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## Copernicus Effect or Strange Duet? An Experiment: Global Education in Grammar Classes in an Exam Oriented High School

Yoko Munezane

### Introduction

In the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Nicholas Copernicus presented his revolutionary theory of a heliocentric system. Overtime, this theory completely changed the concept of the universe, followed by the work of Galileo Galilei and Isaac Newton. Copernicus pointed out that through hypothesizing the sun, instead of the earth, is at the center, all the mathematical contradictions and mysteries about the movement of the planets would be solved, though he emphasized that his theory was only a hypothesis, being afraid of the possible punishment for challenging the authority of the Bible and the Church. In Japanese English grammar classes, grammar is often situated at the center of the pedagogic universe and grammar itself tends to be the goal of language learning, though grammar is supposed to be the means of acquiring communicative skills. In this experimental project I created the global-issue centered English grammar classes with a communicative framework to examine the effect of using global issues as the content of grammar classes. Before the project, I was unsure whether it was going to be a success with the Copernicus effect of a paradigm shift or end up in a strange duet of grammar and global education.

For the past two decades, the Japanese Ministry of Education has been eager to enhance students' communicative skills which it still calls "inadequate." *Developing a strategic plan to cultivate "Japanese With English Abilities"* (2002) issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology specifically



aims at ‘drastically’ improving the English communicative skills of Japanese to meet the needs of globalization in the economy and society. The Ministry of Education presents the goal of fostering high school students to be global citizens with fluent communicative abilities, especially English speaking skill to meet with the needs of globalization. This goal, however, does not coincide with the current situation of entrance examinations where communicative oral skills are not tested except in rare cases. In my working situation, oral communication classes with native teachers for senior high school students have been cancelled for the past three years because administration officials and teachers in authority regarded that oral communication classes do not lead students to success in university entrance examinations.

Preparing for the entrance examinations is an overriding concern for Japanese high school students and English plays an integral part. In Japanese high schools, grammar learning and communicative activities have typically been regarded as separate elements in the curriculum and grammar is still regarded as the core foundation of English education. Many teachers apparently believe that emphasis on grammar leads to success in the examinations.

For the past five years, I have been teaching at a new, private exam-oriented junior-senior high school in the Tokyo metropolitan area, which is trying to quickly become successful in the university entrance examinations. Grammar is regarded as an integral part of entrance examinations and I’ve often been assigned to teach grammar classes using textbooks with meta-linguistic explanations, mechanical substitution drills, and no colored pictures.

The question “How can I make my classes more interesting and effective?” was the genesis of my project. It has been a big challenge to make my classes exciting enough to get students interested and cultivate their motivation. Hence, I have been using songs, magazines, newspapers and relevant movies to complement the textbook in my trial to make the grammar classes more effective and successful. “What kind of topics are the most meaningful ones to the young generation?” This question arose as the next step. Since our planet has many serious problems, and since students are going to take the stewardship in the future, is it not best to use global issues as the content to complement the textbook? Through questioning myself about meaningful content, I



started using global issues as the base of English grammar classes.

The purpose of my project is to examine the effectiveness of using global issues as the content of grammar classes in an exam-oriented high school. My research questions are as follows:

1. Is using global issues as the content of grammar classes in an exam-oriented high school effective in terms of the following points?
  - a. raising global awareness
  - b. enhancing language proficiency on specific grammar form
  - c. enhancing students' motivation
2. Is cooperative group work successful in the global-grammar classes?
3. Does using songs and videos contribute to create successful global-grammar classes?
4. Does adjusting the amount of Japanese in the classes contribute to the effectiveness of global-grammar classes?

## **Literature Review**

### *Teaching of Grammar Two Schools*

A number of researchers claim that formal grammar instruction is unnecessary. Along the line of Krashen's (1985) theory that language should be acquired not through formal instruction but natural exposure, researchers argue that formal grammar instruction enhances knowledge of grammar structure but does not enhance the working ability to use correct forms, since these knowledge and working ability exist as "different systems in the brain" (DeKeyser, 1998). The evidence that speakers of different L1s acquire English morphemes in a similar order (Zobl, 1995) and the application of Universal Grammar that interaction of input and Universal Grammar creates the L2 learning (Goldschneider & DeKeyser, 2001) supports this school of thought.

On the other hand, there is a resurgence of grammar instruction in the classroom mainly because of the following three reasons. First, researchers assert the important role of noticing and awareness of form in second language acquisition (Schmidt, 1990). Second, researchers argue that there is an inadequacy in teaching English without addressing grammar, since according to the studies of French-immersion programs



conducted by Swain and colleagues, learners were not able to achieve accurate usage in specific grammatical forms, in spite of long-term immersion in French (Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1991). Third, studies show that explicit grammar instruction, focusing on form is effective in acquiring target language structures (Norris & Ortega, 2000).

### *Current Approaches*

The recent trend in grammar teaching is to focus on form within a communicative context (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Ellis (2002) suggests that grammar should be integrated with communication if enhancing communicative competence is the goal of second language teaching. Celce-Murcia (2000) claims that the function of any form or structure should be understood at the discourse level within the context. Echoing this principle, Porter (2005) emphasizes that ‘skillful teachers’ contextualize grammatical input to enhance understanding and use of the form. Empirical studies indicate that content-based language teaching develops and facilitates second language proficiency through promoting students’ attention to the relationship of form and meaning (Pica, 2002). There is growing evidence and agreement that second language proficiency is enhanced through linking the target forms with particular persons and events so learners become accessible to the dynamic relations of form and content (Oller, 2005).

