Raising Global/Glocal Awareness in L2 Writing through Photojournalistic Images

フォトジャーナリスト的なイメージを通した L2 ライティングにおけるグローバル・グローカル意識の向上

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Abstract
Although using imagery is a common pedagogic strategy, research into the use of different types of imagery in the L2 writing classroom has been limited. Photojournalistic imagery provides an especially rich and powerful source of meaning and content and may form compelling material to explore global-glocal themes for productive composition. The account presented in this article explores the use of photojournalistic imagery around refugee issues in a first-year writing course at a private university. Learners were asked to choose from a set of photojournalistic imagine about refugees and to imagine themselves either as refugees bound for resettlement in Japan, or as individuals who specialize in working with refugees. The article details how the students then completed a sequence of guided writing tasks to explore the vulnerable situations that refugees find themselves and the life-changing and often traumatic experiences that they go through. Examples of the writing that the students produced about the lives of refugees reveal the powerfully empathetic and moving interpretations that the students made. This approach thus underlines the potential of using photojournalistic images for raising students' L2 global-glocal awareness in their L2 writing.

要旨
イメージは教育上よく用いられるストラテジーだが、L2 ライティング授業での種類の異なるイメージ使用に関する研究は限られている。フォトジャーナリスト的なイメージは意味や内容に関するとりわけ豊富で強力なソースを提供し、内容のある文章作成のためのグローバル・グローカルなテーマ探しにおける、説得力のある題材になるであろう。本稿では、私立大学１年生のライティング授業での難民に関するフォトジャーナリスト的なイメージ使用に関して論じる。学生には難民に関するフォトジャーナリスト的なイメージセットから選ばせ、日本に再定住する難民もしくは専門的に難民との活動を行う人物のいずれかとして自身を想像するように求めた。本論では、難民たちの弱い立場、人生を変えるような経験や多くの場合トラウマ的な経験を考察させる一連のライティングタスクを、学生がどのように完成させたかを詳細に提示する。難民生活に関する学生のライティング例からは大変共感的で心を打つような解釈が示され、L2 ライティングにおける学生の L2 グローバル・グローカルな気付きを高めるフォトジャーナリスト的なイメージ使用の可能性を明示している。

Key words
imagery, photojournalism, Global-Glocal awareness, L2 writing, empathy イメージ、フォトジャーナリズム、グローバル・グローカルな気付き、L2 ライティング、共感

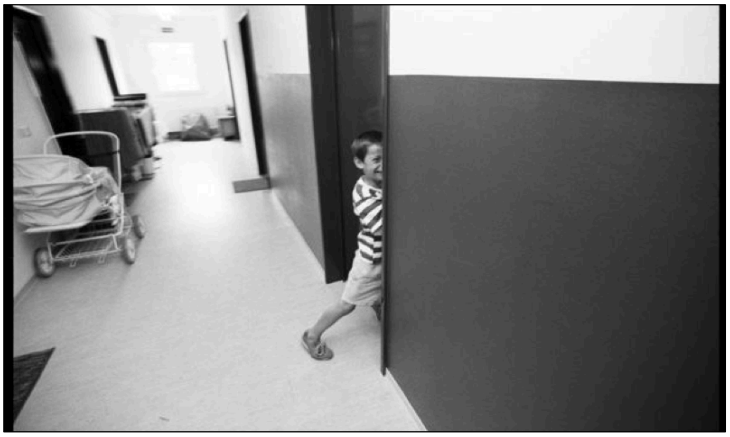

Figure 1. Asylbewerber in einer Sammelunterkunft in Gauting (Bayern,.Deutschland)/Asylum seeker in shared accommodation in Gauting (Bavaria, Germany). Andreas Bohnenstengel/Wikimedia Commons.

Take a look at this picture. It may be nothing more than a photograph of a boy, no more and no less. Yet let us assume that there is more to this picture that what appears at first glance. For example, we may notice the boy's clothes. Perhaps not new, but secondhand? Perhaps the clothes are also not entirely clean, though they could be. As we may also notice the surroundings, we will also see bare walls and a nondescript hallway, plus something that looks like a baby carriage next to the opposite wall and a door. An apartment building, perhaps of working-class families? Or could it be another kind of building—a hospital or clinic?

