

From Classroom to Action: Disaster Relief in Japan

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Reference Data:

Teeter, J. L. (2013). From classroom to action: Disaster relief in Japan. In N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT2012 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

In this paper I review theories of global citizenship education and suggest ways to put global citizenship education into practice. I emphasize the importance of incorporating locally relevant material into courses at the tertiary level and having students make connections between the local and the global. Specifically, I discuss how tertiary level educators can engender locally and globally minded students who contribute to society when calamity strikes. After detailing how foreign language university instructors can incorporate learning-rich disaster-related content into their classes through news articles, online videos, adaptation of required textbooks, and guest speakers, I introduce a group formed by students who took these classes, which focused on disaster relief, volunteering for the Great East Japan Earthquake, and future disaster preparedness at home and abroad.

本稿は、グローバル市民教育の理論を概説するとともに、その教育実践方法を論考する。高等教育における、地域と関連させた教材開発や地域と世界とのつながりを意識させる教育の重要性に焦点を置き、どのように災害時に地域社会やグローバル社会に貢献する学生を育むことができるのかについて論じる。とりわけ高等教育における外国語クラスで、新聞記事、オンラインビデオ教材、教科書、ゲストスピーカーを通して、学生と関わりの深い災害関連の教育内容を授業に導入する方法について詳述する。さらにこれらの授業実践を受けた学生が、東日本大震災における支援活動や今後の国内外の災害支援のためのボランティアグループを形成するに至った経緯とその活動を紹介する。

WHEN A country experiences a disaster on such a large scale as the one that has continued to unfold in Japan since March 11, 2011, what is the role of an educator? Following the disasters in the U.S. of September 11, 2001, for instance, professors at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois took several actions to address the anxiety the attacks had brought upon students. Although the rural college town is separated from New York City by 930 miles, professors of all fields felt compelled to research and prepare for students' questions and concerns. They offered workshops, incorporated discussions of the incident into their classes, and shared information about how students could help with recovery (C. Bukowski, personal communication, 28 Dec 2012). In the case of the Great East Japan Earthquake, with ensuing tsunamis and nuclear meltdowns, a great proportion of the suffering that the natural disasters inflicted could have been prevented if only people had been more prepared and aware of ways to respond.

However, when the subject an instructor teaches is a foreign language, the opportunities to incorporate disaster-related content may seem few and far between. In this paper I describe



how lessons in EFL classes related to disaster recovery and preparedness can engage students in language learning and class content. Furthermore, I illustrate how students enrolled in these classes nearly 500 miles away from the disaster area were inspired to form a disaster relief and readiness group. After sharing activities conducted in the classes, I highlight the formation and initiatives of the organization.

Incorporating Discussions of Disaster Relief into EFL

Analysts of youth culture have suggested that the Great East Japan Earthquake may be one of the greatest influencing factors on the youth of Japan this decade (Gottesdiener, 2011). In seeking to make EFL classes relevant to students' lives, educators can enhance language learning and motivation by incorporating disaster-related content into their classes.

The relevance of content in a class is inherently connected to students' motivation to participate and learn (Frymier, 2002). Furthermore, educational objectives set by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT, 2006) state that teachers should cultivate globally-minded citizens, and instructors have incorporated global issues content in their foreign language classes to encourage a sense of global citizenship (Taferner et al., 2010; Taferner, Sakamoto, Torbert, Wright, & Yphantides, 2011).

When introducing global issues as content, it is important that students form links between the international world and their own lifestyles and communities (Battistoni, Longo, & Jayanandhan, 2009) so they can practice local and global awareness. Therefore, educators are increasingly developing activities in their EFL classes to help students make connections between using English and their everyday lives, such as bilingual maps and reports in English to be displayed in their local communities (Mizuyama, 2010).

