Global Education in Second Language Teaching

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Abstract

This article paints an optimistic picture of the role we second language teachers can play not only in improving our students' language proficiency but also in infusing global education into our classes as we join with our students to address global concerns, such as peace, prosperity, environmental protection, and human rights. The article is divided into four parts. The first part describes global education and identifies organizations of second language educators participating in global education. The second part of the article focuses on two key areas of global education: peace education and environmental education. Next, we address questions that second language teachers frequently ask about including global education in their teaching. Lastly, we supply lists of print and electronic resources on peace education and environmental education.

What is your opinion? When you manage to get away from the everyday emergencies of dealing with classes, family, and the other aspects of teachers' lives and look at what is going on in the world, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of the human race and of our fellow residents on the planet Earth? Do you believe that we as second language teachers can have any impact on what is going on in the world, or should we concentrate solely on improving our students' language proficiency?

In this article, we two authors propose an optimistic view of the future of this planet. We propose that as our tiny globe spins round the sun, we second language teachers can play a role in making it a better place at the same time that we improve our students' language proficiency. The means by which we have been attempting this lies in the infusion of global education into the second language curriculum. This article has four parts. First, we describe what global education entails and provide a list of some organizations of second language teachers who include global education in their teaching. Second, we go into depth on two major areas of global education: peace education and environmental education. Third, we discuss four questions that second language teachers frequently ask about the inclusion of global education in their teaching. Finally, we provide lists of print and electronic resources on peace education (Appendix 1) and environmental education (Appendix 2).

What is Global Education

Cates, 1990. Fountain, 1995 Shiman, 1993 Greig, Pike, & Selby (1987)
Too often, global education is thought of as bringing bad news into the classroom, as something that leaves students feeling depressed. No doubt, there is much happening in the world to be sad about, but at the same time, there is much happening to be happy about. Some all-too-familiar examples of the bad news include wars, poverty, racism, endangered species and deforestation, discrimination against women and those of different sexual orientation, injustice, and apathy in the face of all these problems. On the bright side, we can see in the news and in our own lives examples of peace returning to war-ravaged lands, sustainable development helping to lift people from poverty, people of different races living, working, and learning together harmoniously, protection of endangered species and establishment of protected forests, people working to overcome discrimination and standing up against injustice, and all of this happening because people do care and believe that they can make a difference.

Many second language teachers can be found among the ranks of those trying to make a difference. One way they attempt to have an impact on global issues is via organizations of second language teachers. For instance, the Japan Association of Language Teachers has a Global Issues Special Interest Group (See Appendix 2 for their website address). Other organizations that have similar groups include AILA (International Association for Applied Linguistics), IATEFL (International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language), TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), KoreaTESOL, and the World Federation of Modern Language Associations. Further, UNESCO founded Linguapax (http://www.linguapax.org/), an organization that works to put language to the service of peace.

Peace Education and Environmental Education

Peace education
Two scholars from Lebanon, Gaith and Shaaban (1994) present ideas for incorporating peace education in second language instruction. Three of the aspects of peace education they focus on are themes, skills, and methods. Themes for peace education include: international conflicts, such as wars and trade disputes, and international cooperation, such as people, organizations and governments from various countries working together to work on environmental issues or on developing new medicines from plants; other countries and cultures, so that students can come to know them and appreciate their histories and virtues; cross-cultural communication, so that students understand that people communicate in different ways; and types and roots of violence, e.g., domestic violence, so that students can appreciate that violence does not need to be a part of life.

Skills are a second aspect of peace education that Ghaith and Shaaban suggest fits harmoniously in second language instruction. Of course, the very act of learning a second language plays an important role in bringing about peace,

because knowing other people's language opens paths toward better understanding and communication. Other skills that peace education and second language education share are those that help people develop the collaborative skills they need to work together, part of which involves skills required to overcome the conflicts that inevitably arise when people work together, such as conflict resolution and peer mediation skills.

Certain teaching methods used in second language education and in education generally that seem particularly suited to peace education are projects, role plays and simulations, and cooperative learning. Projects enable students to spend an extended period of time using their own initiative to go deeply into a particular topic, often one of their own choosing. Further, projects can serve as a vehicle for students to link classroom learning to the outside world and to take actions related to their chosen topic. Role plays (Ladousse, 1987) and simulations (Omaggio, 1978) fit well with peace education, because they encourage students to imagine themselves as different people, in different roles, and/or in different situation, again providing a connection between the classroom and the world beyond.

Cooperative learning can encompass both projects and role plays and simulations, as both usually are done in groups, but cooperative learning represents a wider range of activities in which students work together (Kagan, 1994). Cooperative learning represents a set of concepts and teaching strategies for enhancing the value of student-student interaction. Through successful interaction in the classroom, students can develop the skills and attitudes necessary for successful interaction in other spheres and can develop a belief in the power of cooperation (Jacobs, 1998). The fundamental concept in cooperative learning is that of positive interdependence, the feeling among group members that they sink or swim together, that what helps one member helps all and that what hurts one hurts all (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). Wouldn't the world be a much more peaceful place is we all realized the strong and multiple ways in which we are positively interdependent upon each other?

