

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ANTI-BIAS FRAMEWORKS IN JAPANESE EFL TEXTBOOKS

Les cadres anti-biais sont utilisés par les éducateurs pour conscientiser les apprenants aux différences individuelles et culturelles. Ils sont particulièrement utiles dans le cadre des cours d'anglais langue étrangère pour aider les étudiants à développer leurs identités locales et internationales, pour communiquer, et pour guider les apprenants à aborder et à éliminer les préjugés. Cet article propose des suggestions pour inclure des activités anti-biais dans les cours d'anglais langue étrangère des écoles primaires, afin de faciliter l'émergence de véritables citoyens du monde.

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- 1 Defined as the *groups holding power and privilege in the social hierarchy*. Dominant groups define and set the standards by which minority groups are judged and in turn benefit from systems of inequality as they have greater access to resources (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).
- 2 With respect to the fact that dominant groups uphold institutionalized oppressive and violent systems

Introduction

Anti-Bias Frameworks (ABFs) are one way for educators to develop learners' global and cultural identities, their knowledge of social issues, and learners' appreciation of human differences and cultures. ABFs are of particular relevance in multicultural and multilingual textbooks and classrooms, such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, as they are used for helping students develop local and international identities and eliminate biases. Yet, current EFL elementary textbooks issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) (2018-2020) are not inclusive of ABFs. Consequently, there are myriad missed opportunities for teachers and learners to engage in anti-bias lessons for the facilitation of global citizenship through foreign language education class. MEXT, along with international organizations such as UNESCO, emphasize the importance of educational curricula as a means of contributing to a peaceful society (Deardroff, 2019; MEXT, 2019). As such, this paper offers ways to include

ABF activities in elementary school EFL classes for the facilitation of truly global citizens.

Literature Review

Although there is a tendency to view foreign language teaching for young learners as politically and ideologically "neutral," failure to adopt an anti-racist pedagogy, or to address injustices through restorative practices, negatively impacts both oppressed and dominant¹ group members in society. Oppressed groups experience violence and discrimination, while dominant groups internalize these systems and assume distorted perspectives of others, the world, and themselves (Bell, 2016). As such, both targeted and privileged groups are dehumanized by biases² (Freire, 1970). Curricula that omit social issues cannot, by definition, contribute to the amelioration of social problems or to the facilitation of anti-bias education, and therefore miss the opportunity to address ubiquitous systems of oppression, and to correct them.

The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework (Chiariello, 2016) is one ABF that can be used to support student development in social justice education. This ABF is a set of twenty anchor standards divided into quadrants: Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action. These standards guide learners through recognizing the legitimacy of multiple identities, all of the way to carrying out collective action to correct inequalities. EFL teachers are uniquely positioned to address culturally-disproportionate or stereotypical materials in the classroom as facilitators of intercultural communication. By “engage[ing] a range of anti-bias, multicultural and social justice issues” (Chiariello, 2016 p.2), teachers can reframe EFL education as an anti-bias learning opportunity.

Suggestions

The following sections offer suggestions for unpacking the Social Justice Standards outlined by Teaching Tolerance in the EFL elementary classroom.

Methods of Instruction

Teachers’ methods of instruction are paramount in integrating multiple perspectives and identities in class. In a critical analysis of four Japanese EFL textbooks for elementary grades 3-6 currently in use, I found that there are not detailed suggestions for teachers to authentically incorporate topics such as diversity in the EFL classroom (Efron, 2020). Instead, vague statements such as, “It is recommended to think about the differences and similarities between Japan and the uniqueness of other countries” (MEXT, 2018, p. 65 [translation]), and, “We would like children to nurture the foundation where they can experience diversity...” (MEXT, 2018 [translation]), leave teachers without specific techniques for developing students’ global mindsets. Some ways that teachers can integrate ABF anchors into their instruction are as follows.

