

Preparing students for global-mindedness through ELT: Integrating global issues into classroom practices

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Abstract Higher education nowadays is undergoing dramatic internationalization in response to globalization process. One of the internationalizing trends is to raise students' global-mindedness through English language teaching practices. First coined by Hett (1993), the concept global-mindedness was categorized into five dimensions, namely responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness. Since students from Foreign Trade University are expected to deal with their future jobs in intercultural contexts, preparing global-minded students should be prioritized. Therefore, this study attempts to investigate (1) how ELT teachers perceive the importance of global-mindedness preparation and (2) what effort they have made to integrate global issues into their teaching practices in terms of language-teaching content and course design, methods, materials, and extracurricular activities. The study employs qualitative approach with empirical data collected through in-depth interview with 20 ELT teachers at Foreign Trade University. The study is significant as it contributes to the literature of the internationalization of higher education and its findings offers useful implications for English language education in the globalized world.

Key words: global-mindedness, global issues, internationalization, globalization

Introduction

Globalization is seen as the key reality in the 21st century and is defined as “the reality shaped by an increasingly integrated world economy, new information and communications technology, the emergence of an international knowledge network, the role of the English language, and other forces beyond the control of academic institution” (Altbach et al., 2009:7). In this global context, higher education programs are being internationalized to respond to globalization.

Global-mindedness becomes one of the skills that university students need to be equipped with for their future personal and professional development. This can be done through the teaching of English as a foreign language. However, the extent to which universities in Vietnam promote global-mindedness has not been explored throughout the literature. Therefore, this paper

aims at investigating the extent to which university teachers have implemented their strategies for promoting their students' global-mindedness.

Based on Hett's theoretical framework (Hett, 1993) on measuring students' global-mindedness, the study looks at five dimensions which are responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness. Within the scope of this study, the author investigates Foreign Trade University only.

This study discusses a number of issues regarding the incorporation of a global perspective into English language teaching. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Are teachers of English aware of the need for improving students' global-mindedness?
- What strategies have teachers done to improve five specific dimensions in Hett's framework?
- What are the implications for English language education for globalization?

In the first part, I will introduce the concept of global-mindedness in the context of globalization. Then, I will connect English language teaching with global-mindedness to highlight the role of promoting global-minded learners in English language teaching. In the next part, I will discuss the findings of my interviews with EFL teachers regarding experiences in and attitudes to incorporating a global perspective into foreign language education. Finally, implications for ELT teaching and learning in global context will be made towards the end of my study.

Globalization and the need for preparing students for global-mindedness

Globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon that connects global flows of knowledge, power, economy, technologies, people, values and ideas across borders with a variety of affects. National lines are blurring, citizens of the world are blending, and the cultures of different peoples are fusing (Langenfeld & Nieberding, 2005). The world is now undergoing global changes, which can be grouped into three fundamental trends: (1) the increasingly technological world, (2) the increasingly borderless world, and (3) the increasingly polarized world (Ordonez, 1999)

Globalization asserts a greater presence in the realm of education. In response to globalization, policies and programs that universities and governments implement are being internationalized. It is now possible to see two basic aspects evolving in the internationalization

of higher education: ‘internationalization at home’, including activities that help students to develop an international awareness and intercultural skills; and ‘internationalization abroad’, including all forms of education across borders: mobility of students and faculty staff, mobility of projects, programs, and providers (Knight, 2008 cited in de Wit, 2011).

In the process of internationalization at home, universities need to focus on equipping their students with international awareness and intercultural skills so as to compete and collaborate in international contexts. When joining the job market, graduates may be offered increasing opportunities in the global marketplace for work assignments to other countries; or working for international projects within the home country, alongside with people from other nations. Therefore, the need for students and employees to be prepared with ‘global’ skills in their approach to career development has become increasingly vital.

