

English teachers are involved in the process of globalization whether we like it or not, and we must come to terms with this in our own ways (Guest, 2005; Hronopolous, 2005; Griffith, 2004; Peaty, 2004; Edge, 2003; Block & Cameron, 2002). Some teachers make the political decision to keep overt discussion of global issues out of their classroom. Some attempt to cover the issues “objectively,” while others may advocate (consciously or not) a particular point of view. Some are simply trying raise awareness about the issues, while others create opportunities for their students to take action on the issues about which they are learning.

Every teacher must determine her or his own position regarding global issues. In this paper, I am not attempting to convince other language teachers to teach as I do. It is not my goal in to argue that including activism and / or global issues in the language classroom is good for language learning. But incorporating these things into my language teaching is right for me, and my purpose in writing this paper is to offer some ideas and support to other teachers who feel as I do. I want to encourage and inspire other teachers who share my belief in the importance of encouraging students to take action on the global issues that are important to them.

I believe that the world is at a crisis point. I believe that consumption, pollution and other negative effects of globalization and the “modern” lifestyle are leading us down a path to self-destruction. I fear that it may already be too late, but I hope that it is not. This belief affects every aspect of my life, including my role as an English teacher. For me, these issues are too important to merely discuss. Thus, in my teaching, I try not only to raise students' awareness about important issues, but also to encourage them to take mindful action. From the outset, I want to make it clear that my students determine for themselves which issues are important. Students are largely responsible for the content of the class, both by choosing the topics that we

cover and by bringing in articles for discussion. If they have a particular interest or passion, I encourage them to pursue it. More than anything, I want them to choose issues that are meaningful and relevant to their lives.

Throughout my paper, I use the term “global issues” to mean any of the myriad of social, political, environmental, cultural or other types of issues that affect our lives and the world in which we live. When I refer to “activism”, I simply mean action undertaken intentionally with the goal of improving or changing a larger issue. While I see some value in traditional forms of activism such as volunteering and protesting, the action component of my own teaching focuses on encouraging students to look at the power and consequences of our everyday lifestyles. For our activism project, students experimented with and reflected on a lifestyle change related to the issue they had chosen. I will go into more detail below.

In this paper, I will describe the final project of a Global Issues class that I taught last spring at the Hawaii English Language Program (HELP), an intensive English program located on the campus of the University of Hawaii. I will discuss some of the theoretical background for the project, share the materials that I developed, and give examples of the student writing and feedback I received. While both the project and materials are relatively simple, I hope that some of the ideas will be useful to other teachers interested in bringing action into their EFL or ESL classrooms.

The final project in our Global Issues class involved students choosing an issue and doing some research on it. Many students chose environmental issues, but some also chose social ones like child-rearing and gender equality. They also chose one or more actions or lifestyle changes that they as individuals could make in order to positively impact the issue they had chosen.

Students had a great deal of flexibility, both in terms of the issues they chose and the types of actions they did. The final part of their project involved reflecting on the experience of doing their action. In addition to being a vehicle for content-based language learning, I hoped that this project would help make students aware of the power of everyday choices, and the responsibilities that they therefore entail.

It is not my purpose in this paper to present a balanced look at critical thinking and activism. Nor am I attempting to construct an argument that all teachers should include student action on global issues in their classes. Instead, I will explain why and how I bring these things into my own teaching. For me, teaching critically and encouraging activism is, without hyperbole, a matter of life and death. I believe this not, primarily, as a language teacher, but simply as a human being. Given the barrage of information, propaganda and advertising to which we are subjected every day, I believe that it is crucial to be able to think critically. The way in which we live, consuming such a tremendous amount of resources, makes even our “small” actions quite powerful. Furthermore, as I said above, I believe that we are at a crisis point, and that maintaining the status quo will lead to collapse in the not too distant future. Thus, in order to help my students survive in this world, and to help the world survive for my students, I feel obligated to bring critical thinking and action into my classes.

### **Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy**

Pennycook (2001) describes two different schools of thought within the field of critical applied linguistics. Both recognize that critical thinking involves constant examination of power structures and social relationships, but they disagree in terms of their opinion on objectivity. One

school believes that “critical distance and objectivity are important and achievable” (Pennycook, p. 4) while the other claims that true objectivity is impossible. Fowler expands on this second position, saying that “there is not necessarily any true reality that can be unveiled by critical practice, there are simply relatively varying representations” (1996, p. 4).

As a teacher, I think a belief in a knowable, objective truth is dangerous. However revolutionary or progressive a truth might be, this type of belief seems to lead inevitably to inflexibility, closed-mindedness and a transmission model of education. As Freire (1990) says, “to consider oneself the proprietor of revolutionary wisdom—which must then be given to (or imposed on) the people—is to retain the old ways” (p. 47). In my teaching, I do not attempt to transmit “the truth” to my students. Instead, I encourage them to figure out for themselves what is important in their lives and their world, and to consider what they can do to improve those things.

I do not ask that my students agree with me, only that they consider their role in the world. For the final project, I introduce a wide range of issues, and students are free to pick both from those issues or from issues not discussed in the class. I agree with Peaty that addressing “concepts such as fair trade, challenging myths such as that hunger exists because not enough food is grown worldwide, and asking provocative questions about government policies is not indoctrination, but a stimulus to further inquiry” (p. 17). Students are free to ignore the issues we cover in class and choose something entirely different on which to base their action and their project. All I ask is that they find something relevant to them and think about how their lifestyles affect it. By trusting my students to decide on their own what is important and how they will deal with these things, I find myself moving towards Freire's (1990) concept of humanism. “A

real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favor without that trust” (p. 47).

One way to do this is to be a “problem-posing educator” (Freire, p. 68). As opposed to giving answers, I prefer asking questions. In addition to being a good way to develop critical thinking skills in my students, asking provocative questions that require relatively complicated responses necessitates a fair amount of language processing. In addition, interesting questions can really help engage students in a topic and stimulate a lot of language output. Freire says that knowledge “emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 58). In addition to stressing the importance of continual inquiry, I also like Freire's inclusion of the adjective hopeful. Hope is key to action. Without hope, there is no reason to act.

For Freire, real education occurs in the form of dialogs. The dialogs he envisions involve love, a term typically absent from teaching philosophies and curricula. “If I do not love the world—if I do not love life—if I do not love men—I cannot enter into dialogue” (Freire, p. 78). A love for these things introduces a certain morality to education, albeit in a very general sense. And, for me, a love of life and of the world requires consideration of environmental sustainability.

