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 HELP & FAQs

Teaching about the Global Refugee Crisis in the University Classroom.

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Teaching the Global Refugee Crisis allows the examination of links between multiple factors. This helps students to understand causes and effects of displacement. Student interest is thus engaged in problem-solving for a wide range of crisis situations. Lessons can be geared towards a variety of academic fields. In this way, subject area knowledge can be used in the language classroom.

世界的な難民増加の危機を教えることにより、様々な原因どうしのつながりを検証することができるようになります。これは、生徒達に逃避の原因と結果を理解させる助けとなります。そのよにして、生徒達の関心は広範な分野での危機的状況を解決することに引き込まれます。授業は様々な学術分野に適合させることが出来ます。このような方法にて、専攻分野の知識を語学の授業において利用することが可能になります。

Introduction

In recent decades, there have been many arguments for introducing content-based teaching to the EFL classroom and, even more recently, the teaching of global issues has been encouraged in the engaged curriculum. Introducing complex issues under the broad umbrella theme of the Global Refugee Crisis allows teachers and students to consider interrelationships between such factors as: human rights; conflict; the role of the UN and it's related organizations; the nature and functions of various NGO's; health; use of limited natural and monetary resources; the environment; education; women's issues; rights of the child; cultural issues and expectations; cross-cultural communication; religion; history; economics and economic history; power; and art and literature. The focus of any lesson will depend on the level and interests of students, as well as the kind of course being taught.

This paper will:

- introduce reasons for teaching the Global Refugee Crisis and associated issues
- suggest techniques for teaching about the crisis within the framework of an engaged pedagogy

- provide example lesson plans for reading, writing, listening, speaking, and CALL classrooms
- provide a list of relevant readings and links to websites about refugee issues
- invite teachers to contribute to a database of EFL lesson plans about the Global Refugee Crisis.

Important concepts:

What is a refugee?

According to The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is:

Any person who ... owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 2002a).

Status

Status is an important issue in refugee studies. If an international border has not been crossed, the person escaping persecution does not qualify for full protection under the UNHCR definition of *refugee*. They are, instead, *Internally Displaced Persons* (IDP's). Moreover, in times of mass exodus, status may granted as a “prima facie” refugee, and preclude the issuance of documents, limiting movement to the confines of the refugee camp, and inhibiting employment outside the camp.

Why teach the Global Refugee Crisis?

The incorporation of a unit about the Global Refugee Crisis offers opportunities for learning about the real world, and real people, in the EFL university classroom. It allows for the exploration of multiple perspectives in considering any number of facets of the crisis. Teachers and/or students may choose one or more global issues to explore within the framework of the study of the Global Refugee Crisis.

The reasons for becoming a refugee are many, but the experience is not, globally speaking, unusual. According to the UNHCR website, “One in every 300 people in the world has been forced to flee persecution, violence, or war ...” (UNHCR, 2002a). Additionally, as can be seen in Figure 1, as of January 1st, 2003, the majority of Persons of Concern falling under the Mandate of the UNHCR were located within Asia. This fact alone makes the study of the Global Refugee Crisis valuable in Japanese classrooms.

Figure 1. Estimated number of persons of concern who fall under the mandate of UNHCR...1st January, 2003.

Asia	9,378,917
Europe	4,403,921
Africa	4,593,199
Northern America	1,061,199
Latin America & Caribbean	1,050,288
Oceania	69,206
TOTAL	20,556,781

(Reproduced from UNHCR, 2002a).

Integrating the Global Refugee Crisis into the EFL university classroom allows:

- examination of a complex, real-world issue
- focus on a range of global issues
- incorporation of a large number of communicative tasks
- students to follow their interests
- tailoring of courses to suit a variety of academic disciplines
- real opportunities to share knowledge, opinions, and values
- exposure to a wide variety of materials
- opportunities for cooperative, or collaborative, learning and action
- fostering of shared responsibility
- development of critical awareness and thinking
- all learning styles to be included
- development of awareness of the nature of prejudice and discrimination
- awareness and understanding of human rights
- awareness of causes and effects of conflict, and the importance of conflict resolution and peace-building

Lesson content

Depending on the level, interests, and academic field of students, lessons should include the exploration of the definition of *refugee*, and may include content relevant to refugee issues including:

the history and role of the UN	and its associated agencies	status	human rights	health	NGO's
safety	nutrition	children's issues	education	law	environment
economics	power	repatriation	cultural expectations and norms	intercultural communication	women's issues
design of systems in camps	layout of camps	resettlement	art and literature		history

For further discussion of each of these individual issues, please see Bradford-Watts (In Press).

