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[JALT PRAXIS] TLT INTERVIEWS

Torrin Shimono & James Nobis

TLT *Interviews brings you direct insights from leaders in the field of language learning, teaching, and education—and you are invited to be an interviewer! If you have a pertinent issue you would like to explore and have access to an expert or specialist, please make a submission of 2,000 words or less.*

Email: interviews@jalt-publications.org

Welcome to the midsummer edition of TLT interviews! Our feature interview is with Hugh Starkey, Professor of Citizenship and Human Rights Education with the Institute of Education at the University of Central London. He has published widely on language teaching, cosmopolitan citizenship, and human rights education in a globalizing world. He is the co-founder and director of the International Centre for Education and Democratic Citizenship. Professor Starkey has also acted as a consultant to the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the European Commission, and the British Council. For the JALT2017 conference in Tsukuba, he gave a plenary speech entitled, "Cosmopolitan Citizenship and Language Learning." During the conference, he talked more in depth with Bob Ashcroft, a teacher in the Department of International Communication at Tokai University in Sapporo. Bob has a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics from Birmingham University and a Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA). He has also taught in Poland, Germany, and Cambodia. Bob's research interests include CALL, vocabulary learning, and corpus linguistics. So, without further ado, to the interview!

An Interview with Hugh Starkey
Bob Ashcroft
Tokai University Sapporo

Bob Ashcroft: *What are your impressions of Japan?*

Hugh Starkey: It's well-organized. That may be stereotypical but it's remarkably easy to get around. And, surprising things seem to happen. I feel there is great creativity and community spirit here.

Do stereotypes always have some truth in them?

I don't think they *always* have some truth in them, but they may be a starting point for reflection.

What's the problem with stereotypes?

They ascribe an identity to people we have never met. We assume something about a person we are in communication with on the basis of a prejudgment. Therefore, it's not usually helpful. It's best to

wait and see who they really are rather than impose an identity on them.

Is it possible to disregard one's own preconceptions before meeting somebody?

It's a difficult skill which has to be learned. We have to practice it, but I believe it's a necessary part of the educational process—to help us cast aside certain unhelpful preconceptions.

What first got you interested in democratic citizenship and human rights education?

I am from a relatively privileged background. My parents were middle class—they were both teachers. When I was 18 years old, I was a volunteer English teacher for a year in Algeria. This was soon after independence, and I was the only British person in the town. I got to know the people well, and I admired their idealism so soon after the long period of French colonial occupation. They were very keen on creating a new society. I started thinking about the gap between rich and poor countries and decided that I wanted to somehow make a difference in the world. In the 1980s, I worked with the Council of Europe who were just starting a program of human rights education. Suddenly, a lot of things made sense to me. Human rights are a great framework for thinking about issues of inequality. Creating a culture of human rights is important, and teachers can do that through citizenship education, a space on the curriculum where they can do human rights education.

Is there a difference between diplomatic citizenship and cosmopolitan citizenship?

Cosmopolitan citizenship is about seeing humanity as a whole and yourself as part of humanity. It means to recognize that all human beings have equal dignity and rights. Governments, however, see citizenship as about nationality and having a passport. We need to reclaim the term and say that citizenship is about how we live our lives in society. It is the way we interact, help each other, and try to make the world a better place. Cosmopolitan citizenship is seeing yourself as a member of a community with people wherever they may be in the world, and whoever they may be. As English teachers, it's easy to imagine because if we meet a teacher of English anywhere in the world, we immediately have something in common. This is the cosmopolitan perspective which is in opposition to a diplomatic view of citizenship where you ascribe an identity to somebody making them coterminous with their nationality.

How important is English as a lingua franca in promoting a sense of cosmopolitan citizenship?

English as a *lingua franca* means English as a means of communication between people unassociated with a particular cultural background. English has become a medium of communication in the same way that Swahili was a trading language, or like Latin in Europe when it was the language everyone understood. In this way, English as a *lingua franca* implies a cosmopolitan perspective because anyone anywhere can use English and there is no judgment about the status of English.

Do you think that native English teachers should learn a second language?

Language teachers who have never learned another language are at a huge disadvantage because they miss out on an experience that their students have. Therefore, learning another language is an indispensable part of any language teacher's job. Of course, it is possible to get by with just English, but it is not the same experience because they are using their own language, identity, and frame of reference. Learning a second language is a gateway into another way of thinking. The language itself gives insights which can open their mind, allowing them to think about things in a completely new way.

Is cosmopolitan citizenship a relevant concept in such an ethnically homogeneous society as Japan?

Education for a cosmopolitan perspective is hugely important in Japan. There are many expatriates and migrants who are now living and working here who play a full part in the economy and society. Although there has been a huge effort since the 19th century to create the construct of a homogenous Japan, sociologically, that is just not the case. In fact, there are many ways of being Japanese. Indeed, the former director general of UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, said that a person has to recognize "the plurality of his or her own identity, within societies that are themselves plural" (Universal Declaration, 2010). Homogeneity is just a myth, constructed and relative, and not understanding this puts one at a considerable disadvantage.

What steps can language teachers take to encourage an atmosphere of cosmopolitan and democratic citizenship in their classes?

One way is to be explicit that your classroom is democratic. You can use a class charter where you make an agreement between yourself and the students about classroom procedure. For exam-

ple, times when it is appropriate for the students to speak, being respectful of each other, and not shouting. At the beginning of the year, you can work together on these classroom principles. You can point out that human rights are also about universal procedural principles. Classroom standards are mirroring a set of universal standards. In terms of the curriculum, it is important to get away from the very narrow focus on daily life and routines and to make the same topics more interesting. There is always a political, cultural, or sociological angle you can use when presenting material or framing new language in class.

