

Fostering Imagined Communities: the application of community of practice through global issues in the EFL classroom.

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Introduction

The notion of attitude and identity in relation to English as a second language (ESL) has been researched heavily in recent years. In terms of attitude, researchers have attempted to provide suitable definitions to allow for more careful and in-depth understanding of ESL learners. However, the notion of identity in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context is relatively new. Additionally, much of the research appears to focus on ESL context as opposed to EFL. Steering away from the idea of motivation, identity looks at the ‘investments’ made by language learners in achieving success in their second language (L2). That is the desires and commitments made by a particular learner or language participant to learn a language by taking into account their ever-changing identity. Norton (2010) claimed that although a learner may be highly motivated, it does not guarantee their success in acquiring the language. She argues that the level of investments made, as well as awareness of learner’s ‘imagined community’ will allow for greater success in language acquisition. The current research aligns with imagined communities and uses Wenger (1998) theory of Communities of practice in order for learners to achieve or realise their Imagined community CoP. However, there will be some reference to attitude and motivation below as the researcher still believes that these traits can aide understanding of students responses to English language learning. Therefore, for a more in-depth review of motivation see Dornyei (2005; 2010). To allow for a comprehensive understanding of the current research, the researcher’s definitions of ‘attitude’, ‘identity’, and ‘imagined communities’ will be explained in detail.

Attitude Defined

Rokeach (1968) states that attitude is the center of the organisation of beliefs, object or circumstance, thus influencing us to respond in a certain way. He claims that attitude is relatively enduring, due to attitude being a learnt concept and what can be

learnt can be undone or taught. This view was also emphasised by Tsuda and Lafaye (2002) who argued that attitude is not inherited and can be altered by experiences. Rokeach (1968) additionally claims that attitude is an organisation of beliefs that can be broken down into two sub-categories; cognitive and evaluative. The former refers to the perception of the concept or the situation. It is usually a preconceived idea of the object or the situation at hand. Whereas the latter refers to the categorisation of feelings, whether it be bad or good. They then become behavioural components, which refers to response or action. Vaske and Grantham (1993) state that it is the evaluation that influences or determines the way we react towards a given situation.

What can be learnt from understanding learner' s attitudes?

Dornyei (2005), Bartman (2010) and Dornyei and Ushida (2011) claim that attitude is a major component of motivation and the motivational process. Thus, understanding the attitude of learners should enable language teachers to understand what drives students to be more engaged and interactive in the classroom setting. Researching attitudes also allows for a better understanding of when and how these attitudes are shaped and how they can be altered.

Identity Defined

For the purpose of this study, the researcher uses Norton's (1993) definition of identity. She claims that identity relates to three different areas; the first being, how we conceive our relationship with the world, the second, how the relationship is formed across space and time and how we understand our possibilities for the future. In order to further explain identity, Norton uses the term "investment" to further explain how identity in relation to language learners is constructed. She states that investment connects the learner's desire and commitments to learn a language, and their evolving identity. She argues that investment in the L2 is has more influence of successful language acquisition than motivation.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation, Communities of Practice and Imagined Communities

The notion of imagined community or communities within this particular research is adopted from Norton (2001, 2010). However, this idea was developed from Lave and Wenger (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP), and Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2000). The former looked at outside members of a particular community, join said community to become an accepted member of a particular community. They argued that there is a strong need for interaction between those that are learners of said community and those that are long-time members for successful learning to occur. The latter built on the idea of LPP, by stating that through various

factors such as interaction, imaginings, and assimilation members are able to demonstrate their validity in different communities of practice.

Whereas LPP research heavily focused on the outsider: who they are, where they are from. CoP, argues that it is the act of carrying out a common action or practice that allows members to join a new community. “Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger, 1998). Cummins and Davidson (2007) also noted a shift from the dichotomous input-output cognitive approach, to placing learners and viewing learners as members of a larger social construct, with varying communities and varying interaction between members of a particular community. They then argue that the ability to acquire a second language is due to the interactions within CoP, and not due to the isolation of individuals. In other words, learners should not be isolated and viewed only in the context of the classroom. Instead, they should be viewed by the interactions that they have with communities outside of the classroom context. Therefore, CoP can be seen as the different participation of members in their varying communities by evolving, negotiating and exchanging their understanding of the world, not just the classroom.

Moreover, in order for the CoP to be successful there are three principles that must be accomplished to satisfy the learning process: the domain, the community and the practice.

The Domain: refers to the area of interest that is shared within the community.

The Community: refers to the relationship that is built through discussions, activities, learning. The sharing of knowledge between the members of the community here is essential because it is here that the learners are able to continue their negotiation of meaning and understand their role within the CoP.