<p>Building communities</p>	<p>Build trust in the classroom through implementing identity and community discussions. Team-building exercises, sharing personal stories (see the “Identity” section of this paper), and demonstrating patience as students open up build important bonds between students that are necessary to have thoughtful discussions on race, gender, language, ability, culture, etc. Model metacognitive thinking, apologizing, and reflection for students so that they see critical thinking and amend-making as natural processes for operating in the world.</p> <p>In Japanese classrooms in particular, where students demonstrate high levels of self-reported shyness (Harumi, 2010), it is important to emphasize that mistakes, growth, and voice are welcome.</p>
<p>Introducing social justice vocabulary</p>	<p>Contextualize as much vocabulary as possible. Most children need explicit vocabulary in order to discuss issues (Chiariello, 2016). This is especially true for language learners. For this reason, introduce relevant vocabulary words (<i>culture, stereotype, etc.</i>) while providing images and picture books as supplementary materials. When reading books that cover these topics, ask students for their own ideas and personal stories as well. Teachers can break class discussions down from “big ideas” (like <i>diversity</i>) into examples (like <i>family structures, languages, countries, etc.</i>) with the help of anchor charts. And finally, when referencing and scaffolding vocabulary, ask students to think about how different words might make someone feel. When necessary, discuss why words or stereotypes are harmful.</p> <p>It is important not to shy away from recognizing students’ skin tones or instances of inequality. For example, in a textbook’s image of a woman serving a man dinner, it is useful to pause and discuss stereotypical gender roles, rather than glossing over the image to address the textbook content alone. Doing so will also model critical reading for students. Consider having a word or image of the day to facilitate conversations.</p>
<p>Facilitating discussions</p>	<p>Although many companion textbooks guide teachers with phrases such as, “Have students notice the differences between...”, allow students to come to their <i>own</i> conclusions and make observations of main themes in the texts. Ask students what can be inferred from the text and images. If students demonstrate assumptions or stereotypes, ask them to provide evidence for their thinking.</p>
<p>Guiding student discussions</p>	<p>Teachers can model text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world connections while reading or thinking with the class. While engaged in a class read-aloud, pause to discuss the text to build language and meta-cognition. In addition to literary models such as predicting, making connections, and summarizing, ask students to identify problems in the texts (in pairs and groups) and think about solutions. Reciprocal reading activities will also help students deepen their discussions and critical thinking and reading skills. For example, in groups, have students designate clear roles, with one role being to identify why there might be a problem with the text or image. Reciprocal reading can also be used as warm-up speaking activities in class.</p>

Engage in critical reading	<p>Building off of the previous suggestion, critical reading helps students to examine how discrimination functions in school and beyond. When reading out loud, consider which groups are represented in the text and which groups are not; talk about similarities and differences between characters, think about what the author is trying to say about a group or individual; ask if students agree with that representation; read for stereotypes, linguistic biases, cultural imbalances, and unrealistic representations. (The reciprocal reading groups above are also useful here.)</p>
Student journals and reflection sheets	<p>Student journals are an important part of the reflective process. EFL learners can focus on recording their thoughts in any language / mix of languages/images. Some things students may want to include to help themselves process are Venn diagrams, pictures, journal entries, and questions. Using prompts such as, “I notice that...,” “I wonder why...,” “This reminds me of...”, support language development and deeper reflections.</p>
Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)	<p>CRT pedagogy in EFL classes supports both ABFs and students’ first cultures. For example, in many communal countries, speaking out individually or sharing one’s opinion may not be prioritized. To help students collectively create meaning, work in small groups first, before presenting the option to share with the class.</p>
Language adjustment	<p>Depending on the English level of students, teachers’ English levels should be adjusted to allow for the most effective communication, particularly when engaging in important discussions on cultural identity, justice, or diversity. Language adjustment may look like translanguaging, engaging students initially in their first languages, or another blend of language use.</p>

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Because language learners are rarely encouraged to reflect on textbooks’ cultural representations (Canale, 2016), group and class discussions offer an opportunity for students to consider the cultural content of class materials, leading to the exploration of their own cultures, and others. A lack of discussion on culture and language beyond literal examples in textbooks can “fail to foster the appreciation of cultural differences in a constructive manner and are inappropriate for the development of intercultural awareness” (Dendrinos, 2015, p. 36). The dialectical interaction of materials with actual discussion practices in the classroom can heavily impact anti-bias learning.

