

GLOBAL EDUCATION'S IMPACT ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE CONVERSATION CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

Balanced teaching is based on global education. The field of teaching second languages might also benefit from this, as its implementation may improve students' linguistic proficiency and global awareness. However, the platform for teaching English to non-native speakers should be taken into account, as participant tasks and material greatly contribute to the learning curve. On the theoretical foundation of the aforementioned, this study applies global themes to the English language curriculum of an intermediate, multilingual, and multi-cultural discussion class at the Sree Abiraami Arts and Science College for women in Gudiyattam, India. Throughout the study the impact of integrated global education on teaching English as a second language has been qualitatively assessed. By combining the content-based and task-based language teaching approaches as derivatives of the communicative approach, global education concerns are examined. The students were simultaneously urged to use critical thought. Participants essentially demonstrated a greater level of global awareness, problem-solving skills, and the ability to apply critical thinking in their surroundings after receiving instruction on the desired curriculum. Additionally, compared to previous classes, they participated in class more effectively and coherently.

Keywords: *Global education, content-based approach, task-based approach, critical thinking*

Introduction

In the background, everyone on the planet is socially tied to everyone else in terms of politics, culture, and the environment. The economy is interconnected through global trade, the environment is interconnected through the sharing of a planet, politics is interconnected through international relations, and culture is interconnected through shared media, intercommunications, travel, and migration. Despite the fact that we live in the media age, obstacles like "information overload" still prevent us from becoming globally aware. It is rare to find a rational or moral analysis of the reasons and causes behind the media's portrayal of global concerns.

The information is presented in a straightjacket fashion, sometimes for political reasons, and offers little chance for critical thought or participation in resolving the concerns raised. Giving students the knowledge, skills, and values they will require in a classroom setting is perfect if we want to prepare them for these challenges, ensure their wellbeing, and inspire them to create a better world than the one they inherited. In addition to activating schemata, these factors will do so in an ethical manner. A platform for critical thinking is also useful since it enables people to manage the opportunities and difficulties they face.

Given the foregoing context, we are the luckiest teachers when it comes to teaching languages. Every topic belongs to us. According to Rivers (1976), our subject matter is whatever our students wish to discuss. In order to prepare pupils for greater engagement in

global society, English language instructors are essential. Through the use of challenging materials on global concerns, they can create an opportunity for pupils to improve their communication and thinking skills. If our pupils, despite their fluency, are unaware of global issues, If our pupils, despite their fluency, are unaware of global issues and lack a social conscience by employing their communication skills for international crime, exploitation, oppression, or environmental destruction, we cannot claim that our English instruction is successful (Cates, 1997).

Global Education

Definition

Global issues are referred to as “issues of global significance” (Anderson, 1996) or “problems in the world” (Mark, 1993). The global issues approach includes all problems affecting world citizens, such as globalization, poverty, peace, the environment, and human and animal rights. They are not just personal but also professional concerns of teachers in every branch of education (Reardon, 1988). According to Tye and Kniep (1991), global education “involves learning about those problems and issues which cut across national boundaries and about the interconnectedness of systems: cultural, ecological, economic, political, and technological.” It prepares students to become active and engaged participants in an interconnected world.

Rationale of Global Education

Living in an ever-shrinking world demands a deep understanding and a strong sense of responsibility to address issues that affect citizens’ lives. Global problems are interconnected, and global citizens are intrinsically dependent on one another. Industries in developed countries, for instance, partly depend on raw materials supplied by underdeveloped countries. Many industries outsource their production to reduce costs.

Adopting a nonchalant and indifferent attitude toward global events is akin to passengers on a shared boat ignoring someone drilling a hole in their section, believing it will not affect them. Only when others take prompt action does it elicit a response.

The need for collective action is evident in resolving many global problems. There is an urgent need for all countries to join the Kyoto Protocol, an agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC), which has already been signed by 191 states, to combat global warming. Under this treaty, all member countries are obligated to address greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Dealing with such issues is part of the social responsibility of all global citizens.

Curriculum and Global Education

Whether global issues are suitable for and can enhance a curriculum in all areas of education depends on how we view a curriculum and the outcomes we aim to achieve. A ‘real’ curriculum is not merely a set of predetermined learning materials designed to develop literacy skills or teach specific subject matter in courses offered at schools or

universities; rather, it is far more comprehensive than what was traditionally perceived. Its aim is to cultivate more 'well-rounded' citizens who can perform their social roles more effectively.

