

## *Newsletter No. 9*

### **Workshop in January**

#### **Title: "A Thematic Approach to Content-based Language Teaching: Multicultural Themes for Global Awareness"**

**Presenter:** Kip Cates (Professor Emeritus of Tottori University)

Kip A. Cates is professor emeritus in the Faculty of Regional Sciences at Tottori University. For 35 years, he has been active in the field of global education and language teaching as a writer, speaker and teacher trainer. He has a B.A. in Modern Languages (French, German, Japanese) from UBC in Canada and an M.A. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Reading in England. He is a founder and past chair of the "Global Issues" Special Interest Group of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT) and edits its quarterly "Global Issues in Language Education Newsletter". He's also chair of the Asian Youth Forum (AYF), an occasional guest speaker on Peace Boat and writes essays for English learners for the Japan Times. He has worked, lived or travelled in 50 countries and speaks 9 languages.



**Date:** January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025 10:30-14:30

**Venue:** NUFS Meieki Campus (BIZrium Nagoya)

#### **Abstract:**

The English classroom can be more than just a place to study grammar, memorize vocabulary and practice language skills. It can also be an exciting “window to the world” where students learn about other peoples, countries and cultures. One way to achieve this is by taking a thematic approach to language teaching. This workshop will demonstrate how multicultural themes can help students acquire a sense of world citizenship as they improve their English skills. Participants will experience a variety of activities, analyze their design and discuss how international themes can promote global awareness and a healthy curiosity in our multicultural world.

**The number of participants:** 26

## 1. Interesting activities you might want to use in your class. Why?

- Learning about the background and stories about flags, names and money. Knowing them, we can learn about religions, history and so on.
- Giving students different options of homework, since it gives them a lot more freedom than the standard homework.
- World religions and world money were very impressive for me. There isn't any chance to learn about religions at school, however, it's very important to have knowledge about world to be a good global citizens.
- I like the activity of students' explaining meaning of their names. I will use it for the self-introduction part of group work for my classes.
- Flags around the world. Students had many activities to stimulate their affective and cognitive engagement in language and content learning. It was also interesting to explore the integration of language and content, particularly relevant to Japanese and world history and geography.



## 2. What you learned from today's workshop

- What teachers can do is not only teaching English but also making their students global citizens.
- Knowing English is not enough; students need to have knowledge of the world too, otherwise their English is useless.
- I learned how I can expand the topic to make students get interested in its background and cultures.
- There are many visual aids to help you understand the overall meaning, providing a great opportunity to learn the correspondence between form and meaning.
- I learnt a lot about the effective use of realia that students examine and evaluate in order to foster their critical thinking and integrate the target language and non-language content.

## 3. Questions and Answers

*Q 1): How As the teacher of a Global Studies course, have you ever got any unique questions from your students?*

Yes, I have! Here are a few examples:

- At the beginning of my Global Studies course, I do a brief self-introduction and explain that I became interested in multicultural themes as a result of a 4-year round-the-world backpacking trip I did in my 20s. Students often come up to me after class to ask what it was like to travel around the world on my own. Many inquire about how I organized my trip, where I went, how much the trip cost and whether I encountered any dangerous situations. These conversations sometimes stimulate students to go off traveling on their own or to sign up for our Tottori University overseas study programs.
- Other questions arise after my lesson on "World Religions". Some students want to learn more about Islam, Hinduism and Christianity and ask questions about customs in these religions. Others are curious about the two years I spent working in the Middle East. Yet others ask questions about the Muslim

students at our university such as what it's like fasting during Ramadan and where they go to pray on campus.

- Yet other student questions concern the examples of "Money Around the World" that I show in class. Students are often curious to learn more about Ho Chi Minh (Vietnam), why Queen Elizabeth is on the \$20 bill (Canada) and why money in Korea says "Bank of Korea" in English as compared to Japanese money which says "Nippon Ginko" in romaji.