As part of the dialogs, Freire promotes co-intentional education. “Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge” (p. 57). I am not an expert on the issues we discuss, and my perspectives and opinions are no more or less valid than those of my students. In my classroom, just as Freire

said, the teacher “presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers his earlier considerations as the students express their own” (p. 68).

Pennycook says that “*Critical thinking* is...a way of developing more critical distance” (p. 4). In my opinion, however, the “distance” created by critical thinking is as illusory as the “neutrality” of non-political teaching. It is impossible for us to separate ourselves from the world in which we live. Rather than giving us an objective overview, critical thinking simply enables us to flexibly consider alternatives, asking questions along the way. Following the guidelines of critical pedagogy, I attempt to create a classroom in which opinions and ideas can be freely and respectfully exchanged.

### **Global Issues and Social Justice in Language Teaching**

There is growing interest in language teaching regarding the incorporation of global issues into the language classroom. As content-based language teaching has grown in popularity, many teachers have become interested in using meaningful content about important issues. Journals like *The Language Teacher* (2003, 1996) have devoted special issues to the place of global issues in the language classroom, and many articles have been written offering teaching ideas (Jude, 2005; Hronopoulous, 2004; Licht, Maher, & Webber, 2004; Peaty, 2004; Sargent 2004; Jacobs, 2001) . Organizations like TESOL and JALT have special interest groups dedicated to social justice and global issues, respectively. In an interview in *The Language Teacher*, peace studies pioneer Johan Galtung observed that language teachers are in “a unique situation because [we] have so much to talk about” (McInnis, 1996, n.p.). In content-based classrooms, we need to talk, read and write about something, so why not use content that really

matters to the lives of the students? At the same time, of course, we do not wish to neglect the language goals of our students. There is a certain balance that we, as language teachers, need to find. As Hronopoulos (2005) says, teachers “have a moral obligation to bring these issues to our learners, but we should always be careful to design lessons and tasks that attend to our learners' language needs” (n.p.).

In 1995, H. D. Brown put forth the idea that those of us “who teach languages have a special responsibility to subvert attitudes, beliefs and assumptions... ..that language teaching is neutral, sterile, inorganic and has nothing to do with political issues, ...and that there is no particular urgency to act assertively to stave off an imminent global environmental crisis” (n.p.). Now, over ten years later, we can find an increasing number of teachers in both EFL (Jude, 2005; Hronopoulos, 2004; Peaty, 2004; Sargent, 2004) and ESL (Licht, Maher, & Webber, 2004; Stern, 1997) that are bringing these and other global issues into their classroom. Some teachers go so far as to see the inclusion of these types of issues as part of the role of an English instructor. “As educators, we owe it our learners to not only improve their English competence, but to also empower them with knowledge to make them responsible citizens that can create a just, humane and violence-free world.” (Hronopoulos, 2004)

Although I fully support the inclusion of global issues in language teaching, I am not suggesting that every teacher should teach in this way. If a teacher is more comfortable using traditional topics and avoiding overt discussion of controversial or difficult issues then, by all means, she or he should continue to do so. A teacher's passion or enthusiasm for classroom content can determine its success with the students. In my own teaching, I believe that my sincere concern about the issues my students bring into the classroom helps motivate and engage

them.

Furthermore, there are clearly settings where giving students a content-based class on global issues might not be appropriate. For example, many high school English classes around the world are part of students' preparation for a college entrance exam. Teachers would be doing students a disservice by neglecting this responsibility. For content-based language teachers who have the freedom to determine their own curriculum, however, looking at some of the larger issues that impact the students' lives can be a good place to start.

For Peaty (2004), the crux of the issue is how to bring in content about global issues without indoctrinating our students. In his opinion, promoting certain values, goals and viewpoints in the classroom is not indoctrination “if those values, goals and viewpoints are endorsed by society” (n.p.). I find this position to be extremely problematic. If sustainable values, goals and viewpoints were already mainstream, we would not have such an urgent need for education on global issues. In my opinion, it is precisely because our society endorses values that run counter to the longterm future of this planet that looking at these issues is imperative.

It is not the content (issues, values, goals, etc.) which determines whether it is indoctrination, but the way in which it is presented. When information is presented as known and unassailable, and when opposing points of view are not considered, that is indoctrination. When techniques are used to attempt to force or manipulate students into changing their minds, that is indoctrination. In my own teaching, I try to avoid indoctrination by making our activities more student-centered and allowing a free exchange of ideas and opinions rather than insisting on one “right” answer. I agree with Hronopoulos (2005) that one “should always encourage your learners to question everything, even the materials you present to them” (n.p.).

In much of the literature dealing with the inclusion of global issues, there seems to be a reluctance to admit that we, as teachers, model and promote what we think is right. Part of teaching is behaving in a way that you think is right, and sharing your beliefs with students. For example, most teachers discourage cheating and encourage students to treat their classmates' work and opinions with respect. Is this indoctrination? Is this imposing a world view? I agree with Griffith (2004) that "all teachers teach out of their world view, and honest ones admit it" (p. 714-715). Putting it another way, Edge (2003) states "...transparency regarding one's own purpose, appears to be the most ethical basis for action" (p. 707). Who we are influences how we teach, and we always convey certain values and views to our students. Honesty about these is the key, along with making them as explicit as possible. Our students are exposed to many different world views all the time, and I do not think they are in grave danger of being steam-rolled by one teacher's opinions, especially when they are expressed transparently and non-forcefully. "The instructor must make it very clear that each person has the right to have and state personal beliefs and that students will not be penalized in any way for their beliefs" (Vandrick, 1994, p. 115).

### **Adding an Environmentally Ethical Component**

Increasingly, educators seem to be realizing that it is impossible to separate social justice issues from environmental ones (Furman and Gruenewald, 2004; Bowers, 2002; Bigelow and Peterson, 2002). In much of the literature dealing with critical education, though, environmentalism is ignored. Critical pedagogists, including Pennycook (2001) and Freire (1990) frequently mention racism, gender, global capitalism and colonialism while leaving out environmental concerns. (See Bowers (2003) or Gruenewald (2003) for a thorough examination

of this.) If we are going to honestly incorporate Freire's hope and Pennycook's "preferred futures" (2001, p. 8) then environmental concerns must be addressed. Without concern for our environment, there is no hope for the future.