### *Grammar Teaching in Classrooms, Current Situation*

Lott (2005) states that grammar is still treated as a set of abstract rules and concepts, which must be learned mechanically. Dellar (2004) claims that grammar translation pedagogy remains salient in classrooms with its ‘canonical’ nature and the myth that intensive grammar creates fluency. In Japanese high schools, translation-focused, grammar-oriented, teacher-centered EFL classes are still prevalent (Gorsuch, 1998). According to Kanda (2003), in Japanese high schools, grammar classes and communicative activities have been regarded as two separate elements of the curriculum and still grammar classes are composed of explanation of rules and the translation of English sentences into Japanese.



### *Content-Based Instruction*

Content-based instruction (CBI) has dual objectives of enhancing both language proficiency and content-learning. Advocators of content-based instruction (CBI) argue that language learning becomes most effective when it is learned in the context of relevant, meaningful content. Snow (1991) defined CBI as ‘the use of subject matter for second/foreign language teaching purposes’ and suggests the use of themes and content based on student interest. Brinton, Snow and Wesche (1989) stress that language is a means of learning about the people and the world and recommend the practitioners to use authentic materials and motivating themes. Parmenter (2000) sees CBI as contributing to affective aspects, such as enjoyment, increased motivation and decreased anxiety about making mistakes, in addition to introducing intellectual, social and cultural aspects.

### *Global Education in Language Classes*

For the purpose of promoting peace, UNESCO LINGUAPAX, Kiev Declaration (1987) recommends that foreign language teachers ‘increase language teaching effectiveness so as to enhance mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and co-operation among nations.’ Along this line, Cates (1990) advocates the unique responsibility of the teaching profession to promote peace, justice and an ‘active concern’ for the problems in the world. Cates (2004) encourages language teachers to promote peace and international understanding by integrating global issues into content-based language education for the betterment of the world.

The four domains of global education are defined as: 1. *knowledge*: awareness of the world problems; 2. *skills*: communication, empathy, and cooperative problem solving; 3. *active concern*: positive attitude toward problems; 4. *action* for the betterment of the world (Cates, 1990). In *The Course of Study for Foreign Languages* (2003), the Japanese Ministry of Education directs teachers to design the curriculum and treat content so students would ‘heighten awareness of being Japanese citizens living in a global community,’ ‘deepen international understanding from a broad perspective,’ as well as ‘cultivate a spirit of international cooperation.’ These three aims somewhat correspond with the above mentioned ‘*knowledge*,’ ‘*skills*,’ and ‘*active concern*.’ It seems that all



teachers in Japan must teach global issues in language classrooms to fulfill the goal stated in *The Course of Study for Foreign Languages*.

Among educators who advocate the necessity of global education throughout the curriculum, Noddings (2005) states that foreign languages, art, music, science and sports can obviously be used to enhance global understanding, and Noddings stresses the need of school-wide commitment. Smith and Fairman (2005) outline the advantage of integrated program of global education (nonviolent conflict resolution) and philosophy, referring to the higher achievement and retention of academic content.

Kasai (2003) contends that there is a necessity to integrate global issues in English classes at Japanese universities. Peaty (2004) suggests that there is an inherent risk of global education, referring to the inadequacy of teacher knowledge and possible indoctrination. In order to avoid indoctrination, language teachers ought to present many sides of an issue and encourage students to look at any issue from many perspectives, while trying not to express personal opinions at the same time (Sargent, 2004).

Fountain (1990) defines cooperative learning as 'central' to global education, since students can have the concrete experience of interdependence through cooperative activities. Fountain argues that students can foster long lasting understanding of interdependence between countries, ecosystems, world economies, and ethnic groups, through actually experiencing the notion of interdependence. Johnson and Johnson (1983) validate the efficacy of cooperative learning, compared with competitive or individualistic learning situations, indicating higher achievements, more intrinsic motivation, more positive attitudes toward the instructor and higher self-esteem. On the other hand, Leki (2001) points out the inherent problem of cooperative groups, referring to the social/academic relationships between students, particularly, native speakers and non-native speakers. She suggests that even within ostensibly successful groups some participants may feel dissatisfied because of the power relationships that hinder non-native speakers from making meaningful contributions.

#### *Using Music and Video in Language Classes*

Suggestopedia and Jazz Chants being the representative methods, successful applications of music in language classrooms are well demonstrated. Music creates a relaxed, friendly,



cooperative classroom atmosphere and encourages creativity and imagination (Eken, 1996). Research in neurology has shown that musical syntax and linguistic syntax are processed in a similar way in the same area of the brain (Maess & Koelsch, 2001). Reimann (2002), states that music is an effective means to motivate students in language classes, stimulating creativity and language output. Baltova (1994) indicates teaching with video has affective advantages and enhances comprehension. Video contributes to student motivation and learning, providing visual stimuli, which generates prediction and a chance to activate schemata (Canning-Wilson, 2000).