Environmental education

The United Nations devised six objectives for environmental education

(UNESCO-UNEP 1976):

1. Awareness of environmental problems.

2. Basic understanding of the environment and its problems, and humans' role in

the environment.

3. An attitude of concern for environmental problems.

4. Skills in overcoming environmental problems.

5. Ability to evaluate proposed solutions to environmental problems.

6. Participation in solving environmental problems.

As a former head of the United Nations Environment Program Environmental ((Ghafoor-Ghaznawi, 1993) stated, environmental education was conceived as cross-curricular because the environment encompasses all areas of study. Therefore, second language education can play an important role in people learning about and participating in environmental protection. Indeed, Jacobs and Goatly (in press) found that many ELT coursebooks include environmental education themes, such as endangered species, waste minimization, and deforestation.

However, Jacobs and Goatly often report that the UN's sixth environmental education objective, participation, is often lacking from ELT coursebooks' treatment of environmental concerns. This seems particularly sad, as being aware of environmental problems, understanding why they occur, caring about and having the skills to overcome the problems, and being able to evaluate different proposals for addressing them are all for naught if no action occurs.

While environmental and other global issues can seem overwhelming, many things can be done by individuals and groups of students and teachers. These include: writing letters to governments, organizations, and companies; growing trees and other plants; reducing use of paper, energy, and containers; reusing materials such as glass jars; recycling materials and buying recycled materials, such as recycled paper; educating others and taking part in campaigns to persuade others to participate in environmentally friendly actions; raising funds for environmental causes; and boycotting environmentally unfriendly products, such as those made from endangered species, and instead buying environmentally friendly products, e.g., refrigerators that do not use ozone-depleting chemicals.

When considering participation, we keep these two quotations in mind. The first comes from the thinking skills expert, Edward de Bono (1998, p. 8), "If something needs doing, then do something about it. Don't just hope that someone else will.

What is everyone's business also has to be someone's business". The other is from Helen Keller who overcame blindness and deafness to become a leading social activist in the early 20th century:

> I am only one, but still I am one.
> I cannot do everything, but still I can do something.
> And, because I cannot do every-thing,
> I will not refuse to do the something I can do.

Questions about Integrating Global Education in Second Language Teaching

A range of questions arise when second language teachers and materials developers attempt to integrate global education. Below, we address four of these questions:

1. Should every lesson be a global issues lesson?
2. Can we teach language at the same time we teach global issues?
3. How can we get enough knowledge about global issues to include them in our teaching?
4. How can we get materials for global education?

<u>Question 1 - Should every lesson be a global issues lesson?</u>

Infusing global education into second language teaching does not mean every lesson, every reading passage, every group discussion should be about some global concern. What is being advocated is that global education be a regular and consistent part of the curriculum, not just something that is thrown in once or twice a year.

<u>Question 2 - Can we teach language at the same time we teach global issues?</u>

As Wilga Rivers (1976, p. 96), an authority on second language education since the 1960s, has written, "As language teachers we are the most fortunate of teachers--all subjects are ours. Whatever [the students] want to communicate about, whatever they want to read about, is our subject matter". Indeed, the communicative approach, the dominant one in second language instruction, emphasizes that languages are best learned by using them to communicate meaning, rather than by focusing on explicit learning of grammar and vocabulary. One way of achieving a focus on meaning is via content- or theme-based instruction (Crandall, 1987). Global education provides a wealth of content and themes for students and teachers to choose from.

<u>Question 3 - How can we get enough knowledge about global issues to include them in our teaching?</u>

As mentioned in the United Nation's environmental education objectives, knowledge is important (Objective #2). However, in a learner-centered education paradigm, the teacher is no longer seen as the key source of knowledge for students. Instead of being 'Sages on stages', we are now "Guides on the side', facilitating learning, helping students discover how they can be independent learners. We are not afraid to say to students, "I don't know. Why don't you find out and teach me and the rest of the class? or "I don't know. How can we find out together?" In addition to gaining knowledge from and with our students, another place to turn is to teachers in other subjects. The increasing popularity of cross-curricular projects offers an excellent way for teachers of different subjects to learn from each other as they guide student learning.

4. How can we get materials for global education?

While some second language coursebooks already contain lessons or parts of lessons related to global education and other ready-made materials can be obtained (see the two appendices for references), these may not be well-suited to our students immediate needs and interests, or may be too expensive. For materials to be as fresh as today's headlines and closely connected to students' lives, they should be developed at a local or national level. Sources include NGOs, governmental organizations, the media, and businesses. Also, teachers can collaborate with to create and share materials. One easy way to do this is to take some global issues material, e.g., a simplified version of a newspaper article on solar ovens, and combine it with a technique we like for teaching reading, e.g., Jigsaw (Lie, 1992) in which a reading passage is divided into parts, groups of four or less students become experts in one part of the passage and then teach their part to others, after which students take a quiz or do a task based on the entire passage.