The concept of preferred futures also brings up the issue of ethics. As Pennycook says, "preferred futures...need to be grounded in ethical arguments for why alternative possibilities may be better" (p. 8-9). While the inclusion of ethics in the classroom has been a controversial issue, the idea that education can be purely objective seems to be losing favor. To put it another way, I believe that everything that we do is both an ethical and a political decision. Every action that we do or do not take affects power structures and the environment. The effects of our action may be minute or unseen, but that does not absolve our responsibility. "Everything we do has some effect, some impact" (Lama, 1998, p. 63). The decision to exclude politics or ethics from the classroom is no less of a political or moral action than including them. By leaving these issues out of the classroom, the teacher is effectively saying that things should be left the way they are or that it is not our place to question or change them. "A teacher's silence on alternatives to the status quo reduces the risks to the teacher while also denying choices to students" (Shor, 2000, p. 9). I believe that the classroom should be a place for asking and discussing difficult questions. Again, I am not saying that every teacher should include these issues in their classes. But to pretend that excluding them is not a political and ethical action that models and encourages certain beliefs and attitudes is dishonest.

Instead of modeling political, social and environmental apathy, I prefer Freire's (1990) suggestion that true critical pedagogy leads to activism: "Utilizing certain basic contradictions, we must pose this existential, concrete, present situation to the people as a problem which

challenges them and requires a response—not just at the intellectual level, but at the level of action” (p. 85). Thus, in my teaching, I do not tell students what they should think or do. Instead, by posing questions and encouraging contemplation of various problems, I hope to stimulate them to think and do for themselves.

### **Bringing Environmental Education into the English Language Classroom**

There are some striking parallels between the fields of critical ESL/EFL instruction and environmental education (EE). Just as some ESL professionals may be looked down upon because of their MA terminal degrees and their perceived lack of research and publication, EE faculty members are sometimes “seen by their more orthodox colleagues as being engaged in trendy and thus not really scholarly pursuits” (Bowers, 1997, p. 14). Bowers goes on to say that EE departments are typically underfunded, due in part to their lack of academic standing. The same has been said about university-housed ESL programs (Eskey, 1997).

Furthermore, there has been a call from environmental educators to see their field integrated across all academic disciplines (Bowers, 1997). Similarly, many ESL professionals desire an increased awareness among professors in different disciplines of both the issues and methods of ESL education. Also, just as ESL/EFL is concerned with how our students deal with Western norms of classroom participation, plagiarism, silence and so on, EE is concerned with questioning the Western cultural norms that lead to overconsumption and environmental degradation. These include viewing the individual as the basic social unit, having an anthropocentric view of the world, seeing change as inherently progressive and seeing tradition as inhibiting progress (Bowers, 1997, p. 7).

Environmental education and ESL/EFL instruction also share an inextricable link to globalization. The process has far-reaching environmental and linguistic consequences, and it is impossible for any conceptualization of globalization to ignore them. EE also addresses the issue of linguistic extinction, although for different reasons. EE is concerned about the loss of knowledge from ecologically-centered indigenous peoples once their languages disappear. Loss of language can lead to an end of transgenerational exchanges of information (Bowers, 1997).

Above, I stated that all education to be political. Taking this one step further, I agree with Orr (1992) that “all education is environmental education” (p. 90). All aspects of our teaching, from the topics we cover to the way in which we handle classroom resources, model and encourage certain environmental practices. Students notice things like air-conditioner usage and whether copies are two-sided. In addition, many English language students are motivated by career aspirations or a desire for travel, both of which have profound environmental ramifications. If part of our job is preparing students for the modern cosmopolitan lifestyle, this carries with it environmental responsibilities.

Just as critical pedagogy accepts the non-existence of a single knowable truth, much of the environmental education literature focuses on considering alternatives rather than finding the one perfect way. “There is no single outlook on what sustainable living entails nor on how to achieve it” (Wals and Heyman, 2004, p. 123). In addition to disagreement among educators about what, specifically, sustainable living involves, there is also recognition that local variation will require different ideas in different contexts. Working towards a sustainable lifestyle “does not allow for universally applicable recipes for sustainable development” (Wals and Heyman, p. 123). This echoes Freire's (1990) idea that education must begin with the students' current

situation in mind. “Only by starting from this situation—which determines their perception of it—can they begin to move” (p. 73).

Wenden (2004) stresses the importance of working to develop critical reflectiveness, analytical skills and the ability to imagine alternative futures. She argues that true autonomy of thought cannot exist without these abilities. If one cannot critically question one's own values and assumptions, one is not truly free. Similarly, if someone lacks the skills required to understand the world around them, one is not truly autonomous. A person must be able to envision alternative possibilities for the future. Otherwise, that person is constrained to follow pre-existing paths.

In his overview of educating for sustainability, Luke (2001) lists several problems that the field is facing and proposes possible solutions, many of which have relevance with the ESL/EFL classroom. One of the first issues he addresses is the fact that current environmental activism tends to take place “‘at the end of the pipe’ when and where horrendous ecological destruction, pollution or toxic events occur in ‘nature’” (p. 187). This resonated with me, as I wanted my student to engage in a very different type of activism. Instead of asking them to engage in some sort of clean-up activity, I encouraged them to change a behavior where the immediate effects would probably be unseen.

In addition, Luke comments on the fact that, even within environmental classrooms, the “articulation of environmental knowledge often sets nature apart in special distant locales and isolates nature’s wild places from modern economies and societies” (p. 188). Nature is treated as something “out there,” something separate from our daily lives and our daily environment. This echoes my desire that students did not compartmentalize their action as something to be done

once a week with an organization and instead integrated it into their everyday life.

Radical environmentalists are not immune from Luke's critical gaze. He attributes their lack of success to the fact that “their ecocentric deep alternatives would have society forsake environmental protection by choosing various fantastic forms of social implosion--a return to Neolithic hunting and gathering, zero population growth, voluntary and/or coercive simplicity, reagrarisation and deurbanisation.” (p. 195) In order to be successful, sustainability agendas must be realistic. In doing this project, I hoped to make students aware of the power of small, everyday actions.

### **From Awareness-Raising to Activism**

Jacobs and Goatly (2000) looked at 17 randomly-selected post-1990 English language teaching coursebooks to determine the percentage of activities involving environmental issues. Furthermore, they looked at the percentage of those activities that required student action. Within the 17 coursebooks they looked at, there were a total of 6,167 activities, with 2% of these activities (134) having environmental content. Of those 134 activities, only 2 asked students to engage in actual environmental protection (p. 260).

In the introduction to *ESL for Action*, Auerbach and Wallerstein (1987) give their take on encouraging action in ESL students.

The first step to promoting action outside the classroom is to transform education inside the classroom. Our role as teachers is to create a safe environment in which students can express opinions and, most importantly, generate their own language materials for learning and peer-teaching. Curriculum is not a *product* (developed before the start of the program), but a *process*, which is constantly created through participant interaction. (p. vii)

There are many different types of activism which are possible in the language classroom. In American ESL classrooms, activism-minded teachers often follow a Freirian model and attempt to empower marginalized students. Much of the ESL material has focused on preparing immigrants in North America for participation in their new community. (Licht, Maher & Webber, 2004; Nash, 1999; Stern, 1997) While I found these materials interesting, my situation was different in several important ways.