These skills are often referred to as “global-mindedness”. The term global-mindedness is first coined by Hett (1993) who designed an instrument to measure it. Global mindedness is defined as “a worldview in which ones sees oneself as connected to the world community and feels a sense of responsibility for its members and reflect this commitment through demonstrated attitudes, beliefs and behaviours” (Hett, 1993:143). A highly global-minded person recognizes that people from other cultures think, argue, and perceive things very differently and has a “strong sense of appreciation of diversity and differences” (Hansen, 2010: 7) which drives their deep concern for other people in all parts of the world and their feelings of moral responsibility to try to improve their conditions. According to Hett, high levels of global-mindedness emphasize the development of responsibility, awareness, and appreciation based on global, rather than ethnocentric or national standards. In her research, Hett concludes that individuals, who are sensitive to those differences, respond much better in a global context. Despite minor differences, global-mindedness is used synonymously with international-mindedness and world-mindedness.

To improve the conditions of these culturally diverse and different peoples, globally minded people require generic skills such as: “creativity and innovation; inquiry skills, problem solving, and critical thinking; information technology; communication and collaboration; and the ability to be self-directed and flexible in a cross-cultural arena” (DeMello, 2011: 45-46).

In her research, Hett identified five dimensions of global-mindedness, which are responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness.

1. *Responsibility*: A deep personal concern for people in all parts of the world which surfaces as a sense of moral responsibility to try and improve their conditions in some way.

2. *Cultural pluralism*: An appreciation of the diversity of cultures in the world and a belief that all have something of value to offer. This is accompanied by taking pleasure in exploring and trying to understand other cultural frameworks.
3. *Efficacy*: A belief that an individual's actions can make a difference and that involvement in national and international issues is important.
4. *Global centrism*: Thinking in terms of what is good for the global community, not just what will benefit one's own country. A willingness to make judgments based on global, not ethnocentric, standards.
5. *Interconnectedness*: An awareness and appreciation of the interrelatedness of all peoples and nations which results in a sense of global belonging or kinship with the human family (Hett, 1993).

Through the interviews of 30 questions (Appendix A), Hett concludes that students who had taken 7 or more globally-oriented courses scored the highest on the GMS while students who had taken only one or no global studies courses scored the lowest on the GMS. Moreover, a significant difference was revealed through the use of the Tukey-B, post hoc comparison technique between students who had taken less than three globally-oriented courses compared to those who had taken five or more (Hett, 1993:129). These results suggest including courses related to global issues would indicate a stronger global-mindedness perspective, and faculty are critical in providing a more global dimension in courses.

Preparing a globally minded workforce will require students and employees to change the ways they think and talk about themselves. Rather than perceiving themselves as workers per se, people need to develop a mindset that they are global workers and view cross-cultural interactions as the norm for participation in the labour force. This will require considerable attitudinal change by students and employees, and also the people of influence around them, including their teachers.

Foreign language teaching in general and English language teaching in particular can be considered as a globally-oriented courses since through its global language, it introduces a global perspective to those who learn this language. As claimed by Yakovchuk (2004), the foreign language classroom is essentially a meeting point between at least two (but in fact more) languages and cultures, and this is already a step towards a global perspective. In the literature, one can find numerous practical examples of attempts to introduce global education into the foreign language classroom. For instance, Cates (2002) suggests that global awareness can be promoted through classroom activities, which include language-teaching content, methods, materials, course design, teacher training, and extracurricular activities. Yoshimura (1993) suggests ways in which

global issues can be introduced to children at a beginner's level. Sargent (1993) discusses how dealing with conflict resolution may help students to improve their communicative language skills. Henry (1993) describes a 'Model United Nations' simulation for Japanese high school students. Hinkelman (1993) describes the role of overseas study tours in promoting both global awareness and language acquisition for English language learners. Anderson (1996) provides some general guidelines on 'injecting' global ideas into the foreign language classroom.

Foreign Trade University is one of the universities in Vietnam that involve "foreign" factors in its programs. Trained to become professionals in international trade, importation and exportation, international business, etc., FTU students are expected to work in a multinational and multicultural working environment after graduation. Therefore, raising their global awareness crucially helps build up their personal and professional capacity necessary for their future success.