While educators may have reservations about using disaster-related material as content, when interviewed, several youth in Kansai stated that they wanted their instructors to discuss the disasters in class:

In my opinion, it's also great opportunities that you can learn what happened and what's going on at the area struck by the quake and tsunami, if you have a classmate who actually visited there and did the voluntary work. So I wish [teachers would discuss the disaster more in my classes]. (Yasu, 4th year university student, field notes, 9 May 2012)

A common perception of students was that "most teachers weren't concerned about the disaster" (Mika, 2nd-year university student, field notes, 1 May 2012). Students *are* interested in learning from their classmates and instructors about the disaster. Ignoring the topic may lead students to believe that their educators do not consider the disaster significant. Incorporating this highly relevant content into EFL classes not only provides a topic that students will be engaged in, but gives students an opportunity to share and reflect on how they can contribute to recovery and disaster readiness. It can also help students develop empathy for those experiencing disasters outside of their own country. Since some students may have experienced great suffering due to the disasters, instructors should ensure that students are comfortable before incorporating disaster-related content. This may lead to unexpected results. One student from disaster-struck Sendai articulated that she wanted students to be more proactive about helping out. Therefore, she wanted instructors to incorporate disaster-related content into classes (Sakura, field notes, 6 Oct 2011).

While I was volunteering for a month in Ishinomaki in August 2011, it became increasingly apparent that there was still work for volunteers. Furthermore, in Kansai there appeared to

be a disconnect between the disaster and students' everyday lives. In order to cultivate critical discussions of the disaster amongst students in Kansai, I introduced disaster-related content into my courses.

Reading Leader Discussion Groups

One way to engage students in discussions of disaster preparedness and response is through reading leader discussion groups. These are related to literature circles, where small groups of students are assigned different roles to encourage in-depth discussion of one piece of literature (Schlick & Johnson, 1999). For the purposes of my classes, I adapted this to news articles. Instead of reading the same article, each student finds and brings to class an article that they will lead discussions on.

As with Bradford-Watt's news circles (2006), students were required to read, understand and summarize a news article. Either in class or for homework, students also developed preview, comprehension, and discussion questions, and prepared to introduce potentially unknown words in their summary. Students were also taught how to write academic references (see Appendix A).

In small groups, students took turns being the discussion leader (DL). The DL started by asking preview questions, such as "What have you heard in the news about disaster relief volunteering?" Then they introduced the unfamiliar vocabulary and read or recited their summary. The students listening took notes and the DL facilitated discussion by asking comprehension and discussion questions. Once one discussion had finished, another DL began a new discussion based on his or her article.

This activity was used to encourage students to find out more about youth volunteering, local initiatives, and temporary housing issues, including issues brought up in these articles such as:

advantages and disadvantages of Tokyo Walker Volunteer Search engine (Barron, 2011);

- motivations of youth volunteers (Burnett, 2011);
- disaster's influence on youth identity (Gottesdiener, 2011);
- students' disaster recovery project ("Aichi students," 2012);
- international volunteers (Bouthier, 2012);
- disaster relief bus tours ("Disaster area," 2012);
- rebuilding fishing ports in the disaster areas ("Rebuilding schedules," 2011); and
- families in temporary housing (Shiojima & Matsuda, 2011).

While developing autonomy in learning, including researching, searching for main points, summarizing, discussing, and forming and asking questions, students practiced their discussion skills. Many stated that they enjoyed this activity because they normally did not talk in depth about the disaster and they could gain new perspectives from foreign language news sources.

Adapting Textbooks

Many textbooks incorporate disaster-related content and those that do not can be adapted to make them more relevant to these kinds of discussions. (See Table 1 for a breakdown of the texts and their relation to the disaster.)

World English 3 (Milner, Johannsen, & Chase, 2010) is often selected as a text for integrated-skills EFL classes. Three chapters directly cover disaster preparedness and volunteering. Chapter 5, "Survival," introduces vocabulary, reading passages, and listening exercises related to emergency situations. Speaking activities include using unreal conditionals and role-plays of disaster situations, all designed to help students imagine themselves in a disaster situation and think of how to prepare. The workbook in Chapter 9, "Danger," includes a speaking exercise in which

students discuss the following statements: “Women should not be allowed to do dangerous jobs” and “People in our country need to do more to prepare for emergencies.” A writing activity specifically asks students to consider reasons why someone might want a job as a relief worker. Phrases for emergencies are also introduced, such as, “Where is the nearest hospital?” Even Chapter 7, “Transportation,” can be connected to the disaster. Morita (2012) explained that the first people to evacuate from Fukushima after hearing news of a potential nuclear disaster were the family members of Tokyo Electric Power Company employees because they had previously organized exit strategies for cases when certain trains were not running or certain roads were inaccessible. He urged everyone to prepare an exit strategy, especially those near the ocean or within 80 kilometers of a nuclear plant. Using language in this chapter, students can plan a variety of evacuation routes.