### *Summary of Literature Review*

In any current approaches and instruction method, content plays an integral role in language education, for interesting content promotes interest, and increased motivation among learners. Since students are going to take the stewardship in the future, global issues would serve as the most meaningful content for the students. Through linking the target form with particular events and people in global issues, learners would be able to go through the dynamic process of form-meaning connections.

Based on the research reviewed above, I designed the following study for the purpose of exploring the effectiveness of using global issues in grammar classes.

## **Methodology**

### *The Setting and the Participants*

The institutional setting of this study was a newly established progressive private co-educational junior and senior high school in the metropolitan Tokyo area with a student body of about 1300 students. The school used to be a commercial girls' high school till several years ago. Recently, it has been going through a transformation process with a new concept of fostering autonomous global citizens, and at the same time, quickly trying to become successful in the entrance examinations for universities.

Participants in the research were junior high school second year students who were in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of official English education. Their proficiency level was that of beginners, with the exception of a few students in each class who had spent some years



abroad. I taught two grammar classes of these students twice a week and the other teacher taught them reading four times a week. There were thirty-three students in each class. The assigned textbook published in Japan was composed of mechanical substitution drills, pattern exercises, translations, meta-linguistic explanations, and rather stereotypical short conversations between a Japanese student, Jiro, and his American friends. The textbook does not have any photograph or colored pictures. Teachers were supposed to teach using coordinated methods, focusing on the pattern drills and we were supposed to ask permission of the chief English teacher to try new methods and use new content to complement the textbook. Thanks to the kind understanding of my colleagues, this research was realized.

I started my research in November, 2004 and finished in March, 2005. Since students were going to be divided into advanced and intermediate classes from the following spring for the first time, according to the result of the end-year exam in March, some students got nervous about grades, accompanied by expectations and pressures from their parents, as it usually happens in the third semester. Generally, the school uses grades as an incentive to make students study hard and foster a competitive atmosphere among students, which becomes more pronounced toward the end of the third semester.

### *Procedure of the Lessons*

#### *The first stage : peace and human rights classes (Nov.-Dec, 2004)*

I carried out the lessons in English on four peace and human rights campaigners: Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Aung San Suu Kyi. I prepared the original paragraphs explaining each campaigner into which I imbedded specific language forms: present participle and passive voice so students would cooperatively engage in collaborative reading. Then based on the collaborative reading and the lessons, students cooperatively worked on quizzes and language exercises using the present participle and passive voice. For example, looking at the picture of Gandhi, marching to the beach with people to protest against high tax on salt (Salt March), students were supposed to cooperatively write conversations such as: “Gandhi, how long have you been walking?,” “Well, I’ve been walking for five days.” Then, they practiced that short conversation in





groups.

*The second stage: child labor and landmine issues (Jan.-Feb., 2005)*

I carried out child labor and landmine issues classes using a little more Japanese in the lessons as well as using a video and pamphlets in Japanese from NGOs to examine how the change in the amount of Japanese would affect the effectiveness of the lessons. I designed the lessons so students would engage in discussions and collaborative writing while focusing on gerunds, sensory perception verbs, and causative verbs. For example, looking at a picture of a little boy who fell asleep while stitching a ball, students cooperatively worked on the translation (from Japanese to English) of an interview I prepared between a reporter and the boy, Pablo (pseudonym) as follows:

Reporter: I was watching you sleeping.

Pablo: I didn't notice you watching me.

Reporter: Would you mind telling your story?

Pablo: It's not worth listening to.

Reporter: It is worth listening to.....

Pablo: I started working two years ago. My job is stitching balls.

Poverty makes me work. My boss makes me work. I'm tired of stitching balls. I feel like shouting, let me play. My dream is.....

*Procedure of Data Collection*

I designed a study based on both quantitative and qualitative principles. For data collection, I combined questionnaires, student interviews, field notes and colleagues' comments, looking for triangulation (Burns, 1999). I administered the questionnaires during the classes and all the students filled in the questionnaires.

*Pre and post surveys*

I designed pre and post lesson surveys (one page each) to examine the effectiveness of global-grammar classes in terms of enhancing global awareness and language proficiency on specific grammar points on a quantitative basis (research question-1). I also examined the change of the correlations between global awareness and language proficiency before



and after the classes in each stage (related to research question-4).

I asked the students to fill in a questionnaire to gauge their global awareness and language proficiency focusing on form, at the beginning of both the first stage and the second stage. For global awareness, I used a Likert scale to quantify student attitudes with the questions such as, “Are you interested in Mahatma Gandhi?” And I asked the questions such as, “What did Mahatma Gandhi do?” to quantify their knowledge about global issues. For language proficiency, I tested students’ language proficiency in terms of specific language forms (e.g. present participle and passive voice) with original sentences and translation questions.

After both the first stage and the second stage, I administered the survey with the same questions on global issues as the pre-lesson survey and with questions on language form different from the pre-lesson survey, but at the same level. I asked students to write their names or initials so I could keep the track of the correlations between global awareness and language proficiency.