Is there a danger that the teacher will lose authority and control due to a democratic classroom?

The teacher's role is to provide the orderliness necessary for the students to be able to learn. Class members need to recognize that they have a common purpose and that they need somebody to take on the organizational decisions. Some decisions can then be devolved to groups or individuals within the class, but the teacher has an important role to play, not just teaching. The teacher should use their authority to ensure fairness. For example, they should make sure that the shyest student gets an opportunity to speak.

What developments do you hope to see because of democratic citizenship and human rights education over the next 10 to 20 years?

We are in a bleak time at the moment. We have authoritarian regimes in the ascendancy in USA, Russia, China, Turkey and probably Japan. Educators have to believe in the future. That is what it's about: the next generation. We do what we can, where we can. Democratic citizenship and human rights education aim to create a culture of human rights where people see that fundamental freedoms and equalities are important, that xenophobia is not an acceptable part of society, and that we should be inclusive rather than exclusive. We just have to hope that, even if they cannot be fully expressive at the moment, there will come a time when they can. The aim is to encourage human flourishing by spreading the word that people simply want freedom, justice, and peace, and that this can only happen if human rights are respected. That vision was created in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has taken a long time to become widely known and accepted. It is still an incredibly inspiring vision. Almost everyone would agree that it makes sense to try to organize the world so that there is freedom, justice, and peace. I think that human rights education is the right way to achieve this.

Would there be less conflict in a linguistically and culturally homogeneous global state?

That is certainly not my vision (*laughs*). I value the diversity of the biosphere, and of cultures and languages. The United Nations is a very helpful body, but we are still organized politically along national lines. The goal of democratic citizenship is not to make everybody the same, but to have an increased awareness and acceptance of the differences which already exist. It is about making sure that everybody can be involved, and all voices are heard.

Isn't it the job of each person to figure out their own values, rather than following a prescribed dogma such as the Declaration of Human Rights?

I suppose each person can try reinventing the wheel, but that could take quite a lot of time and effort. In any case, individuals are inevitably influenced by many external factors such as family, friends, and religion. All the governments in the world have signed up to the declaration of human rights, and most people find them relevant. People don't have to reject their own religious, political, or ideological background because human rights is all about freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. It is not about indoctrination. On the contrary, it means recognizing that there are lots of different views.

Are there any countries that you could name as an example of a model to aim for in terms of cosmopolitan citizenship and human rights?

Canada has the Canadian Charter of Rights which is very powerful. For every refugee family that arrives in Canada, there is a host family that is designated to make sure that they're okay. It is a brilliant system for enabling newcomers to integrate into society. However, it's important not to be complacent. For example, many people think that Norway is one of the most egalitarian societies, but in fact inequality and xenophobia are commonplace, and there is a far-right party in government at the moment. We should not take even the most promising countries as models, but as starting points.

Are you worried about the rise of Donald Trump as a threat to cosmopolitan citizenship?

Absolutely. Trump is the antithesis of everything cosmopolitan citizenship stands for. Similarly, the vote for Brexit in the UK has been described as the victory of the nationalists over the cosmopolitans in the political science literature. In a recent speech, Trump said that North Korea does not

respect United Nations (UN) sanctions. So, despite his rhetoric, he still needs the UN. On the issue of climate change, in the US, some city mayors and state governors have said that their state is going to respect the Paris Accords. So, despite the American president's power, there are limits. Thankfully there are limits to the damage which Trump is inflicting.

Socrates famously said that he was a citizen of the world, not of Athens. Do you see yourself as a citizen of the world?

Absolutely! I'm very happy to be thought of as a citizen of the world. To deal effectively with a lot of issues; for example, saving the environment, it is essential that we see ourselves as not just members of our local community, be that Athens or Tokyo, but also of the global community of humanity.

Thank you very much for the enlightening interview!

It was my pleasure.

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[JALT PRAXIS] MY SHARE

Steven Asquith & Nicole Gallagher

We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 600 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used that can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see the guidelines on our website below).

Email: my-share@jalt-publications.org • Web: http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare

Greetings and welcome to another edition of My Share! In each issue we aim to present ideas that are useful for many different kinds of teachers and classrooms, and this issue is no exception. Yet again, we are pleased to present a variety of clever activities suitable for diverse contexts. Steven and I hope that you enjoy reading and trying out these ideas in your classrooms.

Brett Davies kicks off this issue by introducing an idea where students can practice explaining familiar Japanese cultural items. This card activity provides an opportunity for students to get better at negotiating meaning in English. Next, for educators who are interested in using slide presentation activities, Yoko Ichiyama suggests how students can use self and peer check lists to revise and develop their slide presentations. Then, Alison Chan describes an energizing and interactive station activity involving a shopping role-play. I am positive it would be a hit with classes of all sizes from junior high school and above. Finally, James Bury shares a dice-based speaking activity which encourages the use of questions. I imagine this could be used with many different levels and adapted for different purposes. In our online edition, you can find an interesting take on true and false questions by Phoebe Lyon, where she presents an interactive, whole-body approach to these commonplace textbook activities.

—Nicole Gallagher

It's a kind of… Explaining Japanese Culture in English

Brett Davies

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Quick Guide

- » **Keywords:** *Negotiating meaning, explaining Japanese culture*
- » **Learner English level:** *High beginner and above*
- » **Learner maturity:** *High school, university*
- » **Preparation time:** *15 minutes*
- » **Activity time:** *30-45 minutes*
- » **Materials:** *Visuals of Japanese culture (on PowerPoint or flashcards); game cards (one set per group of 3-4 students)*

The number of tourists visiting Japan is increasing dramatically every year; therefore, the need for local people who can inform guests about Japanese culture is greater than ever. This activity aims to develop students' ability to describe local customs, foods and events in English. It provides them with