By connecting the disaster to students’ everyday lives, adaptations of textbooks can easily be achieved. In another popular text, *English Firsthand 1* (Helgesen, Brown, & Wiltshier, 2010), Chapter 3 introduces language for discussing routines with adverbs of frequency. Students can be asked to talk about how often they volunteer. With Chapter 9 on future plans, students can be introduced to volunteer vacationing, including volunteering for disaster relief.

Moving on with English (Bray, 2007) has several chapters that can be linked to disaster relief. In Chapter 3, “You, Out on the Town,” students plan a night out. Students can be asked to research restaurants and stores that donate a certain percentage of their earnings to disaster relief. After presenting these places in class, students can design their night out making sure that they stop at these places. In Chapter 10, “You, Helping Solve World Problems,” students plan a charity event. The charity event they plan can be for organizations that support disaster survivors. For the ambitious instructor, the class can vote which

fundraising event they would like to make a reality and actually hold the event. A similar activity can also be found in Chapter 6 of *You, Me, and the World* (Peaty, 2010) in which students plan a charity dinner and write speeches.

Topics such as “When is honesty important?” “How can you find a good job?” “What makes a happy ending?” and “What is the best kind of vacation?” found in *Skills for Success 1: Listening and Speaking* (Scanlon, 2010) can be linked to the disaster. Students can discuss the late governmental disclosure of information about the nuclear accident, search for disaster recovery success stories, and consider the benefits of a volunteer vacation.

Texts that teach students self-introduction patterns, such as *Conversations in Class* (Richmond et al., 2009) can also be adapted. People who are not familiar with Japan may assume that all of Japan has been directly affected by the tsunami and earthquake, or that the whole country is unlivable due to nuclear contamination. Students can be introduced to important phrases for expressing how far or near the place where they live is, such as “I live in Osaka. It is far from Fukushima.”

With very little effort, discussions of the disaster can be brought into classes, achieving the dual tasks of making content meaningful and personal to students, while at the same time, raising disaster awareness.

Online Videos

English language videos on the Internet related to the disaster are available on the YouTube channels of major news agencies and other websites. They can also be used to engage students in disaster response and readiness. (See Appendix B for video recommendations.)

As part of a lesson aimed at having students understand multiple perspectives on the disasters and articulate their own opinions about the disaster, I included the “Video Footage of

Table I. Adapting Textbooks to Disaster-Related Content

Textbook	Chapter	Exercise	Content
World English 3	5: Survival	vocabulary / reading	emergency preparation
		listen to radio program	discuss program interviewing survivors
		unreal conditions	imagine a disaster
		simulation	work with a team in a survival situation
	9: Danger	opinion giving	dangerous work such as disaster relief
		phrases	survival phrases
7: Transportation	discuss transport options	develop an exit-strategy	
English Firsthand 1	3: When do you start?	use adverbs of frequency	discuss frequency of volunteering
	9: What are you going to do?	use future tense to discuss future plans	make plans for disaster relief volunteer trips
Moving on with English	3: Out on the town	plan a night out	plan to visit places that support survivors
	10: World issues	plan a charity event	fundraise
You, Me, and the World	6: Developing countries	plan a charity dinner and speech	fundraise
Skills for Success 1: Listening and Speaking	2: How can you find a job?	read about how to start a new career	imagine difficulties of people in disaster areas who have lost their jobs
	4: What makes a happy ending?	listen to a story with a happy ending	find success stories in disaster areas
	5: What is the best vacation?	listening activity on a helpful vacation	research ways to volunteer in disaster areas for the holidays
	8: When is honesty important?	listening activity on making choices	discuss Japanese government response to nuclear disasters
Conversations in Class	1: Introductions	introduce yourself and hometown	express distance from disaster areas

Emergency Relief Efforts” (<http://peaceboat.jp/relief/videos/video-footage-of-emergency-relief-effort/>) hosted by the Peace Boat Volunteer Center (PBN). Prior to watching the video, students discussed these questions.