In the following parts, I will investigate the effort made by EFL teachers at Foreign Trade University in Hanoi, where I am working, in raising students' global-mindedness.

Methodology

Context

In this study, Hett's global-mindedness scale is utilized to investigate what strategies teachers of English at Foreign Trade University have employed to promote the global mindedness among their students. Interview questions cover five dimensions in Hett's framework of global-mindedness, i.e., responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness. At FTU, global-mindedness is yet to receive attention from the Faculty or University leaders. Therefore, developing global mindedness among students is limited to teachers' individual effort.

Participants

20 teachers from Faculty of English for Specific Purposes and Faculty of Business English were invited to join semi-structured interviews. 10 of them have gone abroad for more than 1 month, either in a degree course or a non degree trip, or participated in an international education program in Vietnam. The other 10 have never gone abroad or joined any international/intercultural community. They were asked about their experience in teaching first year students, since first year students are freshly exposed to learning English from a communicative approach, rather than from a grammar-translation approach at schools.

Therefore, the role of teachers in helping students to be more globally minded can be clearly evaluated.

Data collection

Participating teachers were asked the following questions. Questions are designed based on five dimensions developed by Hett (1993) and the areas of teaching practices suggested by Cates (2002). The terms responsibility, cultural pluralism, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness were explained to them to ensure they fully understand what these terms in Hett's scale mean.

1. Are you aware of the importance of developing your students' global mindedness? Have you ever tried to incorporate global education in your lessons?
2. What have you done to promote students' responsibility in terms of language-teaching content and course design, methods, materials, and extracurricular activities?
3. What have you done to promote students' cultural pluralism in terms of language-teaching content and course design, methods, materials, and extracurricular activities?
4. What have you done to promote students' efficacy in terms of language-teaching content and course design, methods, materials, and extracurricular activities?
5. What have you done to promote students' global centrism in terms of language-teaching content and course design, methods, materials, and extracurricular activities?
6. What have you done to promote students' interconnectedness in terms of language-teaching content and course design, methods, materials, and extracurricular activities?

Their answers were recorded and then analyzed according the four aspects which are teaching content and course design, teaching methods, materials, and extracurricular activities.

Data Analysis

Q1: Are you aware of the importance of developing students' global-mindedness? Have you ever tried to incorporate global education in your lessons?

17 out of 20 respondents are aware that global mindedness is necessary in preparing students for the globalized world. However, only 15 teachers have made certain effort to integrate global perspectives into their teaching, of which 4 teachers have made significant effort and 7 teachers have made little effort while 4 teachers have never tried to integrate even though they know it is important. The other 3 teachers say that they do not care about such issues, but merely follow the syllabus designed by the Faculty. Therefore, in the analysis of later questions, only the answers by 15 teachers who have made big or small effort to incorporate global issues into their teaching will be discussed. It is worth noting that all 10 teachers who have been abroad

before are aware of the importance of educating their students to be more global-minded and have made certain effort to make changes in their teaching in order to do so.

Q2: What have you done to promote students' responsibility?

(Responsibility: A deep personal concern for people in all parts of the world which surfaces as a sense of moral responsibility to try and improve their conditions in some way.)

Participating teachers say that Vietnamese university students have very little concern for people in the world or rarely wish to improve the poor conditions of people in difficulties. According to teachers, this may be explained by the fact that Vietnam is not yet a rich country where its inhabitants are still struggling for a basic living standard. That accounts for the fact that they only care about their own lives before they can think about lives for others. Having realized this, interviewed teachers have tried to link students to the wider world and concepts such as social responsibility and world citizenship.

- language-teaching content and course design: introducing global issues related to disasters and problems facing other countries in teaching speaking (10/15 teachers), writing (9/15 teachers), grammar through tasks of building sentences based on the global topics (3/11 teachers), reading (2/11 teachers) and listening (1/11 teachers)
- methods: role-play (10/15 teachers), group discussion (10/15 teachers), presentations (6/15 teachers), writing tasks (6/15 teachers).
- materials: textbook Market Leader and Skillful (15/15 teachers); extra reading passages with terminologies related to global issues (4 teachers); extra audios and videos related to global issues (3 teachers)
- extracurricular activities: No

Q3: What have you done to promote students' cultural pluralism?

