

Bringing Life to the Classroom: Disability as an EFL Topic

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In this study a questionnaire survey was used to ascertain Japanese students' perceptions of two lessons on the topic of disability, the inspiration and input for which was an event in the author's life: the birth of a daughter with a genetic condition. The first of these lessons incorporates an authentic audio clip in which a couple whose daughter has Down's syndrome talk about their concerns. The second explores the views of the controversial philosopher Peter Singer through class discussion of several morally-fraught scenarios and a PowerPoint presentation. Students' reactions to the lessons were generally positive with topic relevance and the chance to learn stimulating content through English being two main reasons for the favourable evaluation. Some students, however, expressed concerns about indoctrination and the lack of alternative viewpoints in the Singer lesson. These concerns are also addressed in this paper.

本研究では質問紙調査法を用いて、先天性の病気をもつ娘を授かったという著者自身の経験をもとに着想を得て作られた、障害という話題を扱ったふたつのレッスンを、日本人の学生がどうとらえたかを明らかにするものである。最初の授業では、ダウン症の娘をもつ両親が、自分たちの心配事について話しているオーディオクリップを用いて授業を行った。次の授業では、ピーター・シンガーという哲学者の意見を取り上げ、いくつかの道徳的な論争を巻き起こすいくつかのシナリオについて議論し、パワーポイントを用いた説明を行った。これらの授業に対する学生の反応は、おおむね肯定的であり、その主な理由は、身近な話題であり、英語を通して興味深い内容に触れることができたというものであった。一方で、シンガーを扱った授業では、授業者の考え方の押しつけであり、異なる立場からの意見も扱うべきだとの意見をもつ学生もいた。この論文では学生がこのような意見をもったことについても考察していく。

A DVOCATING THE integration of global issues in EFL, Cates (2004) laments that many teachers "leave their international experience at home and spend their class time being 'ordinary' teachers" (p. 37). His point applies not only to global education and international experience: aspects of our lives, of whatever kind, can inform and shape what we teach in the classroom, which, after all, is not an "other-worldly entity" (Tudor, 2001, p. 18) partitioned from society. The exploratory research in this paper concerns two lessons that emerged from a life-changing event: the birth of a child with a chromosomal abnormality. The experiences which provided the input for these lessons are first recounted and the students' reactions to the lessons are discussed. Finally, pedagogical issues raised by this study are considered.



From Life to Lesson

This section outlines the life events that would later become lesson input. It should provide some clarification of my motivations and pedagogic decisions.

A Chance Meeting

Meeting Jane (a pseudonym), a fellow English teacher, was, it would transpire, the genesis of the first of the lessons (Lesson A) recounted in this paper. As the topic of our conversation on that initial meeting turned from work to our respective families, Jane told me that one of her daughters had Down's syndrome. I remember being unsure of how to respond. "That's too bad" did not seem appropriate, although I had taught it to my students as a stock phrase to express sympathy. Perhaps sensing my temporary discomfort, Jane added that she felt fortunate she had been "chosen" to care for such a child.

A Chance Listening

Shortly after the meeting with Jane, I happened across a BBC Radio 4 programme, *Born with Down's* (Finch, 2008). A woman recalling how she hated people "saying sorry" when she told them her daughter had Down's resonated as I remembered the meeting with Jane a few weeks earlier.

A Second Child

A month or so after listening to the radio programme, I learnt from my wife that she was pregnant with our second child. We decided that, considering her age, she would have an amniocentesis since we were concerned about the risk of Down's syndrome. I was grateful that recent events had raised my awareness of the condition and, on hearing that genetic testing

of the amniotic fluid had not revealed any foetal abnormalities, thankful that it would not happen to us.

The Birth

It was obvious soon after Karen, our daughter, was born that something was wrong. Floppy and unable to feed, she was taken to the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit), placed in an incubator and fed via a tube. At three days old we were told by the doctor that Karen "would never be like her brother." Subsequent genetic testing revealed she had a certain chromosomal abnormality, one that being considerably rarer than Down's syndrome was not routinely screened for. From the descriptions of the physical and cognitive symptoms of this condition on websites, it became clear that Karen would never be fully independent. Our thoughts turned to our son: How would having a sister with a disability affect his life?