This cannot be achieved by acquiring knowledge in a single subject area alone; instead, learners must enhance their cognitive skills, which serve as essential prerequisites for functioning effectively in daily life. Ross (2004) states that these skills can be developed through socially structured or prescribed activities, selected from the culture of a society, that lead to the transformation of individuals.

The integration of global education into the curriculum encourages learners to reflect on the causes of issues and find viable solutions to societal problems. Learners produce knowledge through reasoned interpretations of information they receive. Smith, Stanley, and Shores (1950) define curriculum as a cultural reproduction structured in a way that values independent thinking within the broader context of social responsibility.

That is, a liberal and progressive curriculum must meet the criteria of reasonableness, agency, a sense of relationship, and morality (Fenstermacher, 1994, as cited in Kridel, 2010). It prevents learners from developing biases and helps them understand connections among people, cultures, and environments globally (Canadian Teachers Federation, 2005). Such content makes the curriculum more authentic and the learning experience more meaningful.

Global Education Curriculum and Second Language Learning Outcomes of Global Education Based Language Curriculum

Language teaching through a global education curriculum aims to produce a range of outcomes, including global awareness and cognitive and communicative competencies. Each of these outcomes is achieved through classroom input, assigned tasks, and effective learning strategies. Second language learning must be supported by appropriate communicative tasks and opportunities to practice accurate language use in the classroom. Tasks are designed to encourage learners to practice critical thinking, which facilitates interaction between communication components.

Students' improved ability to critically evaluate texts enhances their success in second-language communication. Therefore, incorporating a global issues curriculum in language classes is justified when it raises global awareness and achieves second-language learning objectives.

Second Language Learning

The current perspective on second language acquisition stems from our understanding of the nature of language and language learning. Language is described as a "dynamic resource for creating meaning" (Nunan, 2004), while second language acquisition is viewed as a conscious psycholinguistic process that enables learners to use language forms to interact and communicate. Thus, the ability to communicate meaning is the primary objective of learners in every second language class.

Development of Cognitive Skills and Global Awareness

English language teachers can promote students' cognitive skills alongside education for global citizenship. This fosters global awareness and further enhances learners' cognitive skills. Global issues materials as input give learners ample opportunities to think critically, develop cognitive skills, and negotiate meaning. Explicit instruction in critical thinking, combined with strategies such as questioning, negotiation, and cooperative tasks, encourages learners to critically analyze global issues as they exchange ideas, evaluate one another's perspectives, and justify their own reasoning.

Content-Based and Task-Based Methods in a Global- Issues Based Curriculum

Content-based and task-based instruction are integral to the communicative methodology commonly used in TESOL classrooms with global content. Task-based language teaching centers on communicative and interactive tasks as the core units for planning and delivering instruction. Task-based methods provide an effective foundation for language learning by fostering meaningful communication, interaction, and negotiation, enabling learners to acquire grammar through authentic language use (Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Content-based teaching emphasizes that language is most effectively learned through relevant, meaningful, and motivating content that encourages students to think and learn in the target language (Cates, 1997). Language learners must be stimulated, engaged, and actively involved in the learning process. This is a general principle recommended for all English language educators.

Content educators, such as Mohan (1986), advocate for the use of motivating themes and authentic materials in language teaching. Global issues are real and pressing: deforestation of rainforests, depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, nuclear waste disposal, exponential population growth, the spread of AIDS, state violence and genocide in Kurdistan, Tibet, and Bosnia, as well as ecological disasters exacerbated by war in Ethiopia and Somalia. The list is depressingly long (Maley, 1992).

Language learners are motivated when their prior knowledge, experiences, concepts, and ideas serve as a foundation for understanding global content in the classroom. When learners engage with content relevant to real-life situations, they actively participate and follow classroom instruction. 'Contentless' materials lack meaning for learners, failing to provoke curiosity or sustain interest.

Similarly, task-based language teaching relies heavily on learners' involvement and values the world knowledge and experiences they bring to the classroom. By exchanging their knowledge, experience, and opinions, learners use existing English skills and are exposed to new language, fostering the development of strategies to improve their language abilities.