(Cultural pluralism: An appreciation of the diversity of cultures in the world and a belief that all have something of value to offer. This is accompanied by taking pleasure in exploring and trying to understand other cultural frameworks.)

All 15 teachers say they have incorporated cultural pluralism in their teaching through a variety of activities. They also indicate that 'cultural pluralism' is the easiest dimension to integrate into their teaching.

- language-teaching content and course design: sharing teachers' own intercultural experience (8/15 teachers),; creating speaking role play situation in which people from different countries work together (13/15); teaching about cross-cultural communication, including cultural shock (3/15 teachers)

- methods: essay writing tasks (8 teachers), group discussion (6/15 teachers), presentation (5/15 teachers).
- materials: textbook Market Leader with cross-cultural situations (15/15 teachers), Skillful (10/15 teachers), Youtube videos (8/15 teachers), teachers' free talk (4/15 teachers), inviting foreign volunteers or guest speakers to class to share about their countries (5/15 teachers).
- extracurricular activities: encouraging students to watch movies made by other countries or make friends with foreigners (12/15 teachers), encouraging students to work part-time as tour guide for foreigners (5/15 teachers), University's exchange program (mentioned by teachers but not done in class).

Q4: What have you done to promote students' efficacy?

(Efficacy: A belief that an individual's actions can make a difference and that involvement in national and international issues is important.)

Respondent teachers say that they have brought up global issues such as environment issues, terrorism, human rights issues, health concerns, intercultural communication issues, etc. to be topics for discussion in speaking and writing lessons. Choosing materials for listening and reading that cover global topics is another strategy that teachers say they do. Teachers also use these topics for problem-solving skills.

- language-teaching content and course design: problem-solution and opinion essay writing (9/15 teachers), students making presentations on global topics (7/15 teachers), grammar, e.g. teaching Conditionals (4/15 teachers),
- methods: group discussion (13/15 teachers), problem-solution essay writing (8/15 teachers), video watching (4/15 teachers).
- materials: textbook Market Leader and Skillful (14/15 teachers); youtube video (e.g. Emma Watson talk) (8/15 teachers), striking news on BBC/CNN (3/15 teachers),
- extracurricular activities: University's English speaking contest

Q5: What have you done to promote students' global centrism?

(Global centrism: Thinking in terms of what is good for the global community, not just what will benefit one's own country. A willingness to make judgments based on global, not ethnocentric, standards.)

According to interviewed teachers, students at FTU and in Vietnam generally don't have a strong sense of global centrism, as they don't have the habit of thinking for the sake of the whole world. This is mainly because global issues are yet to be inserted into school curriculum. Teachers also claim that it is difficult to promote global centrism because this requires students

to actually go outside Vietnam to experience the cross-national perspectives. Therefore, while making effort to promote global centrism, teachers have focused on imagined situations.

- language-teaching content and course design: problem-solution speaking (10/15 teachers) or writing tasks (10/15 teachers),
- methods: students making presentations on social issues such as global warming or global organizations/companies such as WHO (5/15 teachers); lesson warm-up with small chat about the striking news related to disaster or terrorism (2/15 teachers)
- materials: Market Leader and Skillful books (8/15 teachers)
- extracurricular activities: encouraging students to join University's English speaking contest and English club

Q6: What have you done to promote students' interconnectedness?

(Interconnectedness: An awareness and appreciation of the interrelatedness of all peoples and nations which results in a sense of global belonging or kinship with the human family)

Teachers say that interconnectedness is the most difficult dimension to promote, since this concept is a more abstract than the other four dimensions and that everyone has their own national identity against people in other nations. Vietnamese students are no exception – they feel the differences between themselves and people elsewhere in the world.

