predictably, the rain affected the number of people (and volunteers) willing to engage in activities in Yoyogi Park, where the bulk of the day’s program would take place. Visitors to the booth included one child and adults of various ages. Their questions and other behavior would suggest that they shared three overall objectives: seeking to identify our organization, engaging in short, relatively unplanned, uncommitted social interaction, and obtaining samples of the information available. Based upon these perceived objectives, we came up with two recommendations for subsequent programs. First of all, we felt that in the future, we should inform potential visitors more clearly of the types of activities organized by the group at the event. This could be accomplished by organizers well ahead of the event. In particular, English teachers in the region could be informed of the program, as well as the linguistic and content-based objectives of the activities. They could be encouraged to invite their students to attend the event and participate in the activities. Regarding Earth Day Tokyo 2003, several teachers

who were thinking about inviting their students to attend had asked me about the program provided at our English language booth, but I was unable to furnish them in a timely fashion with specific information about the activities.

Our second recommendation was that we should assume that future visitors to Earth Day Tokyo would be receptive to environmental issues, but would, on the whole, anticipate light samplings of information and brief social interactions. Thus, the main purpose of our English language booth could be to distribute information about ways to employ global education curricula in language classrooms in Japan, by, for instance, displaying sample textbook activities and programs. Moreover, those staffing the booth could try to raise public awareness of issues, events and organizations related to global issues in language teaching in Japan and abroad.

The twin aims of providing both experiential education and information can be achieved by people staffing one booth. However, at the same time, a single unifying theme for the booth should be agreed upon. When formulating their aims for a booth, organizers of environmental and language education programming at similar events might consider ways in which they can achieve such a balance. Events such as Earth Day Tokyo, along with accessible green spaces, have always been wonderful resources for global education in the larger classroom that is the earth.

## Concluding remarks (Kip Cates)

One of the most important tasks for educators today is to help students learn about the rich variety of peoples in our world and the important problems that face our planet. Language teachers have a special role to play in this work. This mission is outlined in UNESCO's recommendation on *Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace* (1974), a document whose authors call for teachers to promote the following: (a) an international dimension and a global perspective in education at all levels; (b) understanding and respect for all peoples, cultures, values and ways of life; (c) an awareness of the increasing global interdependence between peoples and nations; (d) the ability to communicate with others; (e) an awareness of the rights and duties of individuals, social groups, and nations; (f) an understanding of the necessity for international solidarity and co-operation; and (g) readiness on the part of individuals to participate in solving the problems of their communities, countries, and the world at large

The specific contributions that language educators can make have been further set out by UNESCO's Linguapax project (1987). Among other things, this document calls on foreign language teachers to make efforts to promote international understanding, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence.

JALT's *Global Issues in Language Education* Special Interest Group (GILE SIG) has worked for over a decade to promote these important aims. The Global Issues SIG Forum, held each year at the JALT International Conference, gives language educators from around Japan the chance to come together and hear case studies by practicing teachers working specifically to promote Linguapax and UNESCO ideals.

This year's GILE SIG Forum touched on a number of key areas within the field of global education, from curriculum design (Martin Darling) and analyzing textbooks critically (Chris Bradley) to classroom practice (Jane Nakagawa) and action beyond the classroom (Alfredo Ferreira). The case studies they presented not only touched upon important global issues (respectively, peace, cultural stereotypes, gender issues, and the environment) but also demonstrated the variety of approaches being used by language teachers who strive to add a global dimension to their teaching. I hope that their ideas prove stimulating and serve to inspire others to experiment in their classes with ideas, topics and techniques aimed at teaching for a better world.

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