1. How did the disasters affect people in northeastern Japan?
2. What responses have there been internationally to the disaster?
3. What facts do you know about the disaster and relief efforts?

Students then watched the video twice and answered the following questions with a partner, later sharing their answers in small groups, and then with the entire class.

1. What did people in Ishinomaki need immediately after the disaster? What do they need now?
2. What are the differences between the Tohoku earthquake and Kobe earthquake?
3. Around what age do you think most volunteers are?
4. How many volunteers are sent to Ishinomaki every week?
5. What do Peace Boat volunteers do in Ishinomaki?
6. What happened to the man and his family?
7. In what other ways besides volunteering can you help people in Ishinomaki?

Along with listening exercises, students can analyze how people of different backgrounds are portrayed and how media in different countries utilize stereotypes in their coverage, as described by McLaren and Tomaru (2011).

Guest Speakers

The activities mentioned above were used as a preamble to the visit of disaster relief volunteers as guest speakers. I invited volunteers who were learning English to demonstrate to students

how they can successfully communicate important information in English.

Students were asked to consider their image of disaster relief volunteering in small groups. Many students believed that disaster volunteering was inaccessible for them and their participation would neither benefit themselves nor survivors (Teeter, 2013). The guests then described their volunteer experiences, emphasizing the diversity of volunteers and disaster relief activities and how they themselves had never volunteered before. Students then discussed how their image changed. Those that thought they did not have enough physical strength to volunteer learned that many volunteer activities do not require heavy lifting, such as visiting temporary housing to provide information to residents, beach clean-up, removing sludge from canned foods, distributing provisions, and making jewelry. Students learned that there are many groups helping to get volunteers to the disaster area cheaply and that good accommodation and food is often provided. They also learned the Japanese Self-Defense Forces always ensure that sites are safe for volunteers before they are allowed to enter them. Students who felt that they would only be a burden learned that there are support systems for training volunteers at all levels of experience. Most importantly, they also learned the importance of being prepared for a disaster and how they could use their own talents to contribute to recovery without physically going to the disaster area. As a wrap-up, students were asked to consider ways in which they could contribute from Kansai.

Neconote

Making content relevant to students’ lives can lead them to take action outside of the classroom. After the classes I have described, the guest speakers and I made ourselves available to students. Over tea and lunch, several students expressed that they wanted to volunteer sometime in northeastern Japan or

fundraise in Kansai. This led to the formation of Neconote, a group dedicated to supporting relief efforts from Kansai whose original members include students from universities in Kobe, Kyoto, Nara, Shiga, and Osaka, but is open to anyone who would like to participate.

The formation of Neconote by the students is evidence that content introduced in the classroom can truly lead to students' involvement in work to benefit society. The content, by being relevant to students' everyday experiences, motivated them to learn English and take action.

Leading to and following the formation of the group, meetings were held in Osaka, Kyoto, and Kobe in order to be accessible to as many people as possible. A private Facebook group and blog were also created for people to keep up with the activities of the group.

One of the core principles of the group is that anyone can contribute. This is reflected in the student-selected name of the group, Neconote. *Neconote mo karitai* means "I will take anyone's help," which implies that even small contributions are meaningful. Another principle is that disaster relief volunteering can occur outside of the disaster area. Finally, the group aims to take advantage of people's skills to do something good and make volunteering a normal part of everyone's life.

There are several ways in which members conduct volunteer activities: music, cooking, and handicrafts. The music group has made two CDs of original music by bands in Kansai and Tokyo and has performed at local events to spread information about volunteering. The cooking group holds its own parties to fundraise for disaster relief, and the handicraft group fundraises with objects they make. Other activities of the group included a flea market in Kyoto where used clothes, books, and items produced by survivors of the disaster were sold. Members also put on events at universities and community centers to share information about volunteering and to recruit more members.