- language-teaching content and course design: problem-solution writing and speaking tasks (5/15 teachers); listening and reading practice with global topics (4/15 teachers).
- methods: role play; small chat about the striking news related to disaster or terrorism (2/15 teachers)
- materials: textbook Market leader and Skillful (7/15 teachers), world news (2/15 teachers)
- extracurricular activities: University's English speaking contest

Discussion

It can be seen that teachers are limitedly aware of the necessity of promoting global minded learners. Those who have themselves experienced living in international environments are more likely to inspire and share with their students about global issues through reflection of their own experience. Once they acknowledge the important of global-mindedness, they have made certain effort to incorporate this element into their teaching content, materials and methodology. Therefore, it can be concluded that in order for teachers to have motivation for preparing students to be global-minded citizens, it is essential that universities provide some teacher training about global awareness by sending teachers abroad or organizing seminars.

Among the five dimensions categorized by Hett (1993), improving cultural pluralism, responsibility, efficacy, global centrism, and interconnectedness are sorted in the difficulty level, from the easiest to the most difficult problems. It also seems that the teachers only stop at teaching global issues and cultures but fail to develop students' global skills and attitudes. The participant ELT teachers have taught global-mindedness through integrating global issues found in textbooks, films, music, movies, newspapers, etc. into four main areas: teaching content and course design, teaching methods, materials, and extra-curriculum activities.

Regarding teaching content and course design, teachers are most likely to integrate global issues into speaking, writing and grammar teaching. Teachers find it easiest to implement the global-mindedness development in teaching speaking, writing, and grammar because teachers have more room for creativity in organizing activities and selecting materials. Speaking activities include group discussion, role-play, presentation, and teacher's talk. Writing tasks involve group brainstorming, and essay writing on topics of global issues. Problem-solution essays, opinion essays, pros-and-cons essays can help students to raise their responsibility, efficacy, and global centrism. In grammar, students are asked to make sentences using Unreal Conditional to imagine consequences of a possible disaster. Then comes listening and reading teaching, which is more difficult than speaking, writing and grammar since it is more difficult to find listening and reading materials relevant in both question types and topics. Involving foreign volunteers in the class is another way to raise global awareness among students, specially the cultural pluralism.

Teaching methodology involves mainly student-centredness to make students more active, confident and motivated to come up with solutions to discussed problems. Student-centered methodology also empowers students to raise their voice and share their opinions in class, thus feeling more responsible and taking initiatives in matters happening around them. Students are encouraged to talk, write, and share their opinion in class to avoid being passive learners. Therefore, group work and pair work are favoured by teachers.

Regarding teaching materials, textbooks used at FTU are Market Leader and Skillful series. These new textbook generations involves more global topics. For example, in all levels of Market Leader 3rd edition series, there are 1 section called "working across culture" after every 3 units, where students can practice listening and speaking in multi-cultural contexts. Skillful books also offer a wide range of topics for general English learning, e.g. big family versus small family where teachers can ask students to compare differences between family size in Vietnam and in Western countries. Teachers have also selected extra materials other than textbooks.

There are limited extracurricular activities designed by teachers at FTU. This might be explained by the fact that teachers are restricted to the Faculty syllabus, or given no support by Faculty, or have no time for organizing those activities. The only extracurricular activity offered at FTU is the speaking contest and a number of exchange programs. However, this can accommodate only a limited number of students. Other ideas for extracurricular activities are seminars, overseas tour, volunteering work or internship to international organization, etc. to introduce students to different perspectives, way of life, cultures, and social conditions (Selby, 1999). However, teachers need support from the Faculty and University in order to organize those activities.

The difficulties facing teachers involve the selection of content, insufficient experience and awareness of teachers themselves. Which global issues to include in the syllabus in a particular teaching context seems to be the most salient problems that teachers encounter. The second problem is in organizing learning activities that involves global issues, but still follow Faculty-designed syllabus. The limited awareness, as discussed above, is the main barrier that deters teachers from making effort to teach global-mindedness to their students.