The Practice: here is where there is now a body of knowledge, tools and resources that members within the community are able to use

Moreover, Norton (2000) also takes this view of how learners come to successfully acquire a new language and become members of a new community in relation to investment. By taking research focus away from a homogenous view of learners into one that is diverse, conflicting, and takes a dynamic view of learners and their identity in various social sites (Tanaka and Ogane, 2011). She states that the reason for learners’ investment in a second language is to acquire a wider variety of ‘symbolic’ and ‘material’ supply in particular social situations to further enhance their cultural capital. In other words, a learners’ investment into a second language is ultimately an investment to the learners’ identity, which is continuously evolving. Norton (2000) further argues that it is not only the learners’ current community or social situation

that need to be taken into account. She contends that language pedagogy also needs to account for learners' future possibilities and their future imagined communities. Thus, the distinction between CoP and imagined communities is; CoP is the current community that the learner is associated or invested in, whereas imagined communities focuses on the future community that the learner may want to participate in.

Furthermore, Wenger (2000) agrees with this view, however, he goes further by arguing that competence and experience should not be a complete match or too closely related due to the lack of learning or acquiring in the English language context that is able to take place. He states that there needs to be challenges in order for the community to remain dynamic. Thus, in order for maximum learning or acquisition to take place, learning must take place at boundaries where experience and competence are separate from one another, a place where opportunities can arise within its possible challenges. Therefore, the researcher stipulates that creating a diverse and globalised syllabus allows for learners to visualise their imagined community more concretely, thus allowing them to invest more in their current CoP.

The Japanese classroom context

The current research was birthed as a result of a change in the language classroom and syllabus. The ideas and notions of communities of practice and identities became very prominent when the researcher was looking for answers in order to explain the changes observed. However, these changes will be discussed in more depth later. Yoneyama (1999) stated that as a result of the Japanese education system, students tend to be less willing to communicate and obtain a less active learning style. The extent of which, this problem occurs was also highlighted by Gorsuch (1998) where it was found that in Japan four (4) out of every (5) schools prioritised grammatical knowledge and translation methods of teaching / learning, which results in the silent learner (Harumi, 2001). Thus students tend to develop "normative behaviour" when learning English. Therefore, when students attend university to learn English, their cognitive and preconceived idea of English is passive learning rather than active learning. Although the evaluative component may be positive, the behavioural component influences students to react passively to English learning. Their belief is that there is a particular way to engage in the classroom, which is to be passive (Harumi, 2001). Nakane (2007) as well as Tanaka and Ogane (2011) agrees by stating that in a typical Japanese classroom there is a lack of willing participation, interaction and frequent silence. She contends that the discourse that is taught within the Japanese classroom reflects a more objective knowledge, which does not allow for students' identity (opinion, experience, views, and disagreements) to be prominent. Therefore, students do not interact in social interactions, which is expected when using English.

This often led to students being incapable of using the language in communicative social settings, despite having strong grammatical knowledge. Additionally, Honna and Takeshita (2005) provides a different perspective, which is the lack of interaction in the Japanese classroom could be due to the high emphasis that is placed on imitating native English pronunciation, which results in the self-confidence of the learner being lost. Nakane (2007) also claim that the teacher to student dynamic also puts a strain on the learners' willingness to communicate. The hierarchical and autocratic nature of the teacher to student interaction could potentially be damaging to learners' identity.

Furthermore, Lee (2008) argues that classroom discourse denies new members/ learners from being able to participate or fully engage in a new community, because it subdues their identity both in and out of the classroom. Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008) agrees and states that a consequence of classroom practices lack of connection to learner's identity or imagined community it can cause the learner to become isolated. Thus, Haneda (2006) contends that the classroom should not be viewed as sole unit, but one that accounts for the variety of identities learners have whether it be past, present or future.

Chang (2011) believes this to be particularly important in ensuring that learners' assumptions regarding their imagined community is more accurate and less deceptive in their language learning. She argues that language teachers and learners should expose and be exposed to a variety of imagined communities due to the unpredictable nature of life trajectories. Kanno (2003) agrees and stresses the importance of imagining alternative communities. She argues that educators need be aware of their capacity to influence learners' due to their learning often taking place before and will continue after the educator's time with them.

Additionally, Baker and MacIntyre (2000) advocate for learners to be more immersed in their language-learning program. Arguing that the more a learner is able to interact within a particular program, the more invested they are likely to be. Yashima (2007) identified aspects of studying abroad and how it impacted the students' learning and thus their imagined community. She found that generally students who studied abroad were able to shift their attitudes towards their groups, interest in participating internationally, the way that they communicate. She then argued for the English and a foreign language (EFL) classroom to replicate the imagined community of study abroad students by introducing global contents in the classroom. McGregor and Maede (2003) demonstrated the importance of including global aspects on a course where students pair up to represent and research a particular country in relation to a human rights issue in the country's view. The results demonstrated that not only were the students cognitively and emotionally engaged due to the content, it allowed them to express their own opinions, and mediate discussions in English. They

recognised that through such course content the imagined community is apparent and tangible for the students.