#### *Open questions*

I administered questionnaires with open questions after stage one and stage two. I asked the students to answer open ended questions such as, “What did you think of the lessons on child labor?” or “What did you think of the exercises, using the context of peace and human rights?” in the written form so students could anonymously express their frank, honest opinions on the lessons. Questions were written both in English and Japanese and students had a choice of answering in either language. Most of the students answered in Japanese and for this paper, I translated their answers into English. In this research, I randomly used ‘he’ or ‘she’ to describe their answers, because I administered the questionnaires with open questions on anonymously, and there was no way of knowing whether the questionnaire was written by a male or female student.

#### *Teaching journals and field notes*

After each lesson, I recorded my impressions of student reactions in a teaching journal in English. During class, I sometimes made notes in both Japanese and English about what I noticed while students were working in groups.



### *Interviews*

I interviewed six willing students (three students from each class) in February and in March to get access to their personal points of view, opinions and interpretations to explore the effectiveness of the global education in language classrooms in depth. I first asked students to just give me any comments about the global-grammar classes to allow students to shape the answers and take the responsibility for structuring the information so students could freely express their opinions. Then I asked students what they thought of grammar classes and exercises, using global issues and whether using global issues motivated them to learn English more. I used pseudonyms to quote their comments. Also I asked two colleagues who observed my classes to comment on the lessons.

### *Data Analysis*

For the quantitative part, I separately marked students' answers to questions on global awareness and questions on language proficiency on specific forms. I input data into the computer program and calculated average points for both items before and after the classes to examine improvement. Also I examined if there was a correlation between global awareness and language proficiency before the lessons and if the correlation increased after the lessons using excel program.

For the qualitative part, since most of the students participated in both the questionnaires and interviews in Japanese, I translated comments into English. I read students' answers to open questions, memos of interviews, field notes and colleagues' comments reiteratively. Then I compared and categorized the data to find the recurring words and salient features among the various comments.

## **Findings**

### *Global Awareness Raised: Steps Toward Global Citizens*

#### *Students' knowledge in global issues increased*

Integrating global issues in the language classroom worked to increase majority of students' awareness of global issues. According to the result of the pre and post survey, the average score of the survey questions for the global awareness was raised by about 11



(of 50) points in the first stage (peace and human rights classes) and by about 20 (of 55) points in the second stage (child labor and landmine issues classes).

**Table A: Average scores for global awareness before and after the classes**

	<b>Stage 1: Average</b>	<b>Stage 2: Average</b>
Global Awareness: Before	18	25.3
Global Awareness: After	28.7	45.6
Difference in Average Score	10.7 (21.4%)	20.3 (36.9%)

Students also appeared satisfied about their own progress as they filled in the questionnaire answering questions such as: ‘What did Gandhi do?’(the first stage) or ‘Among the permanent members of the UN Security Council, which countries have not signed the Anti-Personal Landmine Ban Treaty?’ (the second stage). Yuka (pseudonym), for example, said proudly with a smile, ‘Oh, great! Now I can answer all the questions. I did it,’ as she was answering the questions. Ryu (pseudonym) said, ‘Now I know a lot about these issues. I’m happy.’ I assume that students were congratulating themselves about having acquired the knowledge, savoring the sense of achievement.

*Broadened perspectives*

Students broadened their perspectives through empathizing with children in other parts of the world. Many students expressed strong emotion such as surprise, wonder, shock, sadness, anger, and resentment during and after the global-grammar classes. In the open questionnaire, carried out after the classes on Child Labor issues, 36 of 66 (60 %) students commented that they were surprised and felt sad about the children who have to work in terrible situations. For example, Student A wrote:

I was surprised and was shocked to know that there are many children of my age and younger who have to work to support their families and cannot go to school. How hard it would be to work day after day in a miserable situation. This terrible reality is like a fiction.

Along with other students, Student A expressed an emotional reaction to the use of child labor and the exploitative situations of sweatshops, liking herself to the children of her age in other parts of the world. Many students interpreted the facts in personal terms and revealed a keen sensitivity to suffering, poverty, and injustice inflicted upon other people.



Students broadened their scope of vision and started to look at themselves in connection to the world in a new way. Several students began to identify themselves in the global context to think of the role of him and of Japan. Student B, for example, commented in the open questionnaire after the classes on Landmine Issues:

S-B: I was surprised and shocked, since I'm living in the country where we don't have such problems. And I thought that the fact that Japan doesn't have these problems is the very reason we should know about these issues to think about future. We should know about the fact that somebody is dying right at this moment when we are studying about the landmines.

His comment suggests that he has broadened his scope of perspectives. He regards himself as someone living in the peaceful country, yet feels restless about the disparity of people dying while he is studying. He positions himself in Japan but at the same time connects himself to the world through the comparison. By claiming that Japanese people should be aware of landmine issues because we are living in peace, he has started to think of positioning himself in a global context and to think of Japan's role in this troubled world as well. This enhancement of the range of vision and horizon suggests a step toward global citizenship.

*Students' feeling of need for action emerged*

Many students expressed a feeling that the present situation should be changed. An active concern about the need for positive actions for the betterment of the world emerged. After the classes on Child Labor and Landmines, 40% of students (28 of 66) commented that it is necessary to change the present situation, using expression such as 'surubekida', meaning 'we should do something.' For example, Student C commented in the questionnaire after Child Labor classes:

I cannot forgive the adults who force the children to work. I want adults to respect children's right. It is necessary to eradicate the child labor and we should take some measures to protect children's rights, for example through applying more strict laws.