We could make inferences one after another in this process about what we see, and build stories in our minds about the boy, his surroundings, and where he is. From there, we may infer many things between what we see and guess and a reality that is deeper and may yield a story about the boy's family, their circumstances, and perhaps even his future.

In reality, the image is derived from a photograph of a boy in a refugee center in Germany. Viewers have no clues other than the credits on the image about the title of the shot and the location. They may not even notice such information. Yet if they get around to the credits, it might confirm much of what they inferred.

Such inference is the stuff of everyday understanding. We constantly encounter things we do not initially know or understand, yet deal with them if there is something that piques our interest, and consequently make meaning from them. In itself, inference may seem unremarkable for its commonplace utility. Yet such meaning-making has more to it than what appears on the surface. Indeed, an entire field is devoted to the study of this phenomenon from a variety of sources, including the visual—namely, semiotics. What is more, as language learning is also a process of making meaning and understanding out of what is initially the unfamiliar, the phenomenon plays a crucial and not inconsiderable role for learners.

What might an image such as this provide to language learners, and what might they be able to express about it? This short paper explores the use of photojournalistic images on global-glocal themes with mostly first-year humanities students in a private university high intermediate-level basic English writing class. The image above was one of three photographs used to gauge the effects that such imagery had on the students' written expression and exposition, along with the role that the frame of photographic contextualization may have played in shaping what they wrote. Photography, in particular photojournalistic images, may provide rich sources of context and facilitate the meaning-making that could boost learners' confidence and skill in description, characterization, and exposition in writing.

Overview of Imagery in L2 Pedagogy

Imagery in the widest sense of the term has long had a place in the language classroom, and its instrumental function has often been taken for granted. The following view may be a fairly typical characterization of how most language teaching has positioned the use of imagery in the L2 classroom:

> (…) illustrations, visuals, pictures, perceptions, mental images, figures, impressions, likenesses, cartoons, charts, graphs, colors, replicas, reproductions, or anything else used to help one see an immediate

> meaning in the language may benefit the learner by helping to clarify the message, provided the visual works in a positive way to enhance or supplement the language point. (Canning-Wilson, 2000)

Yet such a view, while undoubtedly true, may obscure how some forms of imagery may function more deeply in language teaching and learning. Research has explored the capacity of audio-visual material to bring together listening comprehension, authentic spoken language, and cultural content (Tomalin & Stempleski, 1990; Herron & Hanley, 1992; Braddock, 1996), while its stimulation of oral and written production with a range of learners has also been noted (Wetzl, Radtke, & Stern, 1994; Weyers, 1999). The authenticity of such material for the L2 classroom is highlighted by Breen (1985), and its capacity to bring together language and content in "real-time" use is endorsed by McCarthy and Carter (1995).

For teachers who may wish to sidestep the complicating factors that may come with some digital audio-visual material, however, photography may serve as an alternative. Its content can be as rich and variegated as film and video but held within a fixed framework, and comparatively more straightforward to use in the classroom. The research in ELT, however, is somewhat less incisive with regard to the use of photography. Most language research involving visual material tends to indiscriminately group photographic images with other forms of imagery. Yet photography is structured somewhat differently from other visual material, and a fuller examination of its structure and possibilities of use is necessary.

The Potential of Photography for L2 Global-glocal Content

A groundbreaking study of visual anthropology may shed light on the unique structure and potential of photography and its suitability to language teaching and learning. The American anthropologist John Collier Jr. first explored the use of photographic imagery in the 1950s in pioneering ethnographic research on socio-economic changes in eastern Canadian fishing communities in the Maritime provinces. He used photographs to elicit stories from his subjects for recollection of their past ways of life and to ascertain effects of the changes on their mental health, finding that the images had an affirmative impact on his subjects in yielding detailed and expressive recall. Collier (1957) observed:

> We feel that the stimulation of a photograph stems from its very nature. A photograph is an abstraction. No matter how familiar the object or situation portrayed may be, a photograph is a restatement of reality; it presents life around us in new, objective, and arresting dimensions, and can stimulate the informant to discuss the world about him as if observing it for the first time (p. 859).

What Collier discovered, and brings to our attention, is the way that photography frames a moment from observed and identifiable reality while removing it from the moment, paradoxically maintaining such time and space and preserving content within a framework that is comprehensible and communicable. What is more, this framework may also create another dynamic of immediate contextualization for the subject. For language learning, such play of ambiguity with comprehension and context may be a form of input that opens possibilities for meaning-making and exploration. But even more, such input, especially in photo-journalistic form, is ideal content for probing with depth a range of cross-cultural, social, and political issues (Landay, Meehan, Newman, Wootton, & King, 2001; Strickland, Keat, & Marinak, 2010).