First of all, as a teacher at an intensive English program in Hawaii drawing students primarily from Japan and Korea, the majority of my students are not, for the most part, marginalized. They are already relatively empowered. Whereas Freire was teaching L1 literacy to disenfranchised farmers in a “developing” nation, I was teaching L2 competence mostly to wealthy young people from “developed” countries. My students already had the ability to get an education and earn a living in their home culture. It is true that they might have had some difficulty in these areas if they were to remain in America, but the vast majority of my students did not intend to. Most returned to work or school in their home country after a few months. Thus, even though I share Freire's goals of equality and social justice, empowering my students was not my primary concern. Instead, I tried to help my students become more aware of the power they already had, and to encourage them to consider how they chose to use it. This is important to me, because I believe that the fate of the Earth hangs on the everyday actions of the middle and upper-class citizens of developed countries.

In EFL contexts, some teachers have successfully engaged their students in group actions. Peaty (2004) gives several examples including:

Bamford (1990), whose sponsored walk attracted the support of several hundred teachers, students and friends, raising two

million yen for a development project in Ethiopia, Schwab (1994), who introduced her students to the Foster Parent system and had the satisfaction of seeing them sponsor an Indian child, Rowe (2003), whose students support children at a mission in Vietnam and hold charity bazaars to support volunteer activities in India, and Smith (2002), whose students raised funds for, and built, a house with *Habitat for Humanity*. (n.p.)

While I certainly admire such projects, I wanted to do something that allowed my students the flexibility to choose their own issue and action. I did not want to force students to learn about or act upon issues that are important to me. My goal was for them to choose something relevant to their own lives, and that could be different for each student. Also, I was attracted to the idea of coming up with actions that were integrated into our everyday lives, rather than apart from them.

### **The Class**

Global Issues is a class that I developed and taught at the Hawaii English Language Program (HELP). The term lasted eight weeks, with classes meeting twice a week for two hours per session. HELP is an intensive English program located on the University of Hawaii campus and the students are adults, with most being in their twenties. A majority of the students, approximately 75%, go on to study at an American university or community college. The students are mostly Asian, with the majority coming from either Japan or South Korea. Classes are content-based and the language skills are integrated. Global Issues was offered at the 300-level, meaning that the average TOEFL score of the students was around 450. I piloted these materials during my third time teaching the class, in the spring of 2006.

I had fifteen students in my class. It was slightly more international than a typical HELP class with six Japanese students, four Korean, two Taiwanese, two East Timorese and one Swiss.

In my two prior teachings of this class, we had used *The Future of the Earth* (Arthus-Bertrand, 2004) as our primary textbook. This term, however, we used no textbook. I began the course by having students first brainstorm and then write about the topics and skill areas that they wanted to concentrate on. Because many of them expressed an interest in working on academic writing skills, the final project we did was an academic research paper. Much of this project, however, could be easily adapted for other skill areas. For example, it would be quite easy to have the students do a final presentation instead of a paper. Alternatively a teacher could make reading circle activities the focus of the class, and spend less time on academic writing.

### **Project and Materials**

When I first taught Global Issues, our final project did not have an action component. Students were asked only to do a survey or an interview as part of their final project. I decided to include some sort of action in the project after reflecting on changes I had made in my own life as a result of things that I had learned, and how my quality of life had improved as a result. In this project, I hoped that my students would have a similar experience. Thus, my goal was for them to experience some awareness-raising, then experiment with living in a different way as a result of what they had learned, and ask them to reflect on that experience.

At first, I planned to ask my students to engage in traditional forms of activism, such as volunteering with an organization or taking part in a protest. However, our class met for just eight weeks. By the time students had chosen their issues, they had only a couple of weeks to do their action before writing a paper reflecting on it. It would be impossible to find organized activism activities for a wide range of student issues in such a limited time. In addition, many

volunteer organizations are resistant to the participation of language learners or short-term volunteers.

The more I thought about it, the less interested I became in these forms of activism. In addition to the logistical difficulty, I also realized that I was concerned about the compartmentalization that volunteering or protesting can foster. I did not want students to come away from the experience thinking that activism required an organization. I did not want the students to feel that activism was something to be engaged in only at certain times and in certain places. Ideally, I wanted my students to end the term realizing that all of our actions are a form of activism.

Brainstorm (see Appendix A)

On the first day, I asked students to brainstorm about issues that were important to them. I brought in a collection of magazines (*Mother Jones*, *Adbusters* and *Ode*) and also copies of two textbooks (*The Future of the Earth* by Arthus-Betrand and *Rethinking Globalization* by Bigelow and Peterson). Students looked through these materials in groups and filled out a handout individually. The handout asked students to write down four issues that were important to them, why those issues were important, and what they, as individuals, could do to affect these issues. As they were writing, I encouraged them to think about one or more actions related to each issue.

From the beginning, I wanted to get students thinking about the issues that were most important to them and the types of actions that they could take to positively impact these issues. Of course, because this was done on the first day of class, we had not spent time discussing either issues or actions. Even so, the students came up with a lot of good ideas for issues. Because the

concept of individual activism was new for most of them, they had some difficulty coming up with actions. For the next class, I decided to explain the project in more detail and give them some examples of specific actions.

#### Final Project Introduction (see Appendix B)

For our second day, I put together a handout that explained the project and gave ideas for potential actions. Even though it was important to me that students come up with their own action, I wanted to provide samples as I knew that many students had likely never thought about action in this way before. As stated above, I was looking for individual, everyday actions, and I wanted to be sure that my students understood this. The handout included 10 issues, with a couple of actions suggested for each one. The issues I included were global warming, consumerism, coral reef protection, fair trade, garbage, health, homelessness, tree conservation, water conservation and water pollution. I tried to come up with actions that involved things we did in our everyday lives. For example, for global warming, I suggested buying local goods, driving less and conserving electricity. For coral reef protection, I included actions like buying sustainably-fished seafood and using non-toxic sunscreen.

While going over this handout, I repeatedly told my students that they were not required to choose issues or actions from my list, although they could if they wanted to. The list was merely intended to give them an idea of the types of issues and actions that I was looking for. They seemed to understand, as almost every student ended up choosing an appropriate action, with few taking ideas from my list. The next time that I use this project in class, I will include my students' ideas on this handout and use their papers to help model the final project.