Last, but not least, global education materials can be created by students (Deller, 1990; Jacobs, 1993). Among the advantages of student-created materials are:

1. Students may be more motivated, as their level of control and initiative increases;

2. Materials become more relevant to students' backgrounds and interests;

3. Students' may feel greater ownership of what occurs in their classroom, thus enhancing cooperation between teacher and student;

4. Students' anxiety may decrease because they had a role in devising the materials and activities they will be doing;

5. Teachers can gain insights into their students' interests and needs;

6. Student learning can increase because creating materials gives them greater insight into the learning process, helping them become more skilful learners;

7. Teachers often lack the funds, equipment, or time necessary for conceiving and producing materials to distribute to all their students;

8. Teaching becomes more interesting, as variety and surprises take the place of the same textbook year after year.

Among the many ways that students can generate materials are:

1. Bringing in articles or audio/videotapes from newspapers, magazines, radio, tv, and the web (some of these can be found in simplified form, e.g., BBC radio);

2. Recording songs related to global education;

3. Suggesting global education topics related to events taking place where they live, e.g., pollution in a nearby river;

4. Developing questionnaires for coursemates related to global issues, for instance, after students do a questionnaire related to how environmentally friendly they are (e.g., do they carry a cloth bag so they do not collect plastic bags while shopping), they could make resolutions to adopt more eco-friendly behaviors;

5. Reporting to the class on projects they have done and how their classmates can get involved in the project's global education topic.

Conclusion

In education, we often do not see the fruits of our efforts until many years later, if at all. We need to have faith that what we are doing will sooner or later help our students become more aware, resourceful, and caring citizens of their country and the world. Global education represents another case in which educators may need to accept delayed gratification. We need to remember the saying, "One generation plants tree, the next generation gets the shade". We cannot solve global problems in a few years. Indeed, they may very well get worse before they get better; all the more reason to keep trying, to keep thinking about the shade to come.

In this article, we have presented some ideas about how we second language teachers can do our share to educate students in a wholistic way by helping them become better citizens at the same time that they become more proficient in a new language. Implementing these ideas is more difficult that just sticking to the textbook, but our heartfelt experience with our own students tells us that teaching

via global issues can be deeply rewarding and satisfying. No doubt, many of you already incorporate global education into your teaching. Please share your good ideas with us and with your other colleagues. We look forward to hearing from you.

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- Biodiversity and Conservation Hypertext Book -- darwin.bio.uci.edu/~sustain/bio65/Titlpage.htm
- CCHW: Center for Health, Environment and Justice -- www.essential.org/cchw
- Center for Marine Conservation -- www.cmc-ocean.org
- Center for Plant Conservation -- www.mobot.org/CPC/
- CINTRAFOR (Center for International Trade in Forest Products) -- www.cintrafor.org
- Conservation International -- www.conservation.org
- Cultural Survival -- www.cs.org
- Earth Island Institute -- www.earthisland.org
- Earth Share -- www.earthshare.org
- The Earth Times -- www.earthtimes.org
- Earthwatch -- www.earthwatch.org or http://gaia.earthwatch.org/

- Environmental Defense Fund -- www.edf.org
- Environmental Education Link -- www.eelink.net/sitemap.html
- The Environmental Education Network -- K-12 Environmental Resources
on the Internet for Teachers http://www.envirolink.org/enviroed/envirok12.html
- Environmental Journalism -- www.sej.org
- The Environmental News Network -- www.enn.com
- Friends of the Earth -- www.foe.org
- GAIA -- Global Art in Action -- www.globalart.org
- Green Business Letter -- www.greenbiz.com
- Greenpeace -- www.greenpeace.org
- The Green Teacher -- http://www.web.ca/~greentea
- Good Green Fun -- www.efn.org/~dharmika/
- IATEFL Global Issues Web site - http://www.countryschool.com/gisig.htm
- International Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture -- www.mtn.org/iasa
- IUCN -- Forest Conservation Programme -- www.iucn.org
- Japan Association for Language Teaching's Global Issues Special Issues
Group -- http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/nsig/globalissues/gi.html
- The Nature Conservancy -- www.tnc.org
- New Earth Net -- http://nen.sedona.net/
- Pesticide Action Network -- www.panna.org
- Pro-Natura -- www.pronatura.org
- Rainforest Action Network -- www.ran.org
- Rainforest Alliance --http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/
- Resurgence Magazine -- http://www.gn.apc.org/resurgence/
- Saving the Amazon -- worldwildlifefund.org/amazon/
- Sierra Club Foundation -- www.sierraclub.org
- Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute -- www.stri.org
- Student Conservation Association -- www.sca-inc.org
- Sustainable Development Institute -- www.susdev.org
- Union of Concerned Scientists -- www.ucsusa.org
- United Nations Environment Programme -- www.unep.org
- Worldwatch Institute -- www.worldwatch.org
- World Wildlife Fund -- www.worldwildlife.org (also known as WWF or World
Wide Fund for Nature) -- http://www.panda.org/