Considering the learning environments of students’ home cultures is also important when guiding group discussions. In elementary school classes in Japan, for example, the implicit goal is for students

to arrive at a unified consensus (as approved by the teacher). However, the EFL teacher should encourage students by reminding them that anti-bias thinking necessitates the incorporation of multiple perspectives and open-ended discussions.

Activity Suggestions

Plethora of activities for EFL classrooms abound the Internet, but when held under an ABF microscope, many of these activities fall short of encouraging social action for the promotion of anti-bias thinking. In the case of Japanese elementary school EFL textbooks, content primarily portrays Japanese culture and relies on cursory, superficial inclusion of cultural practices from outside of Japan to introduce students to the world through (Efron, 2020). For example, there are no mentions, in any of the four textbooks I analyzed, of Japanese people living abroad or of non-Japanese people, Indigenous groups, or half Japanese people living in Japan, envisaging the idea of global monoculturalism. Cultures outside of Japan are introduced in the textbooks through Japanese narrators who travel to other countries or who are stereotypically representative of their supposed countries evidenced by statements such as, ‘I’m from the Philippines. I want to be a fruit shop owner’ (p. 60).

Through the inclusion of Teaching Tolerance’s ABF, however, EFL teachers can address misrepresentations and disproportionate inclusions in their textbooks. In order to consider how these social justice standards can be utilized and explored communicatively in EFL elementary classrooms, I offer the following classroom suggestions.

Identity

Japanese EFL textbooks have been found to largely omit output activities (Efron, 2020). Rather, students are prompted by isolated scripts in their textbooks without extended conversational exchanges. This type of interaction “...may not boost students’ engagement or investment in the use of language, thus missing the opportunity to perceive it as a social practice through which they can construct their identity and express opinions” (Moss et al., p. 80). In order to help students strengthen their understandings of identities and to express themselves,

EFL teachers using an ABF can begin with providing windows for students that focus on their own lived experiences and communities, before looking out at other moments and movements. For example:

<p>Story Circles (Deardroff, 2019)</p>	<p>Designed for intercultural communication and piloted by UNESCO, this activity asks learners (of all ages) to sit together and share personal stories in 2 minutes or under, while group members listen for understanding. Once all stories have been told without interruption or comment, learners are asked to share a “flashback” (memorable moment) from each story in 15 seconds or less. Students are guided by reflection questions that ask them how they would like to improve their communication (Deardroff, 2019). This activity supports second language development, but an ABF scaffold could include asking students to identify their own assumptions that they made while listening to others.</p>
<p>About Me booklets and About My Community booklets</p>	<p>A useful activity for exploring identity, <i>About Me</i> booklets ask students to create short books that can be shared with classmates (or in the school library) that focus on expressing students’ multiple identities. Students author and illustrate the books themselves. After this activity, students can use their grammar and translanguaging skills to create accompanying <i>About My Community</i> booklets that are inclusive of, for example, “My favorite shop,” “our school,” “The orphanage—this is a place that helps children,” and so on.</p>
<p>Interactive & First Culture games</p>	<p>Through first culture games, such as the Japanese card game <i>karuta</i>, Students can practice communicative phrases such as ‘I can,’ ‘I like,’ ‘I want’ ‘I believe,’ and peers can practice responding in turn. This is best done in small groups to facilitate conversation (EthicalESOL.org).</p>
<p>In another’s shoes</p>	<p>After reading an autobiographical book, students write or practice “I” in speaking groups, building off of the narrative they read in order to imagine themselves in the shoes of others. This is a practice in empathy and understanding.</p>
<p>In another’s classroom</p>	<p>Raise a class discussion on how your culture(s) (or students’) are viewed by others in the world. Begin by discussing students’ reactions to other cultures, people, and characters discussed in your class so far. Then, help students consider how it is to be on the receiving end of those observations. For example, if you are in Japan, set your Google settings to only search in the U.S. Then, search “lesson plans,” “Japanese classroom,” “Japanese food,” etc. Consider the images that arise. Are these images representative of students’ lived experiences? Are they too general? How does the world perceive Japan? What can surmise about others through a search like this? What can’t we learn?</p>