### Final Project Freewrite (see Appendix C)

For homework on the second day, I asked students to pick a global issue and do a 1 page freewrite. I asked them to answer some or all of the following questions in their freewrite:

Why is this issue important?  
How does it affect your life? How will it affect your life in the future?  
What do you know about the issue right now?  
What else would you like to know about this issue?  
What possible actions could you take to have a positive effect on this problem?

Students were free to use one of the four issues they had written about during the previous brainstorming activity, but they were not required to. In the instructions on this handout, I introduced the idea that they might want to choose an issue that they would like to teach others about. Throughout the term, students did group and pair activities in which they educated their classmates about both the issue and the actions that they took. In addition, several students concluded their final project by expressing a desire to educate their friends and family about what they had learned.

### Label Reading Exercise (see Appendix D)

The purpose of this exercise was to give students more ideas for possible issues and actions. One simple action that I was attempting to make salient during this activity was the decision to or not to buy something. In my opinion, of our daily activities, what we decide to consume probably has the farthest reaching effects. I wanted to encourage my students to think about the practices that they were supporting, and thus participating in, with the money that they spent.

I put the students in small groups and gave each group an item. I asked each group to spend about fifteen minutes finding words and phrases on their label that related to a global issue. During this time, I moved from group to group, listening and answering an occasional question. While listening, I wrote some words or phrases on the board that I later explained to the class. After we got back together as a class, I asked each student to tell us one of the words or phrases that they had written down. I wrote these on the board and had the students explain what they meant and how they were related to a global issue. I clarified these explanations as needed.

I chose the specific items that I did because their labels had a lot of information about how these products were related to global issues. Items included 100% recycled paper towels, organic green tea, wild caught canned salmon, and unbleached organic sugar. In addition to giving an item to each group, I also gave each student a handout including a copy of every label. That way, each group member could look at the label simultaneously. Also, because the labels were different length, having a copy of every label gave students a chance to look at other groups' labels once they were finished with their own.

The groups were active and the students seemed engaged. In addition, they did a good job selecting appropriate words and phrases from the labels. I was concerned that the language of the labels would be too difficult, but they seemed to understand it pretty well. They were able to successfully make connections between the words on the label and global issues. Several students ended choosing topics that were included on the labels for their final projects, including waste disposal, water conservation, water pollution and global warming.

Label Reading Homework (see Appendix E)

For homework, I asked students to choose a label from a product in their home and write a couple of paragraphs about what it told them. I wanted to further make the connection between what we buy and important global issues, and I also wanted to help the students make these issues more personally relevant. I was pleasantly surprised when several students brought in freewrites about environmentally-aware products like eco-friendly laundry detergent or dish washing soap. Because we were short on time, however, we did not spend much time discussing this assignment.

On the handout, I asked students to think about what they knew about the product and why they decided to buy this particular one. I also asked them to think about what other information they would like to know, and where they could find this information. If we had more time, I would have liked to develop more activities dealing with these ideas. It would be useful to have students thinking critically about their shopping decisions, and the types of information that are typically included on and left off of labels. We could think about and discuss or write about why we think these particular pieces of information are given while others are excluded. Unfortunately, we only touched briefly on this aspect of the assignment.

#### Reading Circle (see Appendix F)

From week four to week seven, each student led one reading circle. Students were asked to bring in a one to two page news article for their group to read. They prepared five to ten vocabulary words, four comprehension questions and four discussion questions. I encouraged them to choose articles relating to their final project, so that the article and the discussion could be incorporated into the project. This activity gave students an opportunity to exercise almost

complete control over the issue discussed.

### Other Activities

For the rest of the the term, we split our in-class time among three main areas: small group discussions, coverage of global issues, and academic writing skills. Based on a student survey, we dealt with war and terrorism, climate change and natural disasters, coral reef health, and pollution. We discussed and read about possible solutions at both the individual and societal levels. I brought in readings and other information about topics that the students were interested in, based on their beginning of term surveys and final project topic selections. We used a handful of readings from *The Future of the Earth* (Arthus-Bertrand, 2004), but most of our material came from other sources. This class was not as reading-intensive as it has been in the past, because students expressed a desire to work more on writing and expressing their opinions. Thus, instead of assigning lengthy readings, I frequently brought in graphs, charts or other more visual forms of data to use as the basis for class discussions.

We spent a fair amount of class time working on academic writing, but a version of this project could be used in a class working on any combination of language skills. We focused primarily on format and organization as I felt that these areas would be the most productive given our limited time. We also briefly covered citations, as some students asked about including references. Over the course of the term we went through the writing process. We began with brainstorming, then freewrites that gradually increased in focus. We next worked on first drafts, revisions, and producing a final paper. Due to time constraints, students were required to turn in just one draft before the final version, but many submitted two. I believe, however, that this

project could easily be adapted to a presentation format.

### **The Final Projects**

I asked the students to choose their final topic in week three with final decisions being made by the beginning of week four, but a couple of students took a little longer. First drafts were due in week six. On these drafts, they received both peer and teacher feedback. Throughout the writing process we did activities on academic writing, had peer feedback sessions, and covered content related to the issues that many of them had selected. Also, during week seven, I gave them some in-class writing time. That way, they were able to work with classmates and ask me questions if they needed to. The final projects were due on the last day of class, in week eight.

Most students completed the project successfully, choosing an appropriate topic and action. One student started washing dishes by hand in order to save electricity and thus reduce air pollution. A couple of students wrote about their experiences using bicycles as their primary form of transportation. Another started to conserve water by turning it off when brushing her teeth, washing her face and soaping up in the shower. However, there were a couple of students who did not carry out their action during class. One student wanted to focus on the deforestation of his home country. Instead of forcing him to choose a topic in which he was less interested, I asked him to come up with a series of actions that he would undertake upon his return. Two other students seem to have misunderstood the assignment, coming up with actions that they think people should take, rather than actually taking them themselves.

Obviously, in eight weeks the students were not transformed from ordinary consumers into environmental activists. Some of them came in already holding certain environmental

beliefs, and others just went through the motions and probably will not make any real changes.

They may have lied in their papers and not actually done any action. In any class, some students try to complete assignments with minimal effort. Even for these students, though, the papers were long and required a fair amount of work.

In addition, for at least some of the students, awareness about important issues was raised. Many students said that, before working on this paper, they had not really thought about how their actions impacted global issues. Most students expressed satisfaction with their action and a desire to continue and expand upon it. A couple wrote that they would try to inform their family and friends about what they had learned. The following two passages were taken from the conclusions of two students' final papers.