In the months after her diagnosis, I questioned why the hospital had worked so diligently to ensure her survival, when, I thought, only hardship could result from her survival. In my search for answers, I came across an essay entitled *Welcome to Holland* (Kingsley, 1987; Appendix 2, Lesson A), which provided some comfort as I struggled to make sense of the future that lay ahead. I also ventured into the field of bioethics and to the writings of the controversial philosopher Peter Singer.

Two Years On

From what initially seemed to be a black cloud set to engulf our family, Karen is now a loved daughter. We are aware, however, that the nature of her condition means that many challenges lie ahead.

Why should I want to create English lessons out of such a personal experience? My agreement with the view that the

classroom is not a vacuum—a perspective mentioned at the start of this paper—perhaps underpinned my motivation. Designing such material also presented a creative challenge, and creativity for me, as for many teachers (Pugliese, 2012), is a key professional driving force. Another spur for making the lessons was part of a conscious effort to turn a loss—for loss, as the testimonies of Japanese parents in Nobe, Kabe & Yokoo (1999) reveal, is an emotion many parents feel at the birth of a child with a disability—into a gain. I want to ensure that, for me personally, the pluses of her existence outweigh the minuses. Without Karen, I can now say, I would not have had the insight to develop the classroom resources described in this paper; indeed, this paper itself would not have been written.

The Study

Aim

This study sought to explore, by means of a questionnaire survey, Japanese students' perceptions of two ninety-minute lessons on the topic of disability. The first, Lesson A, focused on the concerns of a couple for their daughter with Down's syndrome; the other, Lesson B, explored the ideas of Peter Singer by means of scenarios containing moral dilemmas.

Participants

Five classes of second-year students (N=101) participated in this study. Two of these classes were language majors at a private university in central Japan taking a required English communication course. These students ($n=10$ and $n=11$, respectively) had an advanced level of English. The other two classes ($n=23$ and $n=23$, respectively), at the same university, comprised non-English majors with a low-intermediate level of English proficiency. The other class was of nursing students ($n=34$), with an interme-

diated level of English proficiency, taking a course in English for nursing at a public university.

The Lessons

For the English communication courses, the two lessons complemented my syllabus which included several lessons on social issues such as dementia and smoking (see Rebeck, 2008). For the nursing students, the lessons replaced two chapters' worth of their English for nursing textbook. Essentially the same lesson plan was used for all the classes, although a more detailed explanation of medical terminology was provided for the nursing students. The classroom handout for Lesson A is in Appendix 2 as is an extract from Lesson B's handout (the complete handouts for both lessons, annotated with teaching notes, will be sent on request).

Lesson A

Looking at the handout for this lesson (Appendix 2), it will be seen how my personal experiences—uncertainty of how to respond to Jane on hearing about her daughter's genetic condition, for example—have been incorporated into this lesson. The lesson is rich in authentic material, including audio clips from the radio programme *Born with Downs* (Finch, 2008), which contains natural, unscripted speech as opposed to the reduced language seen in many ELT coursebooks. Students also practice a teacher-constructed dialogue (Appendix 2, "Extension: Practice this conversation") that incorporates elements from the audio text.

Talking About My Daughter

In the last five minutes of the lesson, I projected onto the screen a picture of my children and told the class about my daughter.

I talked, amongst other things, about the feelings I experienced on hearing her diagnosis. Making this “disclosure” to each class was necessary, I felt, to show students where I was “coming from”— that there was a reason for the teacher bringing this issue into the classroom. The other reason for personalizing the lesson in this way was more pragmatic: to elicit and then gauge students’ reactions for this present study.

Lesson B

In this lesson students discussed in small groups the choices they made in response to five scenarios containing an ethical dilemma. These hypothetical cases, or thought experiments, were designed to explore some of the moral territory covered by Singer’s ideas. The students had read the scenario handout for homework and filled in the blanks from the word boxes. To help them with the reading, they were also provided with an extensive vocabulary list (the words in bold in Scenario 2, Appendix 2, are those included in this list). Following the group discussion, I made a 20-minute PowerPoint presentation to the class that introduced Singer’s perspective on each of the scenarios.