Tanaka and Ogane (2011) observed a similar influence where the imagined community is even more realised and tangible for the learners. On a summer school programme where Japanese students and international students form teams in order to teach elementary to junior high school students English. In this instance, for the Japanese students' and for the international students' the focus is not English or learning English, but it instead focuses on communication strategies. This unique situation enables students to visualise their imagined community but also creates a situation where there is more investment due to the needed interaction amongst teams. Although not all participants continued participation or willingly participated, they were able to gain more learner agency through the activities they engaged in. Thus, through communities of practice some learners' were able to gain a more accurate understanding of their imagined community, as mentioned by Chang (2011).

The Learning Context

In order to further understand the context of the study and the learners, this section will highlight the features of each course, offered to the students. The students in this study are all second year International Studies students. They receive seven and a half hours of mandatory explicit English language teaching per week across four different courses. All courses are taught for ninety minutes per class, over a 15-week period in the first semester and 15 weeks in the second semester. As the students were second year students, they may have other English classes that are not compulsory, however, the researcher chose to focus on the mandatory courses as he stipulates that course 4 could further encourage learners to continue their language learning if successful.

Course 1

These classes are compulsory English classes for all second year students using World Link 1(Morgan and Douglas, 2016). Depending on the class, they may be taught by a Japanese teacher or a non-Japanese teacher, once a week. As is common among a variety of compulsory English classes in Japan, these classes tend to consist of 25-40 students. Additionally, these classes use typical general English topics, with strong attempts to globalise the characters and some of the content, but still resemble the typical English and the typical EFL classroom. See Morgan and Douglas (2016; vi-vii) for further information.

Course 2

The researcher has no primary knowledge of this course, only secondary information based on what students have shared. This is also a compulsory English class for all second year students; however, in this instance they are taught by a Japanese teacher, once a week. These classes tend to have a strong grammar and translation focus as identified by Gorsuch (1998). The topics are again, general English topics, which uses the 'sister' book of World Link 1, World Connection.

Course 3

This course is specifically for second year international communication students, which uses Breakthrough Plus (3) some of the students are taught by the current researcher twice a week. The class consist of fourteen students, so are typically more communicative than the other classes. However, the book contain general English topics and are the same or similar to topics studied in above courses. See Craven (2017; 2-3) for details.

Course 4

This is the current research class. This course focuses on productive skills and was previously was aligned with course 3. The topics in course 3 were then used as the presentation or writing focus of the course. However, after noting the displeasure, and lack of interest because students were repeatedly learning the same basic language structure and being exposed to the same language classroom; the researcher, put forward a revised syllabus that focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) put forward by the United Nations. The students have this class once week and there are around 18 students in this class. Teachers are free to choose their SDG, however, this class studied poverty for the first 7 weeks, and at the requests of students, for the following seven weeks; climate change, and were studying gender equality in the second semester, at the time of data collection. This class also has a student assistant present to foster further language learning.

Establishing The CoP

The Domain

As mentioned above, the domain refers to the shared interest of members within a particular CoP. Although their interest in learning English could be seen as the domain, the researcher wanted to encourage further interest. Rather than explicitly telling students the topic information for each new topic, students are put into groups and are asked by the teacher if they have any prior knowledge of the topic – e.g., 'poverty', which would be written on the board. The student would then walk around the

classroom in their group looking at different images related to ‘poverty’ and discuss what it could potentially mean. Thus, allowing students’ schema to be activated and related words, ideas or concepts are brought forward. Their shared interest here is not only English, but also solving the ‘mystery’ of the word ‘poverty’. They are then asked to write this definition as a group to then share with the class. After this, the teacher elicits the different definitions proposed by each group to make one definition. Students are then asked to discuss possible causes of poverty, with the option of using the internet after at least 10 minutes has passed, to find further causes. The answers are then elicited, and mapped out on the board. The class then chooses four or five of those topics, which are then dispersed into groups to give each group an area of focus. They would then work together to explain how their focus causes poverty. They would then research at home possible effects of poverty within their chosen cause.

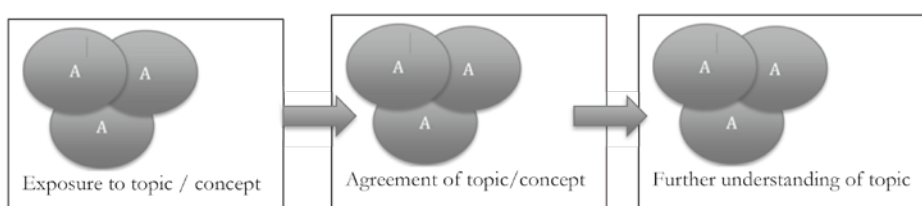


Figure 1: The Domain

The Community and The Practice

In the following class they would then ‘pool’ together in their groups to further add to their knowledge of the topic. Here, there is sharing of information and negotiation of meaning in order to further their understanding, especially when new vocabulary arises.