At the beginning of the class, I was so embarrassed at talking about these kinds of topics and actions because I was completely poor about these things. Actually, I didn't do any actions to conserve water until I started to examine this topic. While I studied with this topic I was surprised at the fact that so many people, more than my expectation, seemed to worry about the water pollution and I realized I was a person who was really indifferent to the environment but I can now say I am a person who is interested in the environmental problem. I think I have influenced by this study so I have been changing my habits step by step. So now, I never let water run while brushing teeth, washing my face, and taking a shower. I also water plants and wash dishes with water used for washing rice and wipe dishes stained by oil before washing. This is my first step for water conservation and I hope I do more actions gradually.  
(student A)

I think the best action I can take is to wash dishes by hand because writing this article I realize that the worst thing I am doing now is the use of the dishwasher. It consumes energy and water and in plus the product I put into is certainly not safe for the environment. I will continue to wash all my dishes by hand in the future because it is not laborious and it save the environment. During this class I really change my mind. I care a lot more about the protection of the environment. I think it is because I realize how big changes could make little things. It is just a habit to take and it is

never very difficult. I try to turn off the water when I am taking a shower and also when I am washing my teeth. I asked my aunt here in Hawaii to wash less often my clothes. It is just a beginning but I am sure I will make more in the future.  
(student B)

In addition to increasing the students' knowledge and awareness about the issue that they chose, it seems that for some students this project helped make them aware of the power we have as individuals. One student titled her paper (about the use of disposable chopsticks) "The Small Actions Can Bring The Big Effect". Another student said:

I also realize that the situation of the planet is alarming and that we can't ignore it longer. It is a lot of changes we have and we can easily do. They are little things but if everybody would make the same effort it could make a big changing. I think the environment protection concern everybody living on the Earth.

When I will go back [to my country] I will talk about the experience I did in this class and stimulate my family and my friends to make efforts to save the environment. I will search articles demonstrating amazing statistics about environment problems so that they will change their bad habits.  
(student B)

## **Feedback**

In addition to the regular end of term course evaluations done at HELP, I asked my students to fill out a short questionnaire (see Appendix G) on what they thought of the class and of the activism project in particular. The first question asked them what they liked or disliked about the class, and what they thought I should change. Overall, the students seemed to be very satisfied with the class.

I like to read and discuss about articles we brought because I could know various types of problems and hear many classmates' opinion. I came to consider about our earth, environment and actions we can do for it more than before and more deeply.

I really liked to choose a topic and to read, learn about it. I realize that I change my mind during this class in the way of environment protection.

I like this class a lot, because we talk about the global

issues... you should keep teaching this class... nothing to change... it's all great.

In terms of suggestions for change, a few students said that they would like to have had more information about each issue, particularly about the underlying causes. Another student suggested starting more gradually.

I wanted to know more about basic information of each issue, because I didn't know well what causes each problem.

At the beginning, it was really hard to follow the topic because these kinds of topics were not very familiar with us. So it would be better to start little by little at the beginning to get used to the topics.

It would have been nice to be able to ease into the issues and the final project but, due to time constraints, I am not sure how that would be possible. I could have provided some more information on various issues, but we would have had to reduce the time that we spent on academic writing skills, and it also could have made the classes more teacher-centered. Still, these are both suggestions that I will definitely take into account in future teachings of this class, particularly if I am teaching in a setting that gives me more time.

The second question asked students what they liked, disliked or though I should change about the final project. Again, the majority of the feedback was very positive.

I liked to make researches about my topic and also to speak about it and the other topics of my classmates.

The final paper assignment was very helpful for me to train myself of how to conduct a mini-research and write an academic writing.

A couple of students said that they would have preferred doing projects on multiple issues.

I learned a lot from the final paper and studied a lot. It was really really helpful for me but it was a little bit boring to focus on only one assignment during two months.

I like the final paper assignment so much. But I think we could do more than 1 project.

It would be great to expose students to actions related to various issues. One way that it might be possible for students to try actions related to more than one issue during an eight week term is to do the actions together as a class. Instead of having students chose a topic and an action, I could introduce a topic and action each week or two and have the students try them together. They could write about their experience with each one and reflect upon their favorite at the end of the class. I think this would work great, but it would mean writing a few shorter papers rather than developing a lengthy academic paper. This is fine, but many of my students this past term specifically wanted to work on academic writing. In addition, I tend to favor assignments where students choose the topics themselves. Also, it would reduce the freedom of students to choose their own issues and actions, as we would have to reach a class consensus. Still, I would be interested in trying the project this way in the future.

In the third question, I asked students what they learned by doing their action and if they would continue doing it in the future.

Of course I will. And I learned many new things other students' report. I want to do actions as much as I can.

I realize the power of teaching. When you read something amazing, surprising you keep it in your mind. I think that is why I change my mind during this class. I was so surprise for example when reading little articles about action like changing the type of [light] bulbs, etc...

I take the problems seriously so that each action is worthwhile. I changed the detergent that I use, I carry my own chopsticks and cup to preserve the environment.

...I could learn all global issue are connected each other...

Before I took this class, I was not interested in global issue. But since I took this class I got interested in any kind of

global issue. And this class is so interesting and I learned a lot. I will continue what I learned in this class.

I changed my behavior. I started refuse a plastic bag in supermarket and I start to pick some trash up when I walk in beach or street especially beautiful place.

The fact that all of the students said that they planned to continue their action is a positive thing, although I realize that this does not necessarily mean that they actually will. I am planning to email them in a few months time to ask some follow-up questions, even though those answers too will be self-reported and potentially unreliable. At the very least, judging by these comments, this project seemed to raise awareness about the interconnected nature of these issues.

In the last question, I asked students if there was anything else they wanted to tell me about the class.

I tend to talk about 'Global Issues' with classmates. This class affected me so much. It was helpful for me.

This class is very very good -> don't stop it. It bring me so much.

This class is just helpful for our earth because education is so important. To know present situation about those problems is the first step to solve them.

I really appreciate you because we tend to forget a trivial but important things. We tend to want to treat big issue or big things. However, it is from a trivial and our daily small things.

All of the feedback for this class was overwhelmingly positive, as was the official end of term evaluation that the students turned into the office. In fact, the overall evaluation score that I received from the students was the highest I had ever received. Thus, it seems that students are able not only to learn about and act upon important global issues, but to enjoy doing so. Their comments show that they have started to realize the power of “small” actions, and I hope that they continue to engage with these ideas.

## **Difficulties and Limitations**

My experience using these materials may not be transferable to other situations. Other groups of students would undoubtedly respond to them differently, and other teachers would certainly present them in their own way. That being said, I hope that some of the ideas and activities I have put forth will be of use to teachers in a variety of settings. I intend to continue using them, and will adapt and modify them as I do.