The instantaneous contextualization that photography offers is ideal for positioning learner output into a larger contextual framework, particularly for writing. The role of contextualization for L2 writing was highlighted in a presentation by Paul Kei

Matsuda (2013) as a way of focusing learner writing and fostering greater meaningfulness in assignments by creating contexts for them to write to, with the aim of creating a small readership beyond the classroom. These features, when contextualized, may form engaging activities and projects for L2 learner writing. When explored as global-glocal content, potential for narrative exposition may open up greatly.

A Photojournalistic Approach to L2 Writing on Global-Glocal Issues

Perhaps the most stimulating photography many anecdotally see, recall and discuss is photojournalistic in nature. Such photography is especially suited for socially and politically oriented themes, and I decided to tap into photojournalistic image and content involving global-glocal issues with my learners. I chose to focus on refugee issues, given the timeliness of their situation and how images of refugees were the most striking and moving among what I found when searching for photography relevant to the overall global-glocal theme. Such issues are also relevant in terms specific to Japanese refugee policy: Japan admits relatively few asylum-seekers, and those it does admit have a profile that stands out in the country given their rarity. Who are they as people, what have they endured, how might they see themselves in Japanese society, and what are their hopes, dreams, and ambitions for the future in Japan?

Believing that such images would unfold much for my learners, and provide content that would enable them to rise to a new level of meaning-making and exposition in their writing, I selected three photographs of various situations involving refugees. I downloaded them from Wikimedia Commons, including the one shown in the introduction, and in turn uploaded the photos onto a blog I created for classroom activities and homework. I explained to the class that I would gather their writing into a blog page collection of student writing on global-glocal issues called *Leaving Home, Going Home*.

As the writing unit was not in a CALL classroom, I asked the learners to access the blog on their mobile devices and view each picture, then select one and write an initial paragraph in their notebooks. I asked them, when writing their paragraphs, to imagine themselves as a refugee selected to be resettled in Japan, or as a worker for an NGO in Japan dealing with refugee issues and writing on the immediate needs of refugees upon resettlement. My decision to allow the class to choose between two different approaches with the images and how to write about them was twofold: while the focus on the writing in this unit was on the paragraph level, I wished to draw on a sense of creativity from those who wanted to explore it, and to enable them to try to go beyond the paragraph level and into essay writing, for those who wanted to try to write more.

Indeed, I was intrigued by the idea of learners writing creatively to factual content. Smith (2013) points out the contradiction of a stereotypical approach frequently taken by teachers with their learners in producing written content. In his example of graded readers and other creative material in reading classes, he states that teachers often ask learners to write factually about the material they have read, but without asking for their visceral reaction to the stories, or by extension, for them to create stories of their own. He makes the case that "the study and practice of creative forms…is particularly beneficial, and that the human tendency to produce literature—even in a foreign language—should be acknowledged and harnessed in foreign language education" (Smith, 2013, p. 13). Within such a view, I sought to have my learners engage with factual content viscerally as a basis to write creatively. It was my sense that such an approach could encourage the learners to probe and write with empathy, and that doing so would not trivialize, but frame the content in such a way as to bring out their immediate, gut-level reactions.

With the strengths of audio-visual material in mind and the blog capability for it, I also decided to upload a video (Katsuyasoda, 2012) to the blog from a Japanese NGO about refugee resettlement

issues and needs, produced in both Japanese and English. While the focus was still on the photographs as the basis for the learner writing, I saw the need for additional support that the learners could access easily as needed, and that they could nourish their writing with while reflecting on the issues that the photographs might raise for them. I felt that their interest in these issues could possibly be stimulated beyond the classroom, perhaps even turned into content for the humanities seminars involving essay writing that they are required to take in their second year. The next part in the process for the students was to develop their initial paragraphs into short compositions of two-to-three paragraphs in length, to be read aloud to each other and peer-checked and -edited, then typed and emailed to me as first drafts in file attachments for me to review, comment on, and send back to the learners to refine or revise as needed. The students readily accepted this approach and means of sending me their writing, some examples of which follow in the next section.