Student C shows a feeling of the need for action and claims for change through expressing the anger against the injustice inflicted upon children in other parts of the



world. Along with several other students she suggests that the situation of child labor should be improved through legal approaches so people who are forcing children to work would be duly punished. She expresses a strong sense of justice against evil.

Students started to think about possible solutions for the problems, and some students started to think about what they could do to improve the situation. For example, after classes on Landmine Issues, student D wrote:

I thought a lot about landmines. It is terrible that easy to make, cheap landmines take lives and limbs from people. I think all the mines should be removed and we can approach toward peace through removing landmines in the future. I thought it's desirable to have more efficient detector. Then landmines could be removed more easily. Maybe I would like to contribute to develop efficient ones.

Student D framed his reaction in terms of his interest in scientific technology. Several students expressed a wish to donate money for the betterment of the world. For example, Student E commented:

It is a serious problem and it is our theme to work on for the future. I pray that someday all the landmines are removed and more flowers are planted. I would like to donate if I have an opportunity.

Here, student D presents her wish for peace and her wish to contribute somehow to improve the situation through donation. Many students expressed an optimistic, positive attitude for tackling problems. They claimed that whether through cooperation, technological development or donation, landmines should eventually be removed. The feeling of a need for action emerged as students started to think actively of ways to solve the problems of child labor and landmines.

*Language Lessons were Effective for the Majority of Students*

*Students' proficiency in English increased*

According to the result of the language test on specific grammar points before and after the lessons, a full 97 % (64 of 66) of students improved their score in the first stage (peace and human rights classes) and 98 % (65 of 66) of students improved their scores in the second stage (child labor and landmines classes). The average score of language test



rose by about 16 (of 50) points in the first stage and by about 27 (of 60) points in the second stage.

**Table B: Average Score of the language test on specific grammar points before and after the classes**

	<b>Stage 1:</b>	<b>Stage 2:</b>
Language Test: Before	17.9	13.4
Language Test: After	33.6	40
Difference in Average Score	15.7 (31.4%)	26.6 (44.3%)

A large majority of students improved their language score on the written test on specific grammar points: present participle and passive voice in the first stage and gerund, perception verbs and causatives in the second stage.

*Exercises captured most of the students' interest*

Eighty-three percent of students (55 of 66) commented that exercises using the context of global issues were more interesting than the ones in the textbook. In the open questionnaire, student H wrote:

I liked the exercises on global issues far better than the ones in the textbook because I got tired of the pattern exercises in the textbook. The pattern is always the same in every lesson.

Most students wrote that they were bored with the exercises in the assigned textbook and found the exercises in the context of global issues more interesting. Generally, students were bored with the sameness of the exercises and were looking for change.

Many students also commented that they prefer the exercises using global issues because they were real issues. Student I wrote:

It seems that the lesson and grammatical points go into my memory easily because the topic and issue are what is actually happening. Compared with the unrealistic exercises in the textbook, realistic ones are much more interesting.

Many students expressed a wish to know more about the “reality” of the world and to have lessons with authentic, real issues, calling the exercises and the conversations in the



textbook unrealistic.

*Students' frustrations*

A noticeable minority, 17% (11 out of 66) of students, did not respond positively to global issues language lessons. Five percent (3 out of 66) of students preferred the exercises in the textbook and 12 % (8 of 66) of students were neutral, while 83% of students found the language exercises on global issues interesting. Student J wrote:

I think global issues introduced have nothing to do with me. Could you just concentrate on the exercises in the textbook? I don't really want you to introduce the issues which don't have anything to do with the term-exam.

Student J found the global issues introduced in the classes irrelevant to his life. The other two students who expressed a wish to study with the textbook also thought that global issues were not as important as the term-exam or the study of grammar.

*Result of the term exam*

The results of the third semester term exam (the year-end exam) in March show that students in this study scored on average about 4 points higher than the students in other classes taught by other teachers.

**Table C: Average Score of the Year-End Exam**

	Year-End Exam Average Score (March, 2005)
Score of Students in this study	68.78
Score of Students in other classes	64.39
Difference in Average Score	4.39

The results in this table suggest the positive impact of using global issues in grammar





classes. In my school, English teachers usually teach using traditional methods with emphasis on mechanical drills. Therefore, the results of the end-year exam suggest that students in this study achieved better learning than students who studied by traditional methods.

*Students' Motivation Enhanced*

*Students engaged in the class with enthusiasm*

In typical classes, using the assigned textbook, students looked bored after twenty minutes and several students started yawning in another five minutes and eventually one or two students would fall asleep. Using global issues as content made a great change. Generally, students looked more serious and excited. They earnestly engaged in the class and became actively involved in the discussions with peers in their groups. For example, student K commented in the questionnaire:

I attended the class with more enthusiasm than usual because it is like “killing two birds with one stone,” since we are learning the global issues and the situation of the world, while studying English.

A colleague who observed both the typical class with the textbook and the global-grammar class commented that he noticed a change in student attitudes and enthusiasm. In the interview, five out of six students mentioned that they attended the classes with more enthusiasm than usual and felt that they would like to study English more.