Conclusion

The study aimed at investigating different measures adopted by ELT teachers at Foreign Trade University, Hanoi with a view to prepare students to be global-minded citizens. The study concludes that during the five dimensions of global-mindedness categorized by Hett's, cultural pluralism can be practiced most easily by teachers. Responsibility, efficacy, and global centrism stand in the middle of the difficulty list. Interconnectedness is claimed to be the most difficult dimension to practice in the classroom.

To better develop university students' global-mindedness, it is essential that teachers' awareness of global-mindedness be raised. Besides, teachers also need sufficient competence to integrate global issues into their teaching practices. In order for this to happen, teachers need support from the Faculty and University, which can be in the form of teacher training for global education to make teachers better-prepared. This is currently not yet offered at Foreign Trade University and also other universities. Universities should take into account organizing activities such as seminars, workshops or short courses which will enrich their knowledge and skills to develop teaching courses and materials.

While the study takes Foreign Trade University as a case study due to author's convenience and accessibility, and the limited scope and time, its findings are beneficial for 'global' English language teaching and contribute to the literature of internationalization of higher education in Vietnam. Further research can be conducted on a larger scale with more participating universities, so that the findings can be more generalized.

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APPENDIX A: Hett's Global-Mindedness Scale

(Respondents are asked to choose one number from 1-5 for the following statements)

Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

Disagree (D) = 2

Unsure (U) = 3

Agree (A) = 4

Strongly Agree (SA) = 5

- 1 I generally find it stimulating to spend an evening talking with people from another culture.
- 2 I feel an obligation to speak out when I see our government doing something I consider wrong.
- 3 The United States is enriched by the fact that it is comprised of many people from different cultures and countries.
- 4 Really, there is nothing I can do about the problems of the world.
- 5 The needs of the United States must continue to be our highest priority over needs of other countries.
- 6 I often think about the kind of world we are creating for future generations.
- 7 When I hear that thousands of people are starving in an African country, I feel very frustrated.
- 8 Americans can learn something of value from all different cultures.
- 9 Generally, an individual's actions are too small to have a significant effect on the ecosystem.
- 10 Americans should be permitted to pursue the standard of living they can afford if it only has a slight negative impact on the environment.
- 11 I think of myself, not only as a citizen of my country, but also as a citizen of the world.
- 12 When I see the conditions some people in the world live under, I feel a responsibility to do something about it.
- 13 I enjoy trying to understand people's behavior in the context of their culture.
- 14 My opinions about national policies are based on how those policies might affect the rest of the world as well as the United States.
- 15 It is very important to me to choose a career in which I can have a positive effect on quality of life for future generations.
- 16 American values are probably the best.
- 17 In the long run, America will probably benefit from the fact that the world is becoming more interconnected.
- 18 The fact that a flood can kill 50,000 people in Bangladesh is very depressing to me.
- 19 It is important that American schools, universities, and colleges provide programs designed to promote understanding among students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.
- 20 I think my behaviour can impact people in other countries.
- 21 The present distribution of the world's wealth and resources should be maintained because it promotes survival of the fittest.
- 22 I feel a strong kinship with the worldwide human family.

23 I feel very concerned about the lives of people who live in politically repressive regimes.

24 It is important that we educate people to understand the impact that current policies might have on future generations.

25 It is not really important to me to consider myself as a member of the global community.

26 I sometimes try to imagine how a person who is always hungry must feel.

27 I have very little in common with people in underdeveloped nations.

28 I am able to affect what happens on a global level by what I do in my own community.

29 I sometimes feel irritated with people from other countries because they don't understand how we do things here

30 Americans have a moral obligation to share their wealth with the less fortunate peoples of the world.

Items reflecting theoretical dimensions:

RESPONSIBILITY: 2, 7, 12, 18, 23, 26, 30

CULTURAL PLURALISM: 1, 3, 8, 13, 14, 19, 24, 27

EFFICACY: 4, 9, 15, 20, 28

GLOBALCENTRISM: 5, 10, 16, 21, 29

INTERCONNECTEDNESS: 6, 11, 17, 22, 25