There is limited space to examine Singer’s ideas in detail here, but one of his key arguments is that “we cannot claim that biological commonality entitles us to superior status over those who are not members of our species” (2010, p. 336). To say that being human alone entitles a person to special treatment is, he argues, “speciesism.” Thus, for Singer, a great ape which scored between 70 and 95 on human IQ tests, would have a superior moral status to humans with profound mental retardation, defined as having an IQ range below 25 (2010, p. 333).

Singer, arguing from a utilitarian standpoint, has suggested that parents of babies born with profound cognitive disability should, up to a certain “cut-off period,” be allowed to choose euthanasia for their child. The second scenario in the classroom

handout (Appendix 2) is designed to open a discussion on this strand of Singer’s thinking. Not surprisingly, such views are extremely controversial and Singer has been attacked by disability advocate organizations, religious groups, and other philosophers such as Kittay (2010).

It was clear to me that with its group discussion and presentation this lesson would be difficult even for the most proficient students. However, my experience as both a language learner and teacher suggests that occasional, highly challenging bouts with difficult language and content can be motivational. Having said this, I considered Lesson B just too demanding for the two classes of low-intermediate students, to whom it was not taught. Questionnaire responses for this lesson were therefore obtained for only three of the five classes.

Data Collection and Analysis

After the lesson(s), students completed an anonymous questionnaire written in Japanese (Appendix 1 contains the English translation; the Japanese original will be sent on request). It includes both closed and open questions, with the former using a four-point Likert scale. Students’ comments that were written in Japanese were translated into English by the author. Employing a grounded theory approach to the analysis of the comments, I identified and coded key words and phrases in an iterative process until a number of main themes emerged from the data

Results and Discussion

The Quantitative Data

Space does not permit a detailed presentation of the results of the closed questions (the author can provide such data on request). Here only the main findings are described. Table 1 shows the percentage of students who responded positively, that is,

who marked either the first or second heading on the Likert scale.

The results for Q1 and Q5 indicate that overall the two lessons were perceived to have been *yuigi*, or “worthwhile,” with the majority of students expressing agreement that the lessons should be taught in future courses (Q2 and Q7). There was also an overwhelmingly positive response to Q3, which asked for students’ views on the personal disclosure part of the lesson (in which I talked about my daughter), and for Q4, which sought to ascertain more generally what students thought about a teacher’s personal experiences shaping a lesson.

Table I. Positive Responses* to the Closed Questions

Positive response	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7
Number	99	101	100	99	54	50	51
%	98	100	99	98	98	91	93

Note: For Q1–Q4 (Lesson A) N=101; for Q5–Q7 (Lesson B) N=55

*Indicates the number of students who marked *Strongly agree* or *Agree*

The Qualitative Data

The coded responses to the open questions were used to illuminate the data from the closed questions. A representative selection of comments are presented and discussed below.

Lesson A

Question 1

Discovery and Awareness Raising

Students seemed to appreciate covering a topic that they would otherwise not have been exposed to:

It was valuable to deal with an issue that we don't really think about in our daily life or in other lessons.

Relevance

Many of the comments, including the two that follow, indicate that the students considered it valuable to deal with an issue that could possibly affect them at some point in their lives. Dörnyei (2001, p. 126) points out that a key motivational strategy is “making the curriculum relevant for the learners.” While many of the topics commonly used in EFL classes (e.g., shopping, traveling, one’s family) are directly related to the students’ lives, a topic’s relevance is not always so obvious. Sometimes its significance may only become clear to a student after the lesson—perhaps years after. The comments suggest that disability was seen by many students as having long-term or “deep” relevance.

There's a chance that my child could have a disability so it is necessary to think about how the parents of such children feel.

As someone who will be working in medicine, I am bound to come across people with Down's. It was valuable to know that these people, like us, also have dreams, as was listening to the couple talking [on the BBC recording] about their worries for the future.