Proceeds go to three organizations in Ishinomaki working on behalf of disaster survivors.

The group organized a volunteer week in Ishinomaki. Half of the group worked with an organization building a senior facility called It's not Just Mud (INJM) (<http://www.itsnotjustmud.com>) and the other half conducted events at temporary housing on Oshima Island. Due to the large number of English-speaking foreigners involved in INJM, students could also work on improving their English communication skills in a real-world setting. Furthermore, many of the students who went on this trip felt empowered to keep returning to Ishinomaki to volunteer on their own, often taking new people with them.

Besides creating links in Kansai to build community resilience, the group aims to hold disaster relief training sessions to increase the capacity of people to respond after a disaster strikes. Members are also considering ways in which they can support disaster relief abroad. Some members participated in fundraising activities in Kobe for people affected by Hurricane Sandy. After participating in several Neconote activities, one member, Maru-chan (19) stated:

What I've realized lately is that there *are* many things that I can do to contribute to disaster relief. In the future . . . I'd like to do what I can in a variety of ways to continue helping with disaster relief. (Field notes, 21 Dec 2012)

Through this group, youth are realizing that they can contribute to society with their own unique skill sets, even if their contribution is small. Even students in my classes who did not join Neconote expressed that they were motivated by the activities in class. Many students that participated in these classes went on to volunteer on their own in the disaster area through different organizations.

Conclusion

Nearly 2 years have passed since the natural and human catastrophes of March 11, 2011, yet the consequences of the disaster are still affecting people in the disaster region and throughout Japan. In order to reduce suffering on such a large scale from occurring again, it is important that as many people as possible are linked together, are aware of how to respond, and know how to prepare.

Educators can help raise awareness by incorporating content related to the disaster into their classes, whether it be by discussing news articles, adapting course textbooks, doing activities with news videos, or inviting guest speakers, which may lead to students' taking their in-class work one step further. Neconote is just one of many examples of how students have been inspired to prepare and respond to disasters. While learning a language, students may just be inspired to believe that they can contribute positively to society and disaster recovery. Furthermore, they can realize that they can use their own skills, especially language skills, to learn more about helping their own communities and connecting to the global world.

Bio Data

Jennifer Louise Teeter is currently a lecturer at Kyoto Sangyo University researching youth and indigenous movements while working to launch the world's first solar/sail cargo ship <<http://www.greenheartproject.org>>. She also provides translation and logistical support for the Aotearoa-Ainuosir Exchange Program sending indigenous Ainu youth to New Zealand for an exchange with Maori on cultural resilience building and leadership <<http://aaexchange.blogspot.jp>> <teeter42@gmail.com>

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Appendix A

Reading Leader Discussion Groups Sample Worksheet

Article Title:
Preview Questions:
1.
2.
Vocabulary and English Definition:
1.
2.
3.
Summary (75 to 100 words):

Comprehension Questions: 1. 2.
Discussion Questions: 1. 2.
Reference:

Note. Adapted from Jacoba Akazawa's worksheet (field notes, 15 Nov 2011) based on *The News Circle* (Bradford-Watts, 2006).

Appendix B

Suggested YouTube Videos on the Great East Japan Earthquake

Source	Description	Video titles
Agence France-Press YouTube Channel http://www.youtube.com/afp	provides 2-5 minute videos on several disaster relief topics	Japan disaster builds international bridges
		Japan disasters push manga artist to end of the line
		Woman in iconic tsunami photo looks to future
		Japan's tsunami survivors brace

Source	Description	Video titles
Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Center Website http://peace-boat.jp/relief/gallery/video/	includes English language videos that are related to its activities in Ishinomaki	Disaster relief volunteer training programme onboard Peace Boat
		Ganbatte 365 (7 videos under this heading on volunteer activities)
		Video footage of emergency relief efforts
Al Jazeera English YouTube Channel http://www.youtube.com/user/AlJazeeraEnglish	provides videos related to the work people are doing to recover	Japan marks six months since disasters
		People & Power - Aftermath of a disaster
Australia Broadcasting News Youtube Channel http://www.youtube.com/user/News-OnABC		Tsunami survivors take part in school exchange
		Orphans of the quake