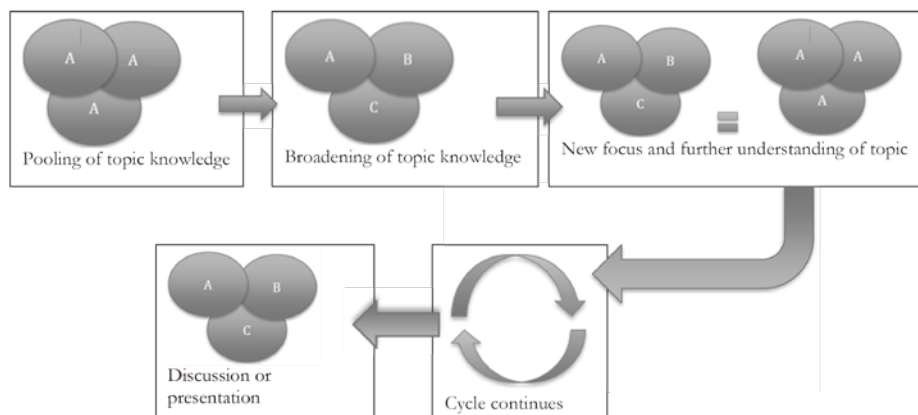


Figure 2: The Community and The Practice

They would then split up to form a new group, which would consist of one representative from each causes of poverty. During this time, the students are given time to share their ideas and research while the other students listen and take notes

for the different causes of poverty, while commenting on issues and giving newer or an alternative perspective. The student must explain any new vocabulary, while the teacher writes new and relevant or overlapping vocabulary on the board. Remaining in the same group, the students are then given one of the already established cause and effects and are tasked with discussing possible solutions how it would solve the problem. Taking students back to ‘further understanding topic’ where the cycle continues until assessment time. Although the it may appear to be a clear distinction between the different activities and learning, the domain, the community and the practice continually interact with each other.

After this process, the student is then free to choose one area of focus to write about two causes of poverty and a solution for each respective cause, as well as create a poster to have a discussion or a PowerPoint presentation to deliver a presentation. After each presentation is delivered, the class is expected to discuss issues raised and evaluate the solutions suggested by class members. The area of focus can be topics already discussed or it can be a completely new topic, as long as it is related to poverty.

It is important to note that the teacher does not require students to research in English, however, the students are expected to mainly talk in English when discussing details. Japanese is also allowed during the discussions, but the teacher asks for it to be kept to a minimum. The students are also asked to share their thoughts and opinions at the different stages, and not to only listen and write about the issues being discussed. It is important that students demonstrate a strong understanding of the chain of effects in order to begin the critical thinking process.

Research Questions

- ▶ To what extent can a community of practice be established in the EFL classroom?
- ▶ To what extent are students more willing to communicate in global issues course 4?
- ▶ To what extent are students’ attitude towards English learning affected in global issues class course 4?
- ▶ To what extent are students interested in learning global issues?

To discuss the research questions proposed above, the researcher will often refer to Wenger (2000) community of practice and Norton’s (2001) imagined communities to discuss their affect regarding class participation, learner agency and attitude towards English.

Methodology

Introduction

The researcher stipulates that global issues content need to be included in university English language teachings in order for successful acquisition or learning to take place. The literature discusses much about the tenets of communities of practice, and imagined communities and will therefore be referenced to within the methodology and the discussions. The researcher does not claim that the current class is one hundred percent a community of practice, however, does believe that there are many aspects of Wenger (2000) theory that are visible within the classroom.

The current research uses qualitative research methodology with a quantitative data collection (questionnaires) and presentation methods (charts). However, the analysis will mainly involve a qualitative approach. The research data was collected using a triangulation method in three different stages; classroom observations, questionnaires, and interviews. Although questionnaires and research questions were designed by the researcher, in efforts to ensure that the responses were honest for both the questionnaire and the interview stage, the classroom assistant was given the responsibility of conducting the data.

Participants

As highlighted above, the current students are exposed to five 90 minute classes (7.5 hours) a week. The current research focuses on course 4, therefore, the participants are all students of course 4 and have studied Poverty, Climate Change, and are in the process of studying Gender Equality at the time of the research. Out of 20 students, 16 participated during the questionnaire stage and 8 participants were willing and available for the interview stage.

Study Design

In order to answer the proposed research questions, this research method used were all qualitative in nature through triangulation and mixed methods.