The reference to “dreams” in the last comment is a response to the video *Dreams* (Elliot & Elliot, 2004) shown in the lesson. Students’ comments suggest that this video encouraged them to reflect on their preconceptions of people with mental retardation, people who, as Kittay (2002) observes, “have rarely been seen as subjects, as citizens, as persons with equal entitlement to fulfillment” (p. 257).

Integration of Content and Language

Students positively evaluated the opportunity to learn *through* English. Comments suggest that many would concur with Guest’s view that university education “should be content based, well beyond teaching English for English’s sake” (Gunning, 2009, p. 15).

This didn’t just give us a chance for English conversation, but we also learnt about Down’s syndrome.

We were not just learning the English language but also learning about society.

Question 3

The students’ comments, including the one below, confirmed to me that this disclosure was an important element of the lesson since linking content to the teacher’s life made the issue more real and less remote.

Hearing the teacher talk about his experiences brings it closer to us.

Question 4

This item asked about students’ general views on teachers personalizing lessons. Two main themes emerged:

Lesson Differentiation

Comments indicated that students valued personalization for differentiating, or setting apart, one class from another.

If a teacher doesn’t use their life experiences in the lesson, then each lesson would be the same no matter who taught it.

Topic Relevance and Teacher Motivation

The comment below is one of several indicating that students considered a topic’s relevance for the teacher to be one determinant of lesson quality.

If it is something the teacher feels strongly about then it will be easier to convey it to us.

A teacher is probably more likely to be motivated by a topic of personal interest and, as Wilson states, “you can’t separate student motivation and teacher motivation and you won’t get one without the other” (Cornwell, 2011, p. 20).

Lesson B

Question 5

The comments revealed why the majority of students considered this lesson to be valuable. The reasons included the following.

Exposure to New Ideas

The lesson introduced students to a viewpoint they may never have considered previously.

There were so many things in this lesson that I had not thought

about; this lesson really gave me a new perspective.

Comments also suggested that students valued learning about new ideas, even those with which they did not agree.

I don't really agree with Singer's views on utilitarianism, but it was very valuable to know that these kinds of views exist.

Thought Provoking

This lesson appears to have been effective in stimulating students to consider difficult moral issues.

This lesson really made me think. I understood that people have different values and it's difficult to jump to conclusions about which is right.

Task Engagement

Comments indicated that students found the group discussion stimulating. Although students in the nursing class, from which the comment below was received, reverted to Japanese for much of the discussion, I did not consider a “crackdown” on L1 use appropriate since it would have deprived nurses in the making of a rare opportunity to discuss ethical issues with their peers.

Perhaps it is because we are all studying a medical related subject, but our discussion became really lively and thought provoking. There is after all a chance that I may become a parent of a child with a disability, so although it is a difficult topic it is something that we should think about from now.

Pedagogical Issues Raised by the Singer Lesson

Comments made by students who responded negatively in the closed questions were mainly related to concerns about value imposition and the lack of alternative perspectives; for example:

It was a good topic for getting us to think about our own opinions. But it wouldn't be good if we unquestioningly agreed with Singer's views and formed stereotypes in our minds.

I think that there is some truth in Peter Singer's ideas and it was good to raise them in class. But his views are extreme and I think you should have also introduced the views of people with opposite or different standpoints.

While few in number, such comments concurred with two of my own misgivings about the lesson: presentation without promotion and the absence of alternative viewpoints.

Presentation Without Promotion

It could be argued that, although highly controversial, Singer's views were appropriate content for a class because the teacher presented but did not explicitly advocate them. During the group discussion section, for example, I took the position of moderator, eliciting opinions from students but not offering my own.

There is a problem, however, with this distinction between presenting and advocating because, as Johnston (2003) points out, “even the slightest and subtlest things that we do or say in the classroom have moral significance and convey complicated and often contradictory moral messages” (p. 32). During the presentation, for example, my body language and tone of voice probably revealed to some extent my stance in relation to Singer's views. Even teachers who profess to believe in the necessity

of adopting a position of balance and neutrality, may, as Cotton (2006) found, experience “great difficulty in implementing their beliefs” (p. 37).