Figure 2. Asylbewerber in einer Sammelunterkunft in Gauting (Bayern,.Deutschland)/Asylum seeker in shared accommodation in Gauting (Bavaria, Germany). Andreas Bohnenstengel/Wikimedia Commons.

Learner Writing on Refugee Issues

The writing samples here are taken from the *Leaving Home, Going Home* blog collection. Overall, the content of the writing revealed layered and sophisticated exploration inspired by the images. Here is one sample where the learner identifies as the subject of the picture to unpack thoughts and feelings many refugees face:

> *I am in the hospital now. Because I undergo an examination to go to Japan. Not only me but also my family undergo it. In other words, my family and I are doing to move Japan. My family is my father, mother and one sister. Only I haven't finished an examination yet. I'm afraid of an injection. I wish I'm not injected.*
>
> *Moving to Japan is sad. Because we are leaving our hometown soon. Also I must make my farewells to my friends. I don't know when we can meet again. I received letters and pictures from my friends yesterday. They are my important treasures. Although leaving my hometown is sad very much, I am looking forward to living Japan. I think Japan is a beautiful country, I want to learn Japanese culture and I'm interested in Japanese. Japan seems a fun country. However I have a question. "Is Japan a beautiful country?" I have been told about Japan from my parents. "Wars aren't happened in Japan. Japanese environment is good and Japan is a developed country. But there are some troubles even Japan. They are relations to other countries, political problems, homeless and so on." Although it's difficult for me to understand them, I'll learn about them.* (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).

This writer demonstrated great depth with feeling, projecting the fears, trepidations, and hopes of what the boy might have been facing.

Writing creatively to such an image enabled emotional understanding and identification with the human material at the center of the picture. To the same image, another student gave the boy not only similar thoughts and feelings, but also a name:

> *I am five years old, and my name is Brian. I am going to go Japan as refugee. I have two feelings. First, I am exciting to go Japan, because I can get more comfortable new life. Second, I am nervous and sad, because I cannot speak Japanese, so I am afraid of communicate with Japanese. I want to make friends, but maybe it is difficult. Also I have some friends in my country, but I have to say good bye to my friends. And I do not have enough knowledge about Japan. These are my feelings.*
>
> *When I get used to new life in Japan, I want to help people like me, and I will study hard to protect my parents. Then I will get more good new life. Maybe I think I will get many difficult and hard things in*

Japan, but I am with a strong feeling.
(The Daily Sekaijin, 2015)

This student went further to project Brian's future dream for his family—a dream that many refugees harbor in their hopes for a better life both here and in the countries they are often resettled in.

Figure 3. Evstafiev Travnik refugees. Mikhail Evstafiev (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Some of the writing wove backstories within their scope. This learner projected a life story of a former refugee, who, out of tragedy, built a life after resettlement in Japan and adjusted to a Japanese way of life:

I'm 76 years old now. That story is when I was 40 years old. My wife is gone, because my wife was dead by war. I'm so sad and I can't live without the wife. But I have to live. So I escaped my country seven years ago. I saving money now, because I'm hoping to go to Japan, and I want to have private business. I have two children, who is one boy and one girl. My job is making traditional things. So I want to know a lot of people that what kind of my job and what is the traditional things. My country's traditional things are textile and ceramic ware. It is my pride to make traditional things. I go to unknown country called Japan and want to spread this traditional quality.

When I was 40 years old, I got a visa to go to Japan at last. Children were delight with me, but we were full of uneasiness. We thanked people who were taken care of so far and on the day to go to Japan, went to the airport. We boarded an airplane. When we arrived at Japan at the first time, it was very cold and it snowed in winter. We were so surprised because we saw snow for the first time. There was our house in the place called Azabu. There was the town which was quiet and seemed to be safe. When we opened the shop, Japanese people were interested in and they saw it. Article and we. Five years later, I thought Japanese people is so kind but introverted and so negative. Some people is positive but almost negative. But now, we are used to life in Japan and live happily. We love Japan. My job and life is success!! (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).