The most difficult aspect of this project was the time constraint. Students had to begin their actions quickly. Ideally, I would have spent more time introducing issues and brainstorming about actions before asking them to choose. Given the fact that we were working with a short term, though, we needed to begin working on the project, and thus choose topics, almost immediately.

More importantly, a couple of students did not really grasp the intention of the action component of this assignment. For example, I had two students choose hypothetical actions that they would do in the future or actions that we all should take, without specifically doing one and describing the experience. The fault for this is undoubtedly my own, and I will try to do a better job of explaining it the next time around. In addition to modifying my explanation, I now have several student papers that should serve as good models.

Another difficulty was that not every student's topic conformed strictly to my conception of a global issue. At the same time, I do not like limiting my students' research choices. For example, I had a student who really wanted to focus on English education, and decided for his action to observe some classes and interview our program administrator. Even though this

project was not exactly what I had in mind, I encouraged the student to pursue it. It is more important to me that students do projects that are meaningful to them than projects that are meaningful to me. When I do similar projects in the future, I will continue to be flexible about what constitutes an appropriate topic and action. At the same time, I will attempt to better explain the types of action that I am suggesting.

Another component of this project that I am interested in developing further is the connection between consumption and global issues. I would have liked to spend more time looking at how our shopping habits are related to the world around us. In addition to looking at what we options we have, I would like to develop activities that encourage students to think about the types of consumerism that are made convenient in our society. For example, is it easier to buy environmentally-friendly shampoo or more polluting shampoo? Is it easier to buy sustainably or unsustainably farmed food? Is it easier to buy drinks in disposable or reusable containers? I think it is both interesting and important to think critically about the types of consumption facilitated by our society, and the motivations behind them.

Finally, I would like to try to do this project again making the peer education component stronger. As it was, I gave the students opportunities to share knowledge and opinions with their classmates, but much of this was done in an unstructured and informal way. It would be interesting to bring in more substantive activities, like mini-lectures or poster presentations. I think that students would enjoy these activities, and they would also be good opportunities for language practice. In addition, there is a possibility that doing more peer education in class could lead to more peer education outside of class. In fact, another component of the project could be to share the results with someone outside of the class and report on that experience.

## **Risks for Teachers**

As I said in the introduction, I realize that this type of teaching is not for everyone. There are risks and difficulties inherent in dealing with global issues. Peaty (2004) addresses some risks one should consider when bringing global issues into the language classroom, the first one being “inadequate teacher knowledge of the subject” (n.p.). As someone without a formal background in global issues, I was initially nervous about my ability to engage students with this sort of content. I am happy to report, though, that this was not a serious obstacle. As long as I made it clear to my students that I was not an expert, we were able to share productive learning experiences about issues that were important to them. When we did not know the answer to a question that was asked, and the students and I would try to find it for the next class. This proved to be motivating for some of the students, and also contributed to an inquisitive classroom atmosphere. I sincerely hope that teachers interested in incorporating global issues will not let their lack of expertise prevent them from doing so. For critical teachers interested in serving more as a facilitator, it is not necessary that they be a storehouse of all relevant knowledge.

For Peaty (2004) the “real issue, then, is not whether or not to integrate global education into language teaching, but how to do it without indoctrinating our students” (n.p.). As I said previously, in my opinion, this has more to do with how information is presented than the content itself. Thus, it should be a concern for all teachers, not only those interested in incorporating global issues. Teachers addressing global issues need to create a classroom atmosphere in which students feel comfortable expressing their opinions. They need to ensure that students feel safe disagreeing with both each other and the teacher, and help them to do so in a respectful way.

This includes giving them the pragmatic and linguistic tools they need. The next time that I do this project, I will include these things more explicitly than I have in the past. Also, teachers need to be careful to present their opinions in a non-forceful and transparent way. And, again, I believe the issue of indoctrination is a concern of every teacher, not only those bringing global issues into their classrooms.

Every decision that we make in terms of both content and classroom management models and encourages certain political and ethical behaviors. Unquestionably, ethics in the classroom is a controversial issue. “Whose ethics are we talking about? Whose morals? And how can you tell a worthy cause from an unworthy one?” (Widdowson, 2001, p. 15). For some teachers, the fact that these questions may not be answered objectively means that we they avoid dealing with them in the classroom.

Personally, I think these are excellent questions to bring into the language classroom. In my teaching, I often get great results from discussions and projects stemming from questions that are difficult or impossible to answer objectively. I do not feel obliged to know the answer to every question that I pose in class. Thus, I do not find myself stymied by Widdowson's questions. In my classes, we talk about *our* ethics and our morals. Just as we do in our lives outside of the classroom, we use our judgment and critical thinking skills to determine the worthiness of causes. It is true that much of this will be subjective, but that does not, in my opinion, make it taboo. The answers and opinions we come up with are by no means absolute, and remain fluid and flexible throughout our class. Ideally, they should remain flexible throughout our lives.

On a related note, Freire warns of the risk that “certain members of the oppressor class

join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, thus moving from one pole of the contradiction to the other” (p. 46). He is cautioning against people who “know what's best” for the people that they are trying to help, thus recreate a form of the very hierarchy they are trying to oppose. I do not want to be guilty of this in my own teaching. As someone with strong convictions, I have to be very careful not to insist that my students agree with me or push by opinions on them.

In an important way, though, my situation is fundamentally different from that described by Freire. I am not joining a class different from my own. I am attempting to raise awareness among people who, from an socio-economic standpoint, are similar to me. My family was not poor. We were educated about, but not particularly active in, environmental or social justice issues. We talked about these things, but our actions were not much different from those of any family living the “modern” lifestyle. We had more than we needed, drove more than we should and consumed more than our share. It is through this shared commonality that I hope I can encourage my students to consider their role in this world.

Bringing controversial issues into the classroom carries with it certain responsibilities. Brown (2004) offers a list of six moral imperatives for critical language teachers, reminding us that while we “promote critical thinking on complex issues, [we should] remain as neutral as possible in the process” (n.p.). Personally, I do not believe that neutrality exists and do not object to teachers giving their opinions provided they are transparently and non-forcefully presented. I certainly do not think that controversial topics should be avoided. I agree with Cates (1997) that “controversial issues can provide an opportunity for both the acquisition of language and the acquisition of knowledge, thinking and action skills” (n.p.). I want to give my students as much freedom in terms of topics to be covered as I possibly can.