Introducing refugee issues

One way of introducing the topic of refugee issues is by using, with appropriate permission, some of the photographs available on, for example, the UNHCR site. Students can look at the photograph and brainstorm issues raised by the photograph. For example, in the case of the photograph of a Somali woman in Ethiopia's Hararghe region (Press, 1991, in UNHCR, 2002b), students may identify such issues as the environment (depletion of wood, used as fuel), women's issues, systems design of camps, composition of supplies provided by international organizations and NGOs, status, safety, economics, or cultural expectations and norms.

Many of the example lesson ideas appearing below may be combined with other tasks to create a more comprehensive

unit of study. Similarly, some of those described for use with classes of English majors may also be useful as introductory activities in a unit designed for students undertaking other fields of study. Opportunities for students to encounter, communicate, and reflect on multiple perspectives should be encouraged. Cooperative, or collaborative, pair or group work allows students to negotiate meaning in the production of artifacts for face-to-face, or computer mediated, presentation.

Example lesson ideas for English majors

The speaking classroom

1. Eastley (2002) describes a lesson for teaching 1st year students about refugees and the refugee experience. In this lesson, students first brainstorm the meaning of the word *refugee*. The teacher presents a definition based on the one used by the UNHCR. Students choose 10 characters from a poster (available at <www.unhcr.ch/teach/legospot.htm>), and create an identity and occupation for each, sharing these with the class, and justifying their reasoning. Students then attempt to identify the refugee from among the many characters represented on the poster, and report their answers to the class with their justifications. They are then directed to consider the UNHCR definition, introduced previously, and read the explanation, hitherto covered, at the bottom of the poster. Students reflect on their reasoning, and a class discussion may ensue, depending on the level of the class.

2. Eastley (In Press) presents a two-lesson unit of work about human rights. In the first lesson, students brainstorm what it means to be a *person/human*, interview each other to create a list of people's needs and wants, and are then introduced to basic facts about the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights. Students interview each other to discover

which rights they have, and which they are being denied, and then complete a picture-matching activity in which half the class members receive a card featuring a picture of someone exercising one basic human right, and the other class members receiving a card on which one right is written. Students must find their partner by asking *What right do you have?*, or *Do you have the right to ...?* This lesson concludes with a class discussion of the Declaration of Human Rights. In the following lesson, students create role plays reflecting a right, either enjoyed, or denied. Following presentation of the role play, other students guess which right has been represented. Finally, a true case in which a right is denied is presented to students, who discuss a series of questions about the case.

3. Each student reads an account of the experience of one refugee (for example, those available in the Doctors Without Borders, 2000a, curriculum; Hyndman, 2000; or UNHCR, 2002c). Everyone will need a different account. They then assume that persona, and interview each other about their experiences. These may be video, or audio, taped for review.

4. Students are given a scenario of a sudden mass exodus due to large-scale persecution in a country. Small groups are provided with a map of a site. The groups plan the layout of the camp to be established at that site. Students must consider the needs of the refugees, and the provision of services within the camps. Groups report back to the class, answering questions as appropriate. Other groups may critique their work. Appropriate worksheets may be adapted from the Doctors Without Borders (2000a) curriculum.

The listening classroom

1. Students listen to an account of the reasons for, and movements of, a refugee who has fled persecution. They mark these movements on a map, or timeline, noting any other relevant details. This may be completed as a jigsaw listening activity, with students regrouping to complete the exercise. Accounts may be found in UNHCR (2002c).