Diversity

Units on diversity ask us to celebrate human differences among us *and* highlight connections that we share. With this in mind, it is important to remember that children are impacted by the visibility or invisibility of people and cultures in their surroundings (see naeyc.org). Seeing one's self represented, as well as seeing normalized images of others, are critical in forming anti-bias thinking. Furthermore, an absence of cultural complexity and depth can negatively impact intercultural learning (Risager, 2018). Monocultural ideals further aggregate these issues of representation, and are often reflected in EFL textbooks. For example, in the aforementioned analysis of Japanese EFL textbooks, the occurrence of Japanese cultural artifacts, practices, and people, was 42.1% of total occurrences, while the average, per country, of the remaining 27 countries in the texts was 2.1% (Efron, 2020).

When textbooks lack meaningful inclusions of diversity, teachers must procure supplementary materials.

Gallery walks	Gallery walks are interactive and visual additions to EFL classrooms. By contextualizing topics with different images and assignments (pictures, sticky note responses, class polls, artifacts, etc.), students develop a more holistic understanding of topics. For example, when discussing <i>families</i> , consider adding students' illustrations of their own families, images of LGBTQ+ families, bicultural families, and adoptive families, student quotes about families (and more quotes and journal entries from students as time passes and their thoughts develops), and so on, rather than settling for a single image of a white, heteronormative family. With a rich gallery wall, students' visions and understandings of <i>families</i> will expand.
Total Physical Response through Realia	Bring physical objects, realia, into class to accompany read-alouds and class discussions. Authentic replicas (as opposed to only photos) can engage students in the topic. Figures (of Mongolian <i>gers</i> , for example) or items such as Japanese <i>obi</i> , encourage students to think about dimensionality. To understand the ways that we all experience the world differently, place an object relevant to the cultural discussions in the textbook in the center of the room and ask students to record their observations / points of view. Although everyone is observing the same object, they will experience different perspectives on it, representative of different perspectives of reality. Alternatively, choose an object that is meaningful to a minority cultural group. After students read their reflections, the teacher explains the significance of the object from the cultural groups' perspective.

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<p>Food Talks</p>	<p>Almost all EFL textbooks feature food at some point. Cuisine can be a wonderful way to learn about diversity. Read different picture books on world food traditions and discuss: what etiquette rules differ between cultures, how school lunches can accommodate students' diverse backgrounds, designing a new school lunch menu, how students can teach others about their own food cultures, etc.</p> <p>It is worth noting that versions of these kinds of activities risk promoting stereotypes (for example, in Japan, <i>sushi</i> is reserved for restaurant outings and holidays, as opposed to being a daily meal). One way to counter this risk is to compare food pyramids or plates, which highlight daily dietary recommendations, in different countries. Students can compare which food representations appear in categories. Older students may also be able to discuss the reasons for differences (economical, ecological, etc.).</p>
<p>Practice Seeing (Revised for EFLs from an original activity by Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).</p>	<p>Choose images of people from different cultural and gender groups, and across professions (if possible, consider using public figures). In an interactive GoogleSlides page, or in person, ask students to assign pre-selected adjectives (<i>brave, smart, presidential</i>), and descriptions (<i>likes reading, is a stay-at-home-parent, uses a wheelchair, speaks English and Spanish, etc.</i>) to each photo. Ask students to reflect on why they chose these words for each picture. Then, share information about the people in the photos. (For example, <i>She is Neerja Bhanot Ashoka Chakra. She was an airline attendant who saved children from terrorists. They are Rebecca Sugar. They created the popular T.V. show, "Steven Universe."</i>) Ask students to reflect on how they felt upon learning about the people in the photos. Can we judge others? Help guide students to consider what prejudices or preconceived ideas influenced your decisions in response to the questions. This is a good opportunity to talk about which people are often depicted in the media, and <i>how</i> they are represented.</p> <p>Examples of questions that can be used to guide these discussions in English, as aligned with Japanese EFL grammar units, include: <i>Who do you see on T.V.? Are they happy/ sad / good / bad / silly? Why? What are they doing? Who don't you see on T.V.? Why?</i></p>