Participant Observation

The first, being classroom observations. Marshall and Rossman (1989) define observations as an organized account of behaviours, occasions, and participants in the chosen study situation. This enables researchers to incorporate multiple realities (Strauss and Corbin (1990). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) also argue for the use of qualitative methods as it involves participants' understanding of the world or something within it. Its multi-method approach accounts for different interpretations, and a more natural outlook to its subject matter. Due to the nature of the classroom, the teacher

used a participation observation method as observations were done in the classroom, and it was therefore impractical for the researcher to separate themselves from activities or interactions. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) describes participant observations as a process of learning not only through passive observation but through active participation within a particular setting. They also claimed that the use of participant observation can also assist the researcher with interview guides to further explore. However, participation observation is not without fault as DeWalt and DeWalt (2000) notes that participation observation is carried out through the bias of the researcher, whom is the instrument for collecting data. Therefore, the researcher will have some innate bias towards the research focus that may influence the observed phenomenon, and thus the analysis of said phenomenon. Therefore, through the use of questionnaires and interviews, the researcher hopes to limit said bias to encourage a more transparent and valid analysis of results.

Questionnaires

Using the notes obtained from participation observation, the researcher was then able to create a questionnaire, which was administered in the second semester, approximately after 20 weeks (30 hours) of teaching. The questionnaire consisted of 39 questions, which were translated by the student assistant and consisted of closed questions, fixed choices and Likert scales, which were usually followed by open ended questions to aid the researcher in the reasons for the participants' choices. This also enabled the participants to fully engage with the research questions and limit potential language barrier that could arise when having a questionnaire in their second language.

The questionnaire was split into four different sections

Section 1: details of the participants.

Section 2: perceptions and attitude towards English, and their English ability before studying global issues.

Section 3: perceptions and attitude towards English, and their English ability while studying global issues class.

Section 4: perceptions and attitude towards EFL class topics.

The questions in section 2 and 3 were essentially identical, where section 2 participants had to reflect on their learning prior to studying global issues and section 3 students had to talk about their current learning experience.

Interviews

Following the responses from the questionnaires, the researcher then proposed further questions to the student assistant to be used in an interview. The interviews

were conducted in Japanese to allow the participants to engage fully and share their thoughts and opinions without the pressure of pleasing the researcher. This method proved to be quite limiting as there was no ability for the researcher to pose further questions to understand answers provided by the participants. The interviews were conducted in two groups of three and a pair. There were 8 interview questions in total, however, no follow up questions were asked.

Results and Analysis

The following section will be discussed in four parts in order to reflect the posed research questions, which were:

- ▶ To what extent can a community of practice be established in the EFL classroom?
- ▶ To what extent are students more willing to communicate in global issues course 4?
- ▶ To what extent are students' attitude towards English learning affected in global issues class course 4?
- ▶ To what extent are students interested in learning global issues?

To what extent can a community of practice be established in the EFL classroom?

From the participation observation, the community of practice as described by Wenger (2000) was apparent in the classroom. From the homework or research tasks the students clearly showed a level of accountability to their peers, and demonstrated their role in their respective groups. Wenger (2000) argued that it is through common practices that learners are able to gain access to a community. This observation was further supported by the interview where a student revealed to the question

Q2) Do you ever feel responsible for making sure that you research enough to inform your classmate?

“We have fifteen weeks, but I thought that was not enough to research correct information. In addition, this topic is not easy, and I don't have enough vocabulary to explain it.” (interview data, student 1, 23 October 2019)

In this instance the students demonstrated that they felt pressure due to the time period of the course, and worried how his lack of vocabulary impacted his peers, and worried how his lack of vocabulary impacted his peers.

It seems that the nature of the course also allowed students to view their language classroom as a community.

Q6) Do you view global issues as a group learning effort or an independent learning effort?

“I think group, because everyone should learn and discuss this issue and completely understand. These issues can’t be solved by alone, but it can be considered by the group.” (Interview data, Student 6, 23, October, 2019)

“Yes, we can help with each other, because global issue is very difficult topic, so we need to cooperate with each other.”
(Interview data, Student 8, 23, October 2019)

“I’m not sure. The group learning has some benefits like to share some information, but to search information is independent.”
(Interview data, Student 12, 23, October 2019)

Students realised that for learning to take place, they must collaboratively work together to think about these issues. However, as the last section expresses, students were also still able to consider their own role within the community.

Based on these findings, it is difficult to determine whether an imagined community can be created in a classroom setting, however, it is evident that the organisation of the course allowed students to create their own community and share information within it.

To what extent are students more willing to communicate in global issues Course 4?