Bigelow and Peterson (2002, in Hess, 2005, p. 47) consider that for educators “to feign neutrality is irresponsible,” and perhaps it would have been more responsible if I had clearly announced my position to the students. However, apart from wishing to avoid accusations of imposing my views, there was another reason for not declaring my personal beliefs in relation to Singer’s ideas: I was not quite sure of them myself. In retrospect, I see that another (subconscious) spur for creating these lessons—to add to those given earlier in this paper—was as a way to run through and clarify my own ideas.

The Absence of Alternative Viewpoints

Whether or not I managed to maintain neutrality as I introduced Singer’s ideas, there is little doubt that the very act of bringing his views into the class was a value-imbued one. Moreover, although I did inform students that there are many who strongly criticize Singer, I did not invite these opposing voices into the classroom. Tomlinson (2011) asserts “that most students are mature...enough not to swallow the content of course books as uncritical consumers but to evaluate it as the intelligent human beings they are” (p. 89). The same can probably be said for the students in Lesson B in relation to the ideas presented. Nevertheless, the question remains: Was it acceptable to present to the class a single viewpoint?

Peaty (2004) contends that it is not problematic even if teaching materials promote a certain cause as long as “society accepts and respects the principles, values and goals being advocated” (p. 17). By this logic, it would be acceptable in Japan (but probably not in Egypt) if a lesson opened students’ eyes to the plight of women in certain societies by focusing on the deleterious

effects of female genital mutilation without necessarily airing the arguments of those who wield the razor blades. I would, however, also argue that *some* viewpoints can also be presented in isolation when the social climate, the zeitgeist, is one that opposes that viewpoint. In present day Japan—but not in the post-war decades when eugenics was part of official central government policy (Yamamoto 2010, p. 14—where tolerance to those with disabilities is promoted, the ideas of Singer run counter to beliefs accepted by society as a whole. Therefore, while it would have been preferable to have included alternative voices into the Singer lesson, it was not an absolute necessity.

Language and Content

A final point that needs to be addressed in relation to both lessons concerns the balance between language and content. Tadashi (2011, p. 19) argues that it is “putting the horse before the cart” if students broaden their horizons through significant content but finish their English course without being able to actually use English. The choice, however, between language and content need not be an “either/or” one. Courses can be mixed so that in certain lessons emphasis is given to language work, with the content being to some extent secondary, while in others, such as the two focused on in this paper, explicit language work may take a back seat. Grammar and content can also be harmoniously integrated in a single lesson as shown by Schneider (2005).

Conclusion

Because of the personal nature of this research, generalization of the findings to other classroom contexts is difficult. Moreover, despite the anonymity of the questionnaires, the influence of response bias on the results, particularly those for Question 3, cannot be discounted; rather than answering according to their

true beliefs, students may have cast “sympathy responses.” Nevertheless, several implications for teaching can be ventured. Firstly, events in teachers’ lives can be the inspiration and the raw material for stimulating classroom resources. Secondly, we should on occasions step outside our “topic comfort-zone.” EFL course books can instill in classroom practitioners a rather rigid notion of what constitutes an acceptable topic, but, as Prodromou (2011) asserts, by considering certain issues as off-limits “we deny ourselves whole stretches of interesting content that would make language teaching a true branch of education rather than a kind of technical skill.” The topic of disability in particular has a deep relevance that will touch on many of our lives at some point. It perhaps deserves a more conspicuous place in the materials we develop.

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Bio Data

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Appendix I

Questionnaire to Gauge Students' Perceptions of Lesson A and Lesson B (English Translation)

Lesson A

In this lesson you listened to a couple speaking about the concerns they had for their daughter with Down's syndrome and to a doctor talking about how the siblings of children with this condition are affected. You then watched a video of people with Down's syndrome talking about their dreams. Finally, you read and listened to the essay “Welcome to Holland,” containing one mother's philosophy of raising a child with a disability.

Question 1

a) This lesson was valuable.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

b) Please explain your response

Question 2

a) This lesson should be done in future courses

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

b) Please explain your response.