***Q 2): How do you scaffold your students' learning in case they don't have enough knowledge about world history or geography?***

Although some learners are quite knowledgeable about world topics, many students come to my Global Studies course not knowing much (or having forgotten a lot) about world history and geography. I therefore see my class as both an intro course for students new to global themes and a refresher course for those who have stronger high school backgrounds in world history or geography.

The thematic activities that I introduced at our NUFS workshop in Nagoya demonstrate some of the ways that I scaffold student learning. These include:

- \* using graphic organizers to introduce multicultural themes. Examples include my "four types of English last names" category table and my "world religions vocabulary" chart
- \* modeling language through teacher demonstrations and written examples on my handouts (eg how to explain a religion, how to explain your name in English...)
- \* making copious use of visual aids in class including handout graphics and Powerpoint slides
- \* encouraging lots of group brainstorming so that students who are more knowledgeable about various themes (flags, money, names...) can assist their less knowledgeable classmates

***Q 3): How can I use the method you showed today in a lesson?***

The thematic lessons I designed for my Global Studies course include a variety of teaching techniques, methods and approaches. I demonstrated a number of these at our NUFS workshop. These include:

- starting the class with fun-but-challenging tasks. These get students working in pairs or groups, engage their knowledge and curiosity, energize the classroom and start the lesson with bang.
- offering students a variety of multiple choice homework tasks that range from reflection and research to surveys and contact assignments with those from different countries. Students like being offered different options and appreciate the freedom to choose a task or challenge that fits their talents, moods or interests.
- adding an international dimension to common EFL themes (food, music, school, marriage...) by extending your thematic focus (food around the world, music around the world, school around the world, marriage around the world...). These multicultural themes promote global awareness, international understanding and cultural comparisons. They also ensure extra language practice



and engage students in learning about other peoples, countries and cultures

- integrating a "global education" strand into your content-based lessons by including knowledge and information about our multicultural world. Try designing your lessons so as to practice language skills, educate students about the wider world and build curiosity about other peoples, countries and cultures. Aim to have students leave each class saying, "Thanks to our teacher, we not only improved our English but also learned about other cultures and deepened our knowledge of the world."

***Q 4): How do you evaluate students' activities on global themes?***

When teaching thematic lessons, it's important to emphasize to students the importance of both language and content. These can be assessed either holistically or as discrete components of the course (eg 50% for language, 50% for content). For my mid-term exam section on World Religions, for example, I require students to explain in English one of the five religions we studied in class. Since we studied these in English, students are told they'll be assessed on both content and language. They may be strong on language but weak in content or maybe vice versa. In either case, they know that both English and global knowledge are important and will be assessed by the teacher. For example:

- \* Islam was founded by Jesus Christ in the 16th century.
  - this is great English but the content is totally wrong. Obviously, this student didn't study for the test.
- \* Islam founded by Muhamd in 7th centry.
  - the content is correct but the English not so good. This student studied but needs work on English.

Ideally, we want students to master both content and language and should specifically tell them so. To prepare students to survive and thrive in a global age, our aim should be to empower them to both understand multicultural themes and be able to discuss them in correct English.

My Global Studies course at Tottori University is actually a general education elective, not an English language course. This means I officially don't have to evaluate students' English abilities. However, the course is part of our university's Global Education program which stresses the importance of developing student proficiency in English as a global language. My approach is therefore to run the class as an English-medium course (with occasional Japanese input) and to evaluate both students' global learning of the themes we study and their ability to explain these in English.



## **AR Discussion**

**Date:** January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025, 14:30-17:00 (Room MW01, 02)

**Title:** Action Research Discussion

**Advisors:** Kazuyoshi Sato, Duane Kindt, Kevin Ottoson (NUFS)

**The number of participants: 11**



*Next Workshop will be held on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025.*

*Detailed information is here:*

<https://www.nufs.ac.jp/workshop/news/>

### **NUFS Workshop**

Nagoya University of Foreign Studies

57 Takenoyama, Iwasaki-cho, Nisshin-shi

Secretary: Chihaya Sugiura