



Global Education:

An interview with Kip Cates

by Jim Kahny

Kip Cates is a leader in the field of global issues in language education and he has traveled extensively giving lectures and workshops. He currently teaches at Tottori University, and gives courses on global education for the MA-in-TESOL program of Teachers College Columbia University, Tokyo. He also coordinates JALT's "Global Issues" Special Interest Group and edits its Global Issues in Language Education Newsletter. He has worked, lived, or traveled in over 40 countries, and speaks eight languages.

This interview with Kip Cates was conducted by e-mail in late July. He had just completed teaching an intensive course at Ehime University and was soon to depart for the Middle East to take part in a peace education conference near Beirut, and to give global education presentations to English teachers in Cairo and Alexandria.

What is meant by the term "global education"?

Global education is an exciting new field which aims at developing greater awareness

of our world, its peoples and problems. It comprises a number of component fields such as peace education, human rights education, development education and environmental education.

Global education has been defined as "education which promotes the knowledge, attitudes and skills relevant to living responsibly in a multicultural and interdependent world." It aims at "bringing about changes in the content, methods and social context of education in order to better prepare students for citizenship in a global age."

How is global education applied to language teaching?

A global education approach to language teaching aims at enabling students to effectively acquire a foreign language while at the same time empowering them with the knowledge, skills and commitment required by world citizens for the solution of global problems. As one language educator has put it:

“Global issues” and “global education” are hot new buzzwords in the language teaching world. Global education is the process of introducing students to world issues, providing them with relevant information and developing the skills they will need to help work towards solutions. Those who support global education usually defend it in this way: We all need to use reading passages, dialogues and discussions in our teaching, so why not design these with content that informs students of important world issues and challenges them to consider solutions?

Why do you feel that language teachers in Japan should be concerned with global education?

One of the most important tasks for educators in the world today is to help students

learn about the rich variety of peoples in our multicultural world and the important world problems that face our planet. Language teachers have a special role to play in this important work.

This mission is outlined in the 1974 “Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace” of UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and in UNESCO’s 1987 LINGUAPAX Kiev declaration on “Content and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages for Peace and International Understanding.”

Language teachers are educators and the education profession has always recognized its unique responsibility in promoting an active concern for the world and its problems, a challenge addressed by organizations such as the US group Educators for Social Responsibility.

What does the teaching of English have to do with global education?

In the past, English was viewed as a linguistic system, a school subject or the language of native speakers, and was taught narrowly with those aims in mind. Today,

however, English is recognized as a global language.

This means seeing English as a means for learning about our global village and for understanding the issues, cultures and problems of our small planet. In this role, English is a “window on the world” through which students can learn about the peoples of the world (Arabs, Chinese, Russians, Brazilians...), about social issues (violence, sexism, minorities, AIDS...) and about important global problems (war and peace, world poverty, human rights, environmental destruction).

Part of the job of international English teachers, then, is to broaden students’ views of English. This means showing how English can be a language of world citizenship for learning about our multicultural global village and for working to solve the global problems facing Spaceship Earth.

Could you give an example of how a global issues topic can be integrated into a secondary school EFL class?

In a global education approach to language teaching, the teacher must sit down, write up two sets of goals for each class—language learning goals and global education goals—then design effective classroom activities that will achieve both sets of objectives. Let’s say our language learning goal is to practice grammar while our global education goal is to raise environmental awareness. A sample lesson plan might look like this:

Language Learning Goals:

To practice the present perfect “Have you...?”
Global Education Goals: To raise awareness of environmental problems.

Activities to Accomplish the Above Goals

1. Show the class pictures of environmental problems and ask:

“Have you ever seen...?”

- a polluted river
- a dead tree
- an oil spill on TV
- litter on the ground

2. Put the class into groups of three and do a group eco-survey about environmental action. Have students ask each other:

“Have you ever...?”

- picked up litter from the ground
- turned off the light to save energy
- used something that was recycled
- given money to an environmental organization

Are there global issue topics that you feel are particularly important to Japanese junior and senior high students?

I believe language teachers have a special

task of helping junior and senior high students learn more about the world and its diverse peoples and cultures. Young Japanese students live in a multicultural global village yet all too often know little about other countries and cultures.

At the same time, there are many serious global issues that high school students need to become aware of. These include environmental problems, human rights, conflict and violence as well as poverty and world hunger. Any language teaching that can help students see themselves as global citizens who have a responsibility to make a better world—both locally and globally—will help prepare young Japanese for an exciting role in our global village.

What would you advise the language teacher who is interested in global education, but doesn’t know where to begin?

For teachers interested in global education and its related fields (peace education, human rights education, environmental education, education for international understanding...), the best thing is to jump in and start exploring! Good teachers have always gone to other disciplines to learn about new ideas, techniques and resources. If you’re interested in teaching English to promote global awareness, international understanding and action to solve world problems, then by all means start exploring! This can be done in a number of ways:

- reading books about global education teaching approaches, ideas and activities;
- attending global education conferences, peace education seminars and environmental education workshops;
- contacting global issue organizations—environmental groups like Friends of the Earth, or human rights groups like Amnesty International;
- exploring global education teaching resources—resource centres such as Social Studies School Service <www.socialstudies.com> can provide a wide variety of books, posters, videos and computer software for your classroom;
- taking courses—global education summer courses for teachers are regularly offered in Japan and overseas, and are a great way to spend a summer vacation.

Teachers who begin exploring global education soon discover a new excitement in their classes and a new mission in their teaching. They are able to approach global issues and world topics more confidently, and can draw from a wider variety of teaching activities, techniques and resources for their English language classes. The result is more student motivation, increased global awareness and enhanced language learning.