On the other hand, this writer took the migration itself as the subject, writing with greater brevity but no less empathy about what a refugee feels on the journey itself:

Figure 4. Refugees on a boat. Unattributed U.S. Navy photographer (Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

I feel very depressed at this moment on the boat. I usually don't get sea-sick, but I feel like I'm about to throw up. Too many people on one boat. I see some girls crying, grabbing mother's sleeves. Some adults are singing the national anthem for not to forget our mother country. I didn't want to leave my country. I asked my girlfriend, well, my 'ex' girlfriend to come with me, but she said "no". Here I am. Standing on the boat with my pals, sharing our least moist cigarettes.

Few of my pals are very pumped up and excited to go to Japan, but I'm not. Is it because of my ex, or my anti-fish? I don't know. I guess I'd have to start very slowly to get used to new cultures. I'm feeling melancholic. I don't care how my life's going to be. I don't mind living in the city or country. I don't mind living with ten other people in one tiny room. My only wish is only her. Oh boy... "I can't swim". (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).

The following student took the approach of an NGO worker, taking account of a composite of people and situations from each

image to analyze and present in concrete terms what the immediate needs of refugees in Japan are, along with the network that is necessary to sustain their lives here:

> *I think that the answers of questions are so many, so in this paper, I will list four factors which seem to be needed for refugees. First of all, they would need the information to live in Japan. For example, how to find the houses to live, buy foods, wash their clothes and count the money in Japan. The second they would need is the companies to advise each other. In the group, they can talk about any alert and learn how to live comfortably, and be relaxed. The third one would be the language skill of Japanese. It let them live in Japan without too much care that NGO cannot do and make their lives easier. But I think teaching Japanese is out of work of NGO because teaching acquires the high level of knowledge and skill of plane expression. If I were the worker in the NGO office, I would look for the group teaching Japanese voluntary. The fourth ones are important for refugees to continue living in Japan. Those are supports to make them get jobs and let their children go to school.*
>
> *Now, I wrote about what refugees need for their lives. But there is more important factor. It is for Japanese. Japanese who live with them would need some help to have communication with refugees. So it must be needed that spreading information about refugees to Japanese to get rid of alert that Japanese has. Those Japanese must be afraid of new comers from foreign countries.*
>
> *At last, to do all these factors, NGO workers have to try to connect with other diverse communities in Japan like local-governmental bodies, schools, plants or offices, voluntary groups and so on. To support refugees' lives is not only for work of NGO but all of our communities, groups and organizations in Japan.* (The Daily Sekaijin, 2015).

Overall, the learners responded positively to the project and the images. The photographic contextualization appeared to help the learners not only focus their writing, but embroider their compositional output with specific detail and exposition that demonstrated empathetic engagement and identification with the people, situations, and issues within the images. The prospect of publication online within the scope of a blog also gave an additional level of contextualization, as well as enthusiasm, in that they were writing for a potential audience beyond the classroom.

While the writing that was situated from the vantage point of NGO workers yielded extensive details on refugee resettlement issues, and the learners could identify with the hardships the refugees may face in Japan, the submissions that took the position of the refugees themselves yielded the most moving work. Such identification enabled learners to break their writing through to creative areas and may have given them a path for extension and characterization. Such aspects may have enriched their composition and contributed to their understanding on refugee issues, and sensitized them to global-glocal themes as a whole.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this process, I had a feeling that photography would be of value for global-glocal theme exploration, all the more with photojournalistic imagery and the compelling content it is known for. Yet I did not foresee, as the process unfolded, just how powerful such imagery could be for developing empathetic engagement and greater depth among learners. This seems to validate my sense that learner creativity is an essential component of language learning, and that it can be channeled in directions that do not detract from academic gravity, but rather add a new dimension to it.

Focusing on refugee issues through such imagery gave learners a platform to craft stories and accounts of greater authenticity that imagined the refugees depicted in the images as more than photojournalistic subjects. Such a platform enabled learners to see refugees as genuine people who could be identified with and understood in immediate and plausible terms. More than anything else,

it brings forward the value of the specific and the concrete as a means to take global-glocal themes out of the abstract and into something instantaneous and graspable for learners. Such an angle is one I wish to continue pursuing with other classes where such content is relevant.

Language teachers often say that they wish for their learners to develop an identity in the L2. The raising of global-glocal awareness through photojournalistic imagery in this writing class enabled the learners to engage and identify with the theme in human terms and perhaps in doing so, deepen their own L2 identity. Perhaps the key in facilitating such development of identity comes from allowing learners to engage with specific and concrete content that stimulates and enables them to craft such content in their terms.

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