Question 3

At the end of the lesson, the teacher showed a picture of his children and told the class that his own daughter has a rare chromosomal disorder. He talked briefly about his feelings when she was born.

a) The teacher bringing up the fact that his own child has a disability was a good thing.

Strongly agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

b) Please explain your response.

Question 4

Your teacher's motivation for creating this lesson was the birth of his daughter, but there are many other ways in which the life experiences of a teacher can shape a lesson.

a) It is good if lessons are shaped by the life experiences of the teacher.

Strongly agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

b) Please explain your response.

Lesson B

In this lesson you read and discussed five scenarios designed to make you think about some of the ideas of the philosopher Peter Singer. After discussing the scenarios in groups, your teacher gave a presentation to introduce some of Singer's views in relation to the scenarios.

Question 5

a) This lesson was valuable.

Strongly agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

b) Please explain your response.

Question 6

It was appropriate to introduce the ideas of Peter Singer in an English class.

Strongly agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

b) Please explain your response.

Question 7

a) This lesson should also be done in future courses.

Strongly agree **Agree** **Disagree** **Strongly disagree**

b) Please explain your response.

Appendix 2

Handout of Lesson A

Social Issues 3: Disability

Expressions for responding to good news:

Congratulations! Well done! That's great!

A: Our first child was born last night.

B:

A: I passed the graduate school's entrance exams.

B:

Expressions for responding to bad news:

Hard luck! That's too bad I'm sorry to hear that

A: I failed my driving test.

B:

A: My grandmother died last night

B:

Look at this conversation. What would you say if you were Mary? Would you use any of the expressions introduced above?

Mary and Susan are old school friends. By coincidence, they meet in a supermarket.

Mary: Hello Susan, I haven't seen you for ages. When did you

have the baby?

Susan: She's six months old now.

Mary: You must be really happy to be a mother.

Susan: Well, yes I am, but she's got Down's syndrome.

Mary: _____

Discussion

Parents of babies with **chromosomal abnormalities**, such as Down's syndrome, may worry about various things. What kind of things do you think they worry about?

Authentic Listening

Background

Paul and Francis, a couple from Leeds, a city in England, have a baby with Down's syndrome. The baby's name is Erin. They also have another daughter, four-year old Holly, who is "normal." Francis was 37 years old when she had Erin. When Francis was 12 weeks' pregnant she had a **NT scan** and was told by the doctor that there was a high chance that the baby would be born with Down's syndrome. Nevertheless, the couple made a decision not to **terminate** the pregnancy.

Listening I

First listening

How much did you understand?

Comprehension scale

0 | | | | | | | | | | 50% | | | | | | | | | | 100%

Second listening

a) What doesn't Francis like people saying to her?

b) Francis and Paul are talking about a worry they have for the future. What is this worry?

Extension: *Practice this conversation and then write Paul's response for the last line*

Francis: I hate it when people say "sorry" to me when I tell them that she has Down's syndrome.

Paul: I know how you feel but it's difficult for people to know what to say. You shouldn't get angry with them.

Francis: You're right, but I do feel angry. I keep on asking myself, "Why us?"

Paul: Look, it's a lovely sunny day. Let's take Erin and Holly to the park.

Francis: I don't want to go. I don't like seeing all the mothers smiling and hugging their children.

Paul: Why not?

Francis: It just makes me feel sad.

Paul: I get sad too when I see brothers and sisters playing together. I feel guilty that Holly will never have a normal sister to play with.

Francis: And Erin will never be independent, so Holly will have the responsibility of looking after her sister when we are gone. Sometimes I think it would have been better if we had decided not to have Erin.

Paul: We're both feeling down at the moment. Things will get better. It's not the journey we planned for, but we need to keep positive, for Holly's sake. You know, I'm sure Holly will benefit in some ways from having a sister with special needs.

Francis: Benefit? Do you really think so? How?

Paul: _____

Listening 2

Listen to a doctor talking about how a child with Down's syndrome can affect his/her non-disabled sibling. Which benefits mentioned by the doctor did you come up with?

Dreams

In pairs, tell each other your ambitions for the future. What do you want to be and/or achieve?