2. Dictate a relevant short news piece. Students predict outcomes and suggest a list of possible solutions. Relevant news may be found at UNHCR (2002d).

The reading classroom

1. Students read stories, poetry, songs, accounts, anecdotes, etc., written by refugees about their experiences. They create posters based on their reading, and present their work to other members of the class, or to members of other classes, in a poster session. Relevant materials may be found at UNHCR (2002d).

2. Students read about the history and conventions of the UNHCR. They work in groups to create a presentation about the conditions leading to the formulation of one or more of the conventions. Relevant materials may be found at UNHCR (2002a).

3. Students read about the history of the UNHCR. They work in groups to map the changing role of the UNHCR, and the conditions leading to change. Students may wish to debate the role that the UNHCR took in a particular crisis, or predict the direction that the UNHCR will take to protect refugees in the future. Relevant materials may be found at UNHCR (2002a).

4. Students read newspaper representations of refugees seeking asylum in a third country, e.g. Australia, Britain, or Japan. Students identify and classify problems addressed in the articles.

The writing classroom

1. Students are given a picture of (a) refugee(s). They describe it, and their reactions to it. They may also assume the persona of one of the people in the picture, and write about their experience. Student writing may be published either on-, or off-line. Suitable examples may be found at UNHCR (2002b).

2. Students decide, or are assigned, a topic related to the theme of *The Global Refugee Crisis*. They work individually, in pairs, or groups, to create a lesson in order to peer-teach their topic. This may be in the form of a web-quest for other students to complete, Powerpoint demonstration, poster session, workshop, or other face-to-face lesson.

The CALL classroom

1. Students complete jigsaw readings about a topic relevant to *The Global Refugee Crisis*. Set a question with multiple possible solutions and have students debate the question online. Group, pair, or individual work is possible in this mode. This assignment may be completed in either synchronous, or asynchronous, mode.

2. Groups work together to produce a multimedia presentation about a topic relevant to *The Global Refugee Crisis*.

3. The class works together to create a database of information concerning *The Global Refugee Crisis*.

4. Individuals, pairs, or groups research NGOs working with refugees. Students create a Web page with information about the NGOs, and the activities of the selected NGOs.

Example lesson ideas for non-English majors

Non-English majors will appreciate the opportunity to apply knowledge of their field, and to be able to present their ideas in English, so lessons should be designed to elicit vocabulary and concepts from the particular academic discipline, and to encourage problem-solving within the context of the discipline.

- Nursing majors may present research issues of health in refugee populations, and may be asked to design an emergency-response nursing compound in a refugee camp set up as a response to a sudden mass exodus of people from a neighboring country. Materials may be adapted from the Doctors Without Borders (2000a) curriculum.
- Nutrition students may be asked to consider issues of nutrition in a similar situation, and having researched the usual diet of the target population, they may be asked to suggest a selection of rations to be distributed at a refugee camp. Other groups may critique these suggestions in terms of cultural appropriateness; dietary needs; cost; preparation time; etc. Materials may be adapted from the Doctors Without Borders (2000a) curriculum.
- Economics students may be asked to participate in a simulation in which the informal market develops in a refugee camp.
- Architecture and design students may be asked to consider problems in engineering or human systems in an example camp, and to present solutions which may be critiqued by other groups. Students may be directed to Doctors Without Borders (2000b) for further details.

Conclusion

According to Wilkinson (2003), following the September 11th terrorist attacks in the USA,

[the] movement of real refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, the uncertainty of future terror attacks, the global reach of the [human] traffickers and smugglers, efforts by developed countries to tighten their border security and immigration procedures, combined to produce a volatile cocktail of apprehension, worry, and at times, xenophobia (Wilkinson, 2003, p9).

What better time to start teaching about the Global Refugee Crisis? I invite you to develop other lesson plans and contribute to a database of ideas for teaching about refugees in EFL classrooms, with a view to publication in the future. Please contact me at <kim@bradford-watts.freesevers.com> for details.

Further reading and useful links

For those wishing to do some background reading prior to teaching the unit, the following resources will give a good background to the issues involved in the Global Refugee Crisis.

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