*Students' motivation to learn more about global issues enhanced*

Many students expressed a wish to learn more extensively about other global issues and expressed a wish to learn more in depth about the issues presented in the class. In the interview, for example, Kinshiro commented:

I liked today's lesson because I was able to understand what you wanted to say. I would like you to arrange another lesson like today's lesson using another global issues because I learned a lot and I'm interested in the world. So I would like to know more about what is happening in the world.

Kinshiro wanted another global lesson because he thought there was a clear message in the lesson, whereas he had not been able to find any message in the mechanical exercises



in the textbook. Kinshiro's comment suggests that interesting content and a clear message enhanced his wish to learn more about the world. It seems to imply that providing meaningful and interesting content in grammar classes is essential.

*Students' motivation to communicate in English was enhanced*

During group activities, I noticed that most of the students were trying to communicate with peers in English. Moreover, students asked me more questions in English than usual. Furthermore, some students voluntarily answered the questionnaire in English, though I did not ask them to. For example, student M wrote:

S-M: There are hundreds of millions of children working at a low wage; I felt sad with the fact.

Students tried hard to communicate in English with their limited vocabulary. Engaging in substitution drills and pattern exercises require the learners to be passive, in a sense that learners have to utter something which does not have anything to do with their emotion or opinions. In the global-grammar classes students had a strong emotional reaction, which enabled them to express themselves in English to become an active communicator.

*Cooperative Group Work Harbored Some Problems*

As I walked among the groups to answer students' questions while they were working cooperatively, I had the general impression that overall, students seemed to enjoy group work and were actively involved in the conversation. In addition, most of the students said that they enjoyed the group activity and gave positive feedback on group work. Student N commented:

S-N: We had fun. Group work is good because we can discuss and teach each other and a cooperative atmosphere is generated. Through talking with friend, I can learn the points I do not understand, so it seems effective.

Many students commented that through helping each other they learnt a lot. However, a few students pointed out some negative points in the open questionnaire. Students commented:

S-O: One person in our group did not participate earnestly in conversation and I was not happy about it. No matter what the task is, those who don't engage in the



class just don't do their job.

S-P: I did not have much chance to talk.

Students felt dissatisfaction with non-cooperativeness in supposedly cooperative work. Student O was not happy about the fact that not everybody was seriously engaged in the group work and student P was displeased with the fact that he was not able to express his opinion fully though he had something to say. Though most of the students liked the cooperative learning and learned well in a cooperative style, some students complained. This suggests that cooperative group which is ostensibly going well could harbor some inherent difficulties.

*Using Songs and Videos Helped Create a Successful Global-Grammar Class*

Music creates a good, pleasant atmosphere of sharing joy, while preparing the students to concentrate on the lesson. I started the peace and human rights class with the song *There is a Hero*, written by Billy Guillman because the lyric of the song matches the lives of the peace campaigners. In the open questionnaire, 80 percent of the students wrote that they like listening to music during the class. In the interview, Saki said:

I liked the song. I really thought that peace campaigners were “the flowers and the candles in the darkest corners of the world” as the lyric went. I feel very relaxed to listen to the music especially at the beginning of the class. It somehow helps me understand the issues and language point. So please continue using music in the class.

As Saki commented, music relevant to the content of the lesson helps understanding of the issue and helps connect the classroom with the outside world, instantly taking the whole class to a different dimension.

I started the child labor class with the song *We are the World* partly because it has the lyric using a gerund, “let's start giving,” and gerunds were one of the forms to focus on in the lesson. Since many students were familiar with the song, they naturally started humming and singing toward the end of the song. In the interview, Taro commented:

I liked the idea that famous musicians got together and created the song for helping people. I think I can easily remember the phrase “let's start giving.” I would like to listen to the song again, so can I borrow your CD?



Taro's comment implies that the songs help students get interested in both global issues and language lessons. Gerund was one of the forms to focus on in the child labor class and Taro suggested that the phrase went into his memory easily because he knew the melody and could sing along. I assume that using songs contributed to creating successful global-grammar classes.

When I used the video of Martin Luther King's *I have a dream* speech in peace and human rights campaigners' class, students looked intrigued by King's speech. In my teaching journal on November 30, I wrote in English:

As soon as the video started, students appeared to have forgotten my existence for a while and became absorbed in watching the video, looking fascinated with King' speech, though the video was without subtitles and it was utterly impossible for them to grasp everything with their limited vocabulary.

With attractive visual aids, students seem to try to understand the material beyond their language capability. Four TC classmates and my colleague who observed the class talked about the effectiveness of that video agreeing that all the students paid full attention to the screen.

Students expressed their fondness for video. For example, Miki commented in the interview:

It was impressive that so many people marched together to Washington, sang together and listened together to Martin Luther King's speech. His speech was very powerful and I liked it. "I have a dream..." I like watching the video in English classes because learning becomes easier.

Her comment suggests that video stimulated student interest, facilitated learning and helped students understand the issue. Video provided visual clues.

*Using Japanese in Global Lessons was Effective for Students with Lower Global Awareness and Lower English Proficiency*

In the first stage (peace and human right campaigners), the correlation coefficient between global awareness and language proficiency before the classes was 0.178608, which means that there is a slightly positive correlation between global awareness and language proficiency. The students who had higher global awareness had a higher



language proficiency. After the lessons the correlation coefficient between global awareness and language proficiency rose to 0.329978.