The following section looks at students’ willingness to participate in class. In this particular section it is important to note Nakane (2007) claim of student to teacher dynamic affecting students’ WTC. Therefore, in this particular class the teacher would join the discussions with the students, displaying elements of surprise and curiosity to new knowledge learnt. The teacher also ensured that the students’ did not rely on them for knowledge and would shift questions to someone within a particular group. This was partly in efforts to weaken the ideology that the teacher has all the knowledge. However, it was mainly in efforts to emphasise the importance of communicating and sharing ideas as a group.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Before studying To what extent do you agree with the following statement? When studying global issues, I spoke i...際問題を学ぶ以前から授業中の発言回数が多かった。 global issues, I speak i...際問題を学んだ以降、授業中の発言回数が多かった。
16 responses 16 responses



Chart 1: Before studying global issues

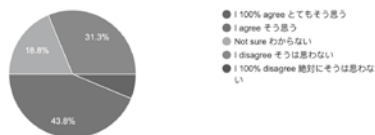


Chart 2: When studying global issues.

In the questionnaire, students were asked to compare students' speaking time prior to studying global issues and then asked about their speaking time now. Prior to studying global issues 25% of students thought that they spoke in class a lot, however, after studying global issues there was an increase of 25.10%. The researcher cannot conclusively determine the reason for this, but stipulates that having different discussion groups may have played a role in this. Student 7 also noted in their reason or being more interested in Course 4, that: *"I feel that I have many opportunities to speak"* (questionnaire data, student 7, 17, October, 2019). Additionally, when asked whether there were any differences in their behaviour/interaction in Course 4, 56.3% students noted that that there was a difference. See Chart 5, below.



Chart 5: Differences in behaviour/interaction in your global issues class compared to other English classes.

Two students noted in their answers, that Course 4 was more than just learning grammar or structured sentences:

"Other class just teach vocabulary and sentence. Don't often teach communicate"
(questionnaire data, Student 6, 17, October, 2019)

"Other classes just learning English grammar."
(questionnaire data, Student 13, 17, October, 2019)

Gorsuch (1998) and Nakane (2007) spoke about the negative affect of focusing on grammar, and not how to communicate. By eliminating explicit grammar teaching it seems that the students may have been able to focus on expressing their opinions more. Thus, leading to more communication being done in the classroom. From the participant observation, the researcher also agrees that students were typically more active and willing to share their research as well as their opinions more openly, without the need for prompts or lots of encouragement. There were periods of silence at times when students felt that the discussion came to its natural end, however, compared to the researchers' other class this appears to be less frequent. Student 16 also shared that a reason for their difference in behaviour/ interaction was because they were able to *"Share information and opinions gathered in English instead of your own*

feelings” suggesting that some students may want to learn new knowledge that may possibly be unknown in their L1, instead of topics related to their feelings in order to be more willing to communicate.



Chart 6: Confidence using English before global issues.

Chart 7: confidence using English after global issues.

An interesting point to note is that although there was not a significant difference in their confidence in their English ability, students still demonstrated more willingness to communicate in course 4. In fact, there was a 12.5% increase in the number of students who did not feel confident in their English ability, and a 6.5% increase in students who were more confident. Due to the nature of reflective questions, the students that previously chose ‘not sure’ changed their answers in the second question. Therefore, it may be possible that there were no changes at all, a negative change, or a positive change. However, further research is needed to describe this phenomenon. It may be that confidence may not play as big a role in willingness to communicate as previously thought.

To what extent are students’ attitude towards English learning affected in global issues class course 4?

As highlighted by Dornyei (2005), Bartman (2010) and Dornyei and Ushida (2011) attitude is a major factor in motivation and can be used by language teachers to understand what makes students more interactive in the classroom. Vaske and Grantham (1993) talk about the evaluation influencing, or possibly, determining the reaction to a particular thing, or situation. Therefore, if the evaluation is negative, the likelihood is that the reaction will most likely be negative also. What is interesting to note here is that the general consensus amongst Course 4, was that they were generally interested in studying English prior to global issues. Only 6.5% said that they were not sure or was not interested (see chart 8). The results demonstrate that their interest in English may have improved slightly, with a 50/50 split between ‘very interested’ and ‘interested’ in learning English (see chart 9). However, since the difference is not significant, it cannot be deemed conclusive.

Before studying global issues I was: 国際問題を勉強する以前、私は:
16 responses



Chart 8: Participants interest in learning English before studying global issues.

Since studying global issues I am: 国際問題を勉強して以来、私は:
16 responses



Chart 9: Participants interest in learning English when studying global issues

Furthermore, when asked: **‘has your idea of English learning changed in any way since studying global issues?’** 43.8% of students agreed that learning global issues had impacted their idea of English learning (see chart 10).

Has your idea of English learning changed in any way since studying global issues? 国際問題を勉強して以来、...に対する考え方の変化はありましたか?
16 responses

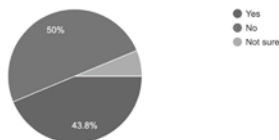


Chart 10: Participants response to their idea of English being changed.

If the participant answered yes, then the following question asked in what way had it changed. One student noted that their focus had shift to wanting to learn about issues related to global issues, and talk about these issues. Another student was able to use English to further connections with domestic issues and international issues. Thus, furthering their interest in learning more.