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Justice

Including justice in EFL lessons is particularly important when textbooks fail to introduce discussions on society or social problems. My critical analysis of Japanese EFL textbooks, for example, revealed that, combined, the books contained zero discussions on social discourses, despite being designed for multiculturalism and global thinking (Efron, 2020). The inclusion of justice in lesson units is essential, though, in asking how stereotypes affect us, how systemic discrimination impacts our world, how privilege affects justice, and how discrimination affects people (Chiariello, 2016). Justice is also necessary in recognizing institutional injustice and the harmful impacts of bias on communities. No country is free from discriminatory practices and as such, it is necessary for teachers to educate through anti-biased units dedicated to exploring and promoting justice, so that we can educate future global leaders for a more humane world.

WebQuests for Current Social Justice Issues	<p>Simple WebQuests can be utilized to help students explore justice. For example, the following activity engages students in examining different areas of social justice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to amplifier.org; Look through the human rights posters.; Answer the questions: <i>How does this poster make me feel? What words do I see? What colors are used? What does this poster seem to be about?</i> • From there, students work in groups to research the issue, problem solve, and design their own human rights posters on free platforms like Canava, or on paper.
Global figures	<p>(See the “Considering your Curriculum” section of this article.)</p>
Hashtagging Events (Buechel, 2020)	<p>When responding to textbook units such as hobbies, places, or weather, share real images of world events, news, and social justice on a white board and have students practice English by creating #hashtags foar events they are familiar with (Buechel, 2020). Social justice units can be tied into every subject, as systemic biases are ubiquitous. For example, when learning the weather, discuss ways that low-income countries have far fewer ways to adapt to climate change than high-income countries (Levy & Patz, 2015), or ways in which environmental crises create environmental refugees, will tie world events and discourses into an otherwise isolated textbook unit.</p>
Reworked “Privilege Walk”	<p>The Privilege Walk activity, though intended to teach about the intricacies of privilege, has long been criticized for centering whiteness (Torres, 2015) and for making individuals feel humiliated (Ehrenhalt, 2017). To rework this idea and help students recognize the privileges they hold, Torres (2015) recommends emphasizing the power of minoritized groups. For example, “Step forward ...if you speak a second language...” (Torres, 2015). Other ideas include: <i>step forward if your family came from another country, step forward if you work hard despite a disability, step forward if you’ve challenged racism, homophobia, etc.</i> These questions can be adjusted by grade level and scaffolded by language ability and languages.</p>
History Project	<p>Learn the history of the place names or words in your local community. Which words have colonial roots, Indigenous roots, or Western influence?</p>

Action

The final tier in Teaching Tolerance's ABF is the unit "action," which synthesizes knowledge-building in the previous units with real-world problem solving and engagement. Taking social action can be challenging, but it is important to help students recognize that they can effect change in the world, especially since many boards of education describe wanting to equip students with "the ability to solve problems, thereby fostering global leaders who can work globally in the future" (MEXT, 2019, p.10).

For many EFL classrooms, the learning is removed from the world and occurs in isolated units, in effect, removing learners from the target language. However, by engaging with the language to solve world problems, students can become empowered learners and global thinkers.

Engagement with local interlocutors	<p>There are many ways to engage with others outside of the classroom for the benefit of social justice and EFL education. For example: Skype exchanges with schools in other countries, e-penpal programs with students in other countries, and interviews with local community members or experts on various social or environmental issues online.</p> <p>Another way to engage with others is to conduct interviews and then create a digital class book that can be added to, featuring things that are unique about students on one side, and the things that are unique about others on the other side. (During such activities, it is important not to shy away from topics like race, ability, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, etc., which are central to ABFs).</p>
Community projects	<p>Consider creating a school-wide community project focused on bringing the school closer together, for example, through building a digital school library (EthicalESOL.org).</p>
Showcasing Thinking	<p>Students can showcase artwork, analyses, writing that address issues found in textbooks, media, and other discussions through a bulletin board, school newsletter, or class blog.</p>
Book survey	<p>Survey the books in your school library. Consider oppressed and dominant groups (cultural groups, men / women / non-binary, able / disabled, and so on). Who are the protagonists or what are the themes in the books? Are there books from Indigenous groups? Help students write a letter to your Board of Education discussing their findings. Students can also research books featuring protagonists of different backgrounds and include their requests for books in their letter.</p>