Through Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), English teachers incorporate global issues and authentic topics such as poverty, inequality, and environmental change that learners are trying to make sense of. These topics encourage the development of skills

necessary for completing real-life tasks. Learners are exposed to the target language in naturally occurring contexts using materials not specifically prepared for language classrooms.

Critical Thinking and Global Issues in the Language Class

Introducing Critical Thinking and Global Issues

Critical thinking and a global education curriculum are essential components that should be integrated into language classes. Critical thinking does not emerge automatically or accidentally; rather, it results from the deliberate application of language teaching strategies and the provision of appropriate classroom input. Language classes can also incorporate global issues, such as world peace, environmental concerns, child labor, and poverty, as core content. This input can come from teachers, textbooks, or even learners themselves, drawing on a variety of resources.

The authentic nature of global problems, the diversity of ideas about their causes, the open-ended nature of possible solutions, and the varying knowledge levels of students enable teachers to enhance learners' cognitive skills, such as critical and creative thinking. Critical thinking is a key learning platform and plays an essential role in acquiring language skills. It involves reasoning at the level of lessons, sentences, words, and phrases until a logical understanding is firmly established in the mind, often emerging through questioning, exploration, and validity assessment.

Recommended strategies for fostering both global awareness and critical thinking include reciprocal peer questioning in small groups followed by class discussions, reader-generated questions on assigned reading passages (King, 1995), the "Discussion Method" (McDade, 1995), "Conference Style Learning" (Underwood & Wald, 1995), and "Cooperative Learning Strategies" (Cooper, 1995). These strategies encourage language learners to critically evaluate the validity of ideas in texts and assess the perspectives of others.

Critical Thinking and Second Language Speaking Skill

It has been demonstrated that critical thinking is crucial for learning second language abilities, especially writing and reading (Stapleton, 2001). Writing enables students to examine the essay subject, pinpoint the main point, weigh its various facets, draw on personal experience to gain a deeper comprehension, and formulate their own well-supported viewpoint before reaching a conclusion. Speaking abilities are enhanced by critical thinking in comparable ways. First, the skills of organising important concepts, creating arguments, testing ideas, solving problems, and assessing evidence are all developed via critical thinking, which is primarily fostered by discussion tasks (Davis, 1993).

Discussion and critical thinking go hand in hand, and critical thinkers are "directed" to evaluate the arguments based on the gathered and compiled information. Second, it gives the speaker the ability to recognise the points of contention in discussions and assess how reliable the justifications are. Lastly, in addition to the unavoidable constraints of spoken language, second language learners frequently have linguistic barriers when it comes to participating in discussions and debates in both academic and real-world contexts. Critical

thinking helps language learners make up for some of their speaking deficiencies. Critical thinking integration in a speaking course can be explained by the two previously described factors as well as the metacognitive awareness brought about by critical thinking teaching.

Participants

This study was made on an intact group of intermediate English learners as a second language, at SAWC, Vellore, India. The participants' age was between eighteen and nineteen years old. They were studying at tertiary level.

Learners were encouraged to ask each other the following proposed questions.

- How could "migration" be described, according to you?
- Is this a common phenomenon in the present modern world?
- Is this issue a common problem in your country?
- Why, according to you, is rural migration a booming reality?
- Explain and illustrate your points using your personal observations and experiences?
- What effect does migration have on rural areas?

They also were encouraged to think of further extended questions on the topic. The participants learn to think and contribute their opinions in group discussion. While the teacher monitored the discussions, the primary focus was on the content being expressed. Since more streamlined vocabularies were deemed fit, they were asked to share the relevant words by hanging their list on the wall. Then, some of the learners from the student group were called in front of the class and the remaining students asked their questions related to the topic. Meanwhile, the learners were asked to be creative and were told to give ideas, both pros and cons. At the end of the class, a student was asked to give a short talk about the topic and possible causes discussed.

Conclusion

The results observed were significant and aligned with expectations. Primarily, the participants demonstrated an increased level of attentiveness. They also demonstrated improved ability to think critically about global issues. Their level of topic-based critical thinking was significantly higher than before. Students successfully analyzed global issues, and their proficiency was clearly demonstrated." Their performance exceeded the average level. They applied their personal experiences and shared them with others. The global-issues-based curriculum demonstrated its potential to promote tolerance and appreciation of diverse beliefs, cultures, and backgrounds.

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