“I felt I wanted to be able to explain examples related to international issues in English”
(questionnaire data, Student 7, 17, October, 2019)

“If I thought it was a global problem, I was surprised that it was actually a domestic problem, and vice versa.”
(questionnaire data, Student 3, 17, October, 2019)

Other students noted how they wanted to further their English knowledge due to learning about global issues. This suggest that although they were previously interested in learning English, learning about global issues may have peaked their interest further. Thus, displaying a positive attitude towards learning English.

“I want to learn English more.”

(questionnaire data, Student 15, 17, October, 2019)

“I felt that I wanted to be able to use English more”

(questionnaire data, Student 16, 17, October, 2019)

It also appears that students may have somewhat used their global issues knowledge in English to expand or join a new community. One student notes how they were able to use already established friendships as a tool, not just for learning about global issues, but for other knowledge too. Another was able to realise their ability to join a new community as they were able to communicate in English with people other than their classmates.

“I found getting many information from friends who are from other country is very valuable, not only global issues though.”

(questionnaire data, Student 11, 17, October, 2019)

“I can talk in English with other people.”

(questionnaire data, Student 10, 17, October, 2019)

Therefore, the researcher argues that the findings suggests that global issues content may have played a major role in allowing students to envision future possibilities, by exposing them to alternative imagined communities (Kanno, 2003; Chang, 2011). Lee (2008) argued against the typical practices of language teaching due to it lacking the ability to take into account the students' identity. Yashima and Zenuk-Nishide (2008), spoke about the possibility of the learner becoming more isolated because of classroom practices, however, it appears students that the global issues topics led to students feel more connected. Yoneyama (1999) identified having a strong grammar focus in the classroom had a negative effect on students, which led to 'normative behaviour'. Therefore, by taking the focus away from grammar, specific sentence structures and giving students more autonomy over their learning it appears that the 'normative behaviour' described can be unlearned (Gorsuch, 1998). Additionally, McGregor and Maede (2003) demonstrated how attempting to replicate the study abroad experience in the classroom may allow students to view English and the possibility of joining their imagined community more tangible. What would be interesting is to see is if the interaction within the global issues class led to a change in behaviour in the other classes taken by students. However, it is not within the scope of this research to do so. Nevertheless, it is clear that a change in topic may has in some ways affected students' attitude towards English, as well as making their imagined

community more tangible and possibly more accessible.

To what extent are students interested in learning global issues?

As the results above demonstrates, students seem to enjoy studying global issues and have gained a stronger interest in learning English. However, it is important to note their interest in global English over the typical general English courses. From this, the researcher hopes to identify particular reasons why students enjoy certain courses. Thus, chart 11, asks students to identify which class topics they were more motivated / interested to learn in.

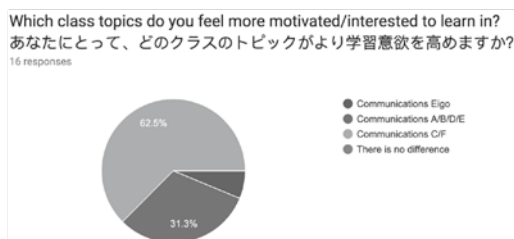


Chart 1 1: Which class topics do you feel more motivated/interested to learn in?

From the results above 62.5% of students chose the global issues class (course 4) as the one that they are most motivated or interested in. Three students explicitly stated that they were interested in learning about these issues, thus allowing students to obtain new knowledge and learning English at the same time.

“I am interested in international issues, especially gender issues.”

(questionnaire data, Student 3, 17, October, 2019)

“I’m interested in international issues”

(questionnaire data, Student 16, 17, October, 2019)

“Because I’m interested in that as I told you before”

(questionnaire data, Student 11, 17, October, 2019)

Norton (2000) stated investments made in a second language is due to learners wanting to enhance their cultural capital, which can be done by acquiring different symbolic and material supply in various situations. Perhaps these learners viewed that this knowledge would enhance their cultural capital within their community. However, a follow-up interview would perhaps reveal more thoughts regarding these statements. Another learner made a similar statement:

“This class’s topic is a worthwhile.”

(Interview data, Student 13, 17, October, 2019)

Suggesting that they place particular value on learning more than what the other courses have to offer. Cummins and Davidson (2007) also noted a shift from the dichotomous input-output cognitive approach, to placing learners and viewing learners as members of a larger social construct, with varying communities and varying interaction between members of a particular community

Cummins and Davidson (2007) spoke about the importance of learners being viewed as members of a larger unit that displays various interactions between members. The AAA – ABC diagram displayed above aimed to replicate this idea, encouraging students to view their own identity and their own role, while maintaining that they are part of a community with a specific role within each community.

“Because there is a discussion”

(questionnaire data, Student 1, 17, October, 2019)

“I can exchange oppinions (opinions) with friends and know more academic words.”