**Table D: Correlation between Global Awareness and Language Proficiency: Stage 1**

	Global : Before	Global : After
Language: Before	0.178608	0.275826
Language: After	0.212374	0.329978

This strengthening correlation implies that the lesson was effective for students who had both or either high global awareness or high language proficiency but not quite effective for those who had neither of these at the beginning.

In the second stage (child labor and landmine issues), I spoke more Japanese during the lesson and used a Japanese video on child labor and landmine issues to make the lessons effective for the students with lower global awareness and language proficiency as well. As shown in Table D below, there is a correlation between global awareness and language proficiency before the lessons but that correlation decreases after the lessons from 0.47801 to 0.125845.

**Table E: Correlation between Global Awareness and Language Proficiency: Stage 2**

	Global : Before	Global : After
Language: Before	0.47801	0.176493
Language: After	0.1790	0.125845

In order to explore the meaning of this weakened correlation, I grouped the data into the following four groups, according to the score of the language test before the lessons: 1. low global awareness with low language proficiency: 2. low global awareness with high language proficiency: 3. high global awareness with low language proficiency: 4. high global awareness with high language proficiency. Then I examined the improvement of the scores in language proficiency before and after the lessons.



**Table F: Average Improvement of the language test according to the groups: stage 2**

Groups	Average Score: Before (full Score 50)	Average Score: After (full score 60)	Average Improvement
1. Global: low (5-22)/ Language: low (0-8)	4.5 (9%)	34.6 (58%)	30.1 (49%)
2. Global: low (13-25)/ Language high (10-27)	15.2 (30%)	41.5 (69%)	26.3 (39%)
3. Global: high (29-38)/ Language: low (0-14)	11.5 (23%)	37.8 (63%)	26.3 (40%)
4. Global: high (32-39)/ Language: high (15-42)	22.8 (46%)	46.5 (78%)	23.7 (32%)

This table shows that students with low global awareness and low language proficiency before the class made the best improvement and students with high global awareness and high language proficiency made the least improvement in the score. This result implies that nearly all students regardless of the initial score of global awareness or language proficiency improved their score in the language test after the lessons. The comparison shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 highlights that in the second stage, almost every student made more progress than in the first stage.

### **Discussion**

In this study, firstly, I have found that integrating global issues into grammar classes was effective in creating a nice harmony to enhance students' global awareness, language proficiency and motivation. Students made a step toward becoming global citizens with deeper knowledge, broader perspectives and feeling of need to take action for the betterment of the world. Generally, students found the language exercises in the context of global issues appealing and meaningful, and made a lot of progress in language proficiency in terms of specific grammar forms. However, a few students expressed frustration about having global-grammar classes because they were not able to find any



relevance between global issues and term exams. In the end-year term exam, students in this study scored a little better on average than students who typically study with traditional methods. As shown in the interviews and the questionnaires, students felt excitement, joy, sorrow, restlessness, and anger throughout the lessons, which led to higher motivation to earnestly engage in the class, a wish to learn more, and greater enthusiasm to communicate more in English. Secondly, I have found some inherent problems in cooperative groups. Thirdly, I have found that using songs and videos concerning global themes was effective in creating a positive atmosphere to facilitate learning. Lastly, I have also found that using Japanese in global lessons was effective for students with lower global awareness and lower English proficiency.

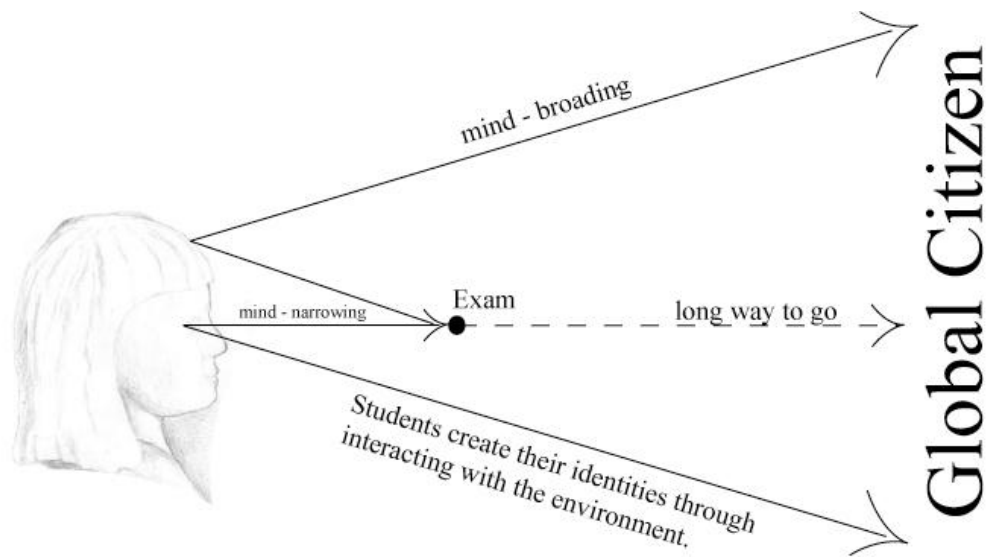
As Ryan (2000) states “Intrinsic motivation is entailed whenever people behave for the satisfaction inherent in the behavior itself.” Students expressed their wish to have more global issue oriented lessons and engage more extensively and in depth with the global issues, in spite of the fact that global issues orientation had nothing to do with the term-exams and the language lessons using global issues were not directly relevant to the test scores. It implies the positive effect of the global-grammar classes. Students found learning more interesting and meaningful and this experience itself became a factor motivating students to learn. Students started to become more intrinsically motivated and, to a certain degree, more autonomous learners independent from an extrinsically motivating system of behaviorist reward and punishment.