Most importantly, it is crucial that students' language goals do not get lost in the content. As language teachers, we have a job to do. That being said, within the context of content-based language teaching, there is a lot of room for meaningful discussion and reflection about important issues. We need content, so why not choose content that matters? The activities that comprised this project were designed largely to generate a lot of language input and output. The research component required reading, comprehension and summarizing. The action component required reflection and expressing of one's own experience and opinions. In addition, there were many class discussions based upon elements of the project. The papers produced were longer and more deeply thought out than others that I have received from students at this level, indicating to me that language goals were not neglected.

## **Conclusion**

Brown (2004) observes that “language class is an ideal locus for offering information on topics of significance to students” (n.p.). After doing this project with my Global Issues class, I feel that, not only is a language class a good place for offering information, but it is also a good locus from which to engage in action. Going forward, one of the issues I wish to consider and further investigate is how to make the experience of doing an action more meaningful, with the goal of inspiring long-term change. Ideally, I would like at least some of the students take something of the experience with them after the class is over. In their final projects, many indicated that they would continue their actions, but I do not actually know whether any long-term changes occurred.

While I do believe that these issues that we face are, without hyperbole, a matter of life

and death, I also believe in not imposing my ideas on students. As a result of doing this project, though, I believe that it is possible to give students freedom in terms of the issues discussed, while creating opportunities for action and reflection. Instead of insisting that students learn about issues that are important to me, I had success letting them choose issues relevant to their own lives. Fundamentally, the issues themselves are not of primary importance. Encouraging students to engage in reflective consideration of their actions is worthwhile, regardless of the issue.

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## Appendix A

### Brainstorm!

To help me plan the class, and also to get some ideas for our final projects, I want to begin by asking you to choose 4 global issues. Tell me why it is important, and also try to come up with some ideas for actions that we can do to help improve the situation. Feel free to list more than one action! Don't worry if an idea is good or bad at this point. Just try to choose things that are important to you!

1. Issue:

Why it is important:

What we can do about it:

2. Issue:

Why it is important:

What we can do about it:

3. Issue:

Why it is important:

What we can do about it:

4. Issue:

Why it is important:

What we can do about it:

## Appendix B

### Final Project - Introduction

In this class, for the final project, I would like you to do a presentation or paper addressing a global issue. This project should include several parts. First of all, you'll need to do some research to collect some background information on the issue. You can use books, magazines, the Internet or other sources. If you are interested in really practicing academic writing, you can include a list of sources at the end of your paper, and I can help you with the format of this.

In addition to presenting some information on your issue, I also want your final project to include some sort of activism. This could mean volunteering somewhere, or getting involved with an organization, but it could also mean making changes in your own life. Below, I have a list of actions and the issues that they are related to. There are many, many more possibilities, this is just to give you some starting ideas. The final part of your project will be about your activism experience, and your thoughts about the future.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Action</i>
Air Pollution / Global Warming	Buy local goods. Don't drive your car / take the bus. Use less electricity (air dry your clothes, etc.)
Consumerism	For gifts, make your own or give non-material gifts. Keep track of what you buy and how it was produced.
Coral Reef / Ocean Life Protection	Only buy sustainably farmed / caught seafood. Use non-toxic sunscreen.
Fair Trade	Buy fair trade foods / coffee / clothes. Don't shop at places that sell things made with cheap labor. Support co-ops.
Garbage / Waste / Litter	Don't use disposable cups for your coffee. Don't throw usable things away, give them to charity (ie Good Will) Keep some public area clean. Organize some sort of recycling.
Health	Eat local / organic foods. Volunteer at a hospital or other health care facility.
Homelessness	Volunteer at a homeless shelter / food pantry.
Tree Conservation	Take paper out of the recycling stack to make your own notebook. Buy recycled toilet paper / paper towels. Use less of both.
Water Conservation	Turn off the shower while soaping up or brushing your teeth. "If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down."
Water Pollution	Buy organic food. Clean up some river / coastal area. Use eco-friendly detergents / soap / shampoo / household cleaning stuff.

## **Appendix C**

### **Homework**

I would like you to write about 1 page about an issue that is important to you. It could be something that you would like to learn more about or something that you would like to teach other people about. Use some or all of the following questions to get some ideas of what to write about.

Why is this issue important?

How does it affect your life? How will it affect your life in the future?

What do you know about the issue right now?

What else would you like to know about this issue?

What possible actions could you take to have a positive effect on this problem?



## **Appendix E**

### Label Reading Homework

For this assignment, I would like you to find a label in your home and write a couple of paragraphs telling us what it tells you. In addition, please write about whatever other information you know about the product, and where you learned that information. What other information would you like the label to include? What information do you need to make your shopping decisions? Where can you get this information? What were you thinking about when you bought this product?

## Appendix F

### **READING CIRCLE ASSIGNMENT**

#### **ACTIVITY PURPOSE**

The reading circle will give you a chance to discuss things you are interested in. You will get experience doing research and preparing materials. You will also gain experience leading a discussion.

#### **THE GROUP LEADER'S RESPONSIBILITY**

- 1) Find a 1-2 page article.
- 2) Prepare a vocabulary list of 5-10 difficult words/phrases, underline the words in the article, and provide the definition and part of speech. Make sure that the definition and part of speech match how the word is used in the article.
- 3) Create 8 questions (4 comprehension and 4 discussion questions) for the in-class discussion.
- 4) Lead and monitor the discussion of your article among your group members.

#### **CHOOSING THE READING**

You can choose any article that has to do with a global issue. Choose a topic that interests you. It could be related to your final project. It should be a news story, not just an "encyclopedia" type article.

Make sure that the article is not too difficult.

Internet news sites (yahoo or google news) are good places to find readings, but you can also use newspapers, magazines, textbooks, etc.

#### **READING CIRCLE DAYS: IN-CLASS READING AND DISCUSSION**

- 1) Bring the article to class the day before your discussion. The rest of the group will read the article for homework.
- 2) During the discussion, first answer any questions that your group has about the article.
- 3) Next, go over the vocabulary list.
- 4) Then, ask your group to give you their answers to the 4 comprehension questions.
- 5) Finally, discuss the 4 discussion questions. Make sure that each person in the group gives their opinion and that the group is not dominated by one person!

## **Appendix G**

### End of Class Feedback

Thank you all for the hard work you did during this class! As you can probably tell, many of the issues we talked about are very important to me, and I look forward to learning more about them as I read your paper. In the future, I would like to continue teaching this type of class, with these types of topics and activities. Thus, I would really like to know what you think about it, and I'd also appreciate any suggestions that you have. Thanks again!

What did you like / dislike about this class? What should I do again? What should I change?

What did you like / dislike about the final paper assignment? What, if anything, should I change?

What did you learn by doing your action? Was it worthwhile? Will you continue / change your behavior in the future?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about what we did / learned in this class?