(questionnaire data, Student 12, 17, October, 2019)

Here, one of the learners clearly identified the importance of interacting and learning from their peers. Which suggests that the facilitative role assumed by the teacher may have had some impact in allowing students to view each other as members of a community each with knowledge and resource to share. This supports Kanno (2003) claim that the autocratic nature of the student-teacher relationship may negatively affect students’ way of engaging in the classroom. Perhaps due to having less hierarchy within the classroom students may have been able to engage more frequently.

Moreover, not all students agreed. 31.3% of students felt that they were more motivated to learn in course 3. A student found the class particularly challenging:

“Easy to understand (course 3) compared to C and F (course 4). I didn’t have the necessary English skills to express the problems and solutions of international problems in English” (questionnaire data, Student 4, 17, October, 2019)

Wenger (2000) argued that learning occurs at the boundary where students are challenged and their competence and experience are not entwined, but there is a manageable gap. Perhaps for this particular student, competence and experience were too far apart; causing more challenges to occur than learning. However, this student

chose ‘not interested’ in learning English prior to studying global issues, then ‘interested’ in learning English after studying global issues. Suggesting that global issues may have played a role in them understanding their identity more in order to form a more accurate idea of what imagined English community they wish to be a part of. Similarly, two students spoke about the communicative aspects of course 3, which could be linked to the notion of identity and imagined community.

“I’m interesting about communicate.”

(questionnaire data, Student 4, 17, October, 2019)

It may be that this particular students’ idea of communication and using English was not realised within course 4, as the language and type of discussions being had within course 4 did not match their imagined community. This student also gave a similar response when asked about the topic that they felt more motivated or interested to learn:

“It focus about communication. Speaking to friends and discuss (discuss).”

(questionnaire data, Student 17, 17, October, 2019)

Therefore, this emphasises that this student’s imagined community involved using for daily conversation purposes. Interestingly however, this student acknowledged that in global issues there was a strong focus on communication:

“Other class (courses 1, 2, and 3) just teach vocabulary and sentence. Don’t often teach communicate.” (questionnaire data, Student 6, 17, October, 2019)

Therefore, it may be the style and the discussion elements of course 4 that the student enjoyed more so than the topics itself.

Conclusion

From the above discussion it is clear that a community of practice as described by Wenger (2000) can in fact be implemented within the EFL classroom. It appears that by creating a class structure that is quick and easy to learn, but giving students challenging knowledge at the boundary can create a collaborative network where students are able to have more agency within their learning, but still participate as a member of a community. The structure of EFL class interactions can be changed to allow students to become used to particular practices. Rather than short classes that put strong emphasis on grammar, if the class is able to learn a particular topic over a longer

period of time, with the role of each participating member made clear there can be strong alignment within the community. The discussion also demonstrates aspects of the future possibilities of members being realised. Thus, emphasising the importance of exposing members to more than one different imagined community as highlighted by Chang (2011).

To some extent community of practice led to the engagement and interactions of members being increased. Although members were tasked at certain points to further their knowledge of a particular area, the group decided what their main aspects were and had to pool their knowledge together in order to negotiate what information to prioritise and was necessary for the other members of the community. However, it seems that the topics of global issues also played a role. Students were overall more interested in global issues, which may have led to their willingness to communicate. It seems that it was no longer the structure of the language that was their focus, but the ability and opportunity to communicate their ideas. Students were much more inclined to participate at the site of new knowledge, and or different perspectives.

Furthermore, by having the knowledge and the sharing of information the forefront of the class' CoP, it would be natural to assume that the English learning would be secondary. In fact, this proved to be a particular driving force, especially when it came to students feeling a sense of responsibility to their community. If they wanted to interact more, they had to gain new knowledge, whether it be through their L1 or their L2, but in order to share their gained knowledge they would have to use L2 to emphasise their commitment to the community. Baker and MacIntyre (2000) discussed the importance of students being able to fully immerse in a particular programme to allow students to interact more to further engagement, which was highlighted in this study.

Therefore, the current researcher advocates for CoP aided by global issues to be brought into the language classroom. However, this is not in replacement of classes that explicitly teach grammar, nor is it advocating for it to be replaced by general English classes. Instead, it should be used to further engage learners and provide an outlet for their interest. However, at university level regardless of the students' language level their needs to be more engaging and interactive topics used. Although the classroom structure should not be completely replaced, this study advocates for a change in the topic choices. Having global issues has been demonstrated in this study as being engaging and enhancing students' interest in their language learning, which could prove beneficial for many students. It would also allow for compulsory language students to bring their prior knowledge and perspectives to discuss these issues. A limitation of this particular study is that it did not objectively measure whether the students actually improved their language level. For a further study, testing the students on the vocabulary that they used in their writing or presentations would allow for some measurement on the students' language learning.

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