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Considering your Curriculum

Although many EFL teachers might be excited by these ideas, some may initially struggle thinking about where in the curriculum to include anti-bias units. As mentioned, because oppression (sexism, racism, linguisticism, etc.) is systemic, there are infinite ways to ground curricula in social justice education. For example, consider this 6th grade textbook used across Japan, *We Can 1* (MEXT, 2018), and some ways to reframe the units so that social justice is centered in each unit:

Original Textbook Unit & the main topics covered	Ways to Tie in Social Justice Themes
This is Me (countries, months, hobbies, seasons)	<i>Race & Ethnicity unit:</i> books with protagonists of different cultures, races, religions; identity-building; different seasons around the world; different cultures' understandings of seasonal elements; thinking about how cultures and histories form our individual and collective identities.
Welcome to Japan (Japanese food, traditional cultural events)	<i>Immigration unit:</i> picture books on immigration; interviews or blogs from half-Japanese, non-Japanese, or Indigenous people living in Japan; diversity activities; understanding why people move to or seek asylum in other countries; bilingualism; understanding representation
He is Famous. She is Great.	<i>Global heroes unit:</i> autobiographical/biographical books featuring heroes from various social justice and civil rights movements around the world
I Like My Town (shop names, this is~, we have~)	<i>Class unit:</i> visit different towns around the world on Google Earth. Visit high-socioeconomic and low-socioeconomic areas and ask students to discuss the differences. What do they have? What don't they have? What issues contribute to poverty? How can we help? With this last notion, be careful not to "suggest [that] we must fix poor people instead of eliminating the inequities that oppress them" (Gorski, 2007, par. 2). Think about who holds and maintains power.
My Summer Vacation (summer events, food)	Students identify and investigate a community problem and propose a solution. They then plan and implement action directed at solving the problem.
What do you want to watch? (Olympics, sports, adjectives)	<i>Ability unit:</i> Focus on empowering Paralympic athletes from countries around the world. What privileges do non-disabled people have? What is ableism? Use books with disabled protagonists. Identify the physical accessibility of your school.
My Best Memory (school events)	<i>Educational rights unit:</i> What is school like in other countries? Include Malala Yousafzai's contributions to education, girls' educational rights, students going to school abroad and their experiences.

What do you want to be? (occupations)	<i>Rights & activism:</i> Explore what jobs are most necessary in the world per social justice units; i.e. if you are championing the environment, what kind of job can you do? What can we do right now to help? Look at youth activists around the world.
Junior High School Life (Jr. high school club activity)	<i>Bullying & bias:</i> Address issues at school. Showcase club activities from around the world focused on social justice; for example, in America, the Gay-Straight Alliance club. What kind of club does your community need?

Conclusion

When teaching culture or social issues it is important to be mindful of tokenism and/or over-stereotyping groups for the sake of discussion. Likewise, students' classroom learning must be understood in accordance with their linguistic abilities. For example, young learners may not have enough vocabulary to output and confirm their depth of understanding. As mentioned, translanguaging is one practice to help bridge this gap. Lastly, it is not enough to simply include this paper's aforementioned activities as stand-alone occurrences in the EFL classroom. These suggestions are mentioned for their potential to scaffold and synthesize larger, on-going conversations with students on identity, justice, diversity, and action.

This article helps EFL teachers recognize both the possibilities and the pitfalls of existing EFL materials in their own schools. Through this perspective, teachers can reconsider not only what we are teaching, but also how the existing materials can be used in language class to provoke deeper thinking and critical discussions.

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