On the other hand, a few students expressed frustrations about having the classes that used global issues. They asked me to arrange no more global classes because they felt that classes were irrelevant to the term exams. They have set their goals on getting good grades on the exams and wished to achieve that goal efficiently. As a teacher I am in a position to seriously listen to each student’s opinion to understand the dynamics of the classroom. I interpret the implication of students’ different reactions to the same classes as the contradiction between educational aims in a genuine sense and the entrance examination-centered education. Not only my school, but also many high schools in Japan might have similar contradiction of following an ideal to foster the students’ development as autonomous citizens with global perspectives but at the same time having to cope with the high competition among schools to become successful in the entrance



exams.

Focusing on preparing for the exams is usually a mind-narrowing, activity, heading toward a single goal, during which students sometimes lose the chance to probe different possibilities to choose their ways while searching their identities, since university entrance exam is such an energy and time consuming issue in Japan. Studying global issues, however, broadens students' scope of vision, leading them through the journeys outward and inward, helping them in their search for their identities, while creating intrinsic motivation and autonomy.



Through combining these mind-narrowing exam-oriented grammar exercises and mind-opening global issues together, I was able to hear a nice duet. Media, like video and music, joined and it became a quartet, with students' happy chorus resonating in the classroom. However, here and there, I heard the cacophony, expressing the worries and frustrations about the exams. Through this research, I have become able to see the classroom as a dynamic mixture of unique voices. The fact that students have shown the signs of growth as a step toward global citizenship while enhancing their language skill and intrinsic motivation was encouraging to me. I surely will continue to be attentive to the cacophony, which represents the dilemmas and frustrations many teachers, high





schools, and administrations have on the educational ideal of fostering global citizens and the immediate and pressing needs of focusing on preparing for the exams.

In grammar-centered grammar classes, grammar itself tends to be the goal of language learning, though grammar is supposed to be the means of acquiring communicative skill. Through integrating global issues into my grammar classes, I found the first notes of a paradigm shift: global-issues at the center, grammar as the means. The goal of language education is, essentially, enhancing communicative skill so people can understand and solve problems together. A great vision in grammar classes where even large global problems can be addressed through communicative and cooperative work sheds light on solutions for the detrimental effect of the mind-narrowing, exam-focused sphere of Japanese English language education.



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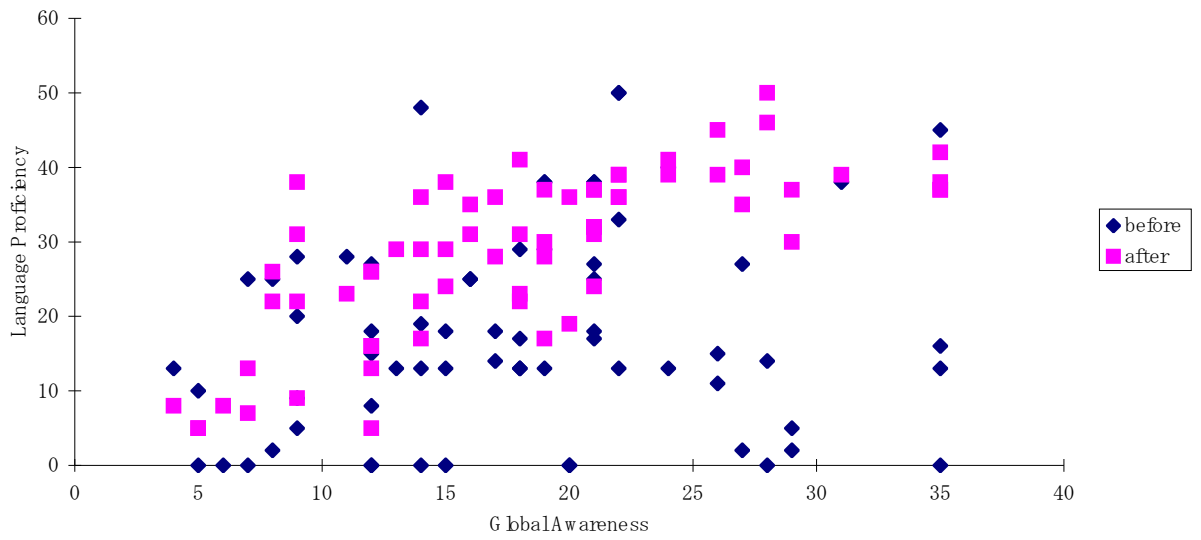
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# Accents Asia

Correlation between Global Awareness and Language Proficiency before and after the Lessons: Stage 1  
Appendix 1



Correlation between Global Awareness and Language Test Score before and after the Lessons: Stage 2  
Appendix 2