What would you suggest to the teacher who expresses this sentiment: "I would like to integrate global education into my teaching, but my students are interested in sports, fashion, and their hobbies. It's difficult enough getting them to study English when I use topics I know they enjoy and are familiar with."

Student interests such as sports, fashion and pop music don't have to be a barrier to global language teaching. Good global education, like good language teaching, insists on starting with student interests, not ignoring them, and building from them to new skills and knowledge. What is necessary is to bring to student interests a global perspective which promotes knowledge of the world, builds skills for world citizenship and fosters a sense of social responsibility and action for a better world.

If students enjoy sports, then teach this in the classroom. But why not focus on international sports events, such as the Olympics or World Cup Soccer, which encourage students to learn about world countries and cultures. If students enjoy pop music, then use it in the classroom. But why not focus on global issue songs such as "We Are The World" (about world hunger) or "They Dance Alone" (about human rights). If students are interested in actors and pop musicians, then exploit this in the classroom. But why not focus on socially-concerned actors such as Richard Gere (working for a free Tibet) or musicians like Sting (working to protect tropical rainforests).

World hunger, human rights, and the environment are such serious topics. Wouldn't younger students be turned off by such somber themes?

The key to imparting a global perspective and awakening student interest in world affairs lies with the skill and creativity of the global education teacher. Even with an unmotivated class, a good global educator can always find a way to develop in his/her students the global awareness, knowledge, and skills needed for socially-responsible world citizenship.

Let me give an example. If I ask my students to rank their top ten favorite topics, no one will mention "human rights." Yet, if I create and teach a dynamic, exciting EFL lesson on human rights, including games, songs, videos and role plays, students will come up to me after and say, "Before today's class, I had no interest in human rights. But today, we studied human rights—in English—and, thanks to you, I now realize how important they are. Thank you for opening my eyes to this issue."

What has been the response of your students to English classes that incorporate global themes?

I've found that, when done well, teaching English through global themes gets a positive response from students and results in increased interest, excitement and motivation. The world countries, themes and issues taught each morning in a "global education English class" appear each night on the TV news—a daily lesson in relevance. The knowledge about world nations, topics and issues, and the ability to discuss these in English, translates into a feeling for students of becoming international cosmopolitans—what I call the "Indiana Jones" effect. All of this leads to a degree of excitement and interest that is hard to compare to more traditional classes.

A second benefit is the promotion of international understanding. Japanese students often have little incentive to meet foreign people or adequate world knowledge to interact effectively with them. Some feel, "I know nothing about foreign countries or global issues, so what's there to talk about?" Others, more proficient in English, may try to strike up conversations but end up angering their foreign friends. Linguistic proficiency, after all, has no inherent relation with international understanding. It doesn't matter how good your English (or your intentions), if you alienate a friendly Muslim student by persistently offering him alcohol because you're ignorant of Islamic taboos.

Once students have studied world regions, themes and issues in English, however, they have a base of knowledge and awareness from which to expand. A direct result is the warm response of foreign people at meeting Japanese youth who know something of their countries and world issues, and who can communicate this in English. This not only leads to friendlier relations between individuals (and increased English use), but also improves the reputation of Japan from a country ignorant of world affairs to a nation of people interested and knowledgeable about world countries, cultures and problems.

What are a few practical resources for the busy EFL teacher interested in exploring global education further or bringing global issues into class?

Useful books in English include:

Elder, P. & Carr, M. (1987). *Worldways: Bringing the world into your classroom*. Addison-Wesley.

Fisher, S. & Hicks, D. (1985). *World*

studies 8-13. New York: Oliver & Boyd.

Pike, G. & Selby, D. (1988). *Global teacher, global learner*. London: Hodder/Stoughton.

Milord, S. (1992). *Hands around the world: 365 creative ways to build cultural awareness & global respect*. Charlotte, Vermont, USA: Williamson Publishing.

Tokiwamatsu Gakuen. (1998). *Go global: A global education resource book for language teachers*. Tokyo: Kagensha.

Good books in Japanese include:

Fisher, S. & Pike, G. (1992). *Wa-rudo studies: Manabikata oshiekata handbook*. Tokyo: Mekon.

Guro-baru Eigo Kyoiku Kenkyu Kai. (1996). *Guro-baru eigo kyoiku no shuho to tenkai*. Tokyo: Sanyusha.

Hicks, D. & Steiner, M. (1997). *Chikyu shimin kyoiku no susumekata*. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.

Otsu, K. (1992). *Kokusai rikai kyoiku*. Tokyo: Kokudoshu.

Pike, G. & Selby, D. (1997). *Chikyu shimin o hagukumu gakushu*. Tokyo: Akashi Shoten.

Uozumi, T. (1995). *Guro-baru kyoiku*. Tokyo: Reimei Shobo.

Interested language teachers are also welcome to subscribe to the “*Global Issues Newsletter*” which I publish. Subscription fees for one year (4 issues) are 2,000 yen. Please write for a sample copy. *Global Issues in Language Education Newsletter*

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What sparked your interest in global education?

Part of my interest in global education comes from growing up in Canada—a bilingual, multicultural country with a multi-ethnic population from around the world. As a child, my friends and school classmates were like a mini-United Nations with ethnic roots from around the globe—English-Canadians, French-Canadians, Russian-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians...

I was also lucky to have teachers who sparked my interest in the world and to have parents who took me—at age 12—off to Europe for an eye-opening five-week trip. Later, as a university student, I took 4 years off from university to travel around the world—living in France, working in Sweden, travelling through Turkey, exploring India... That trip impressed upon me the rich diversity of our global village, but also made me realize how little we know about other peoples, nations and world problems.

Now, as an English teacher in Japan, I have a chance to contribute to a better world through helping my students become active, informed world citizens ready to face the challenges of the 21st century. I invite others to join me in this important task!