Now watch this YouTube video. As you watch, write down five of the dreams that people with Down's syndrome on this video talk about.

You can watch this again at home:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_P4t2jR1g

Reading: In your pairs read this essay again (you should have already gone through it for homework).

“Welcome to Holland” by Emily Perl Kingsley

A) I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this.

B) When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip to Italy. You buy a bunch of guide books and make your wonderful plans. The Coliseum. The Michelangelo David. The gondolas in Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

A) After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later, the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, “Welcome to

Holland.”

B) “Holland!?!?” you say. “What do you mean Holland?? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy.”

A) But there's been a change in the flight plan. They've landed in Holland and there you must stay.

B) The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, disgusting, filthy place, full of pestilence, famine and disease. It's just a different place.

A) So you must go out and buy new guide books. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

B) It's just a different place. It's slower-paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while and you catch your breath, you look around....and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills...and Holland has tulips. Holland even has Rembrandts.

A) But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy...and they're all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say “Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That's what I had planned.” And the pain of that will never, ever, ever, ever go away...because the loss of that dream is a very significant loss.

B) But... if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.

Now **watch the video** of “Welcome to Holland” and answer these questions:

- What are the “guide books” shown in the picture?
- What is the “new language” the parents have to learn?

You can watch this again at home:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvCJZw8Ymxk>

Transcripts

Listening 1

Francis: I've had a couple of people say "I'm sorry" when I've told them, and I've not said to them I don't like you saying that, but I don't like it when people say that because it's almost... it's like the sort of thing you'd say to someone if their baby had died. We've had conversations, haven't we, I've said to you what will happen to Erin when we're not here anymore because if she's not able to look after herself, and I've said to you, haven't I, Holly will always see her right, you know, because she's her sister, and you say you can't put that level of responsibility onto Holly, but...

Paul: No it wasn't...we made the choice to have a baby, you know, we didn't make that choice for Holly...

Francis: No, no, of course we didn't, but, you know, we're not going to be here forever.

Listening 2

Doctor: Siblings lose out in a big way because life sort of revolves around the child's needs. They might be embarrassed to have their friends over for sleepovers or at home, so it's a huge impact on them.

Interviewer: But there must be some families that would say their siblings have embraced the child with Down's syndrome.

Doctor: I'm not saying they haven't embraced, they've become stronger and much nicer and better individuals, and can understand life better, and are much better human beings as such. But it's not easy.

From *Born with Downs*, BBC Radio 4, 24 Nov 2008

Lesson B

Note that students had been provided with a description of the "XO syndrome," a concocted genetic condition characterized by profound cognitive disability.

Scenario 2

A woman, Mary, has an **ultrasound scan** in her twelfth week of pregnancy. No **fetal** abnormalities are found, but she still decides to have an amniocentesis. This is because Mary and her husband, Peter, both feel that the worst thing that could happen to them is for their baby to be born with a severe disability.

The couple already have one child, a boy of three, and they want him to have a brother or sister to play with. *They only have enough money to support two children.* There is no way they could _____ three children.

The amniocentesis does not find any genetic abnormalities. They feel _____ and wait in anticipation for the birth of their second child. However, when the baby, a girl, is born it soon becomes obvious that something is wrong because she is **floppy** and cannot feed. The baby is taken to the **NICU**, put in an **incubator**, and fed milk through a tube. The **pediatrician** sends a sample of the baby's _____ for genetic testing. The results of the test come back two weeks later. They show that the baby has XO syndrome. The doctor is sympathetic but she explains to the couple that amniocentesis does not always _____ all chromosomal abnormalities in the fetus. No test is 100% **accurate**, she says.

Mary and Peter spend two days reading about XO syndrome on the Internet. They are very sad and feel that their lives are **ruined**. Worse of all, they feel that they have **burdened** their son with a sister who will have so many problems. The husband asks the doctor whether he would _____ the feeding tube and let the baby die. The doctor refuses.

raise	detect	relieved
blood	remove	

A: The doctor should have agreed to Peter's request to let the baby die.

B: The doctor was right to have refused Peter's request.