

## **INTEGRATING VALUES INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING**

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### **Abstract**

*Studies in English Language have now come to accept the fact that the affective factors complement the cognitive aspects of learning and both are essentially partners in the mind. During the initial years of research into the language learning phenomenon, much stress was placed on the workings of the cognitive domain while the affective domain was ignored for a long time. As this forms an important part of the human personality it is extremely vital to consider its due status in language learning. Integrating Human Values into English Language helps not only to qualify the students and teachers in their upward mobility towards success in society but also helps them to become good citizens and human beings which is extremely essential in the present times. By promoting value education through language, learners grow intellectually, morally and emotionally. Since every human being is a limb of society, only if the human beings are value driven can we expect whole societies to be peaceful and harmonious.*

**Keywords:** English, language, values, affective, integrating

### **Introduction**

Studies in English Language have now come to accept the fact that for effective acquisition of language, we require the active participation of both the cognitive and affective domains of the human personality. In fact, the affective factors complement the cognitive aspects of learning and both are essentially partners in the mind. During the initial years of research into the language learning phenomenon, much stress was placed on the workings of the cognitive domain while the affective domain was ignored for a long time. As this forms an important part of the human personality, it is extremely vital to consider its due status in language learning. In his seminal work 'A Way of Being', in the chapter titled 'Can Learners Encompass both Ideas and Feelings' in the third section titled 'The Process of Education and its Future', Rogers commented about the current situation in American educational institutions, "they have focused so intently on the cognitive and have limited themselves so completely to 'educating from the neck up', that this narrowness is resulting in serious social consequences." (267)

**Studies in Affect**

Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition marked a watershed development in Language learning. Krashen's Theory described the Affective Filter Hypothesis. It states that a mental block caused by affective or emotional factors can prevent input from reaching the student's language acquisition device. The affective filter hypothesis stipulates that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal role in second language acquisition. These variables include motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. When the filter is up – that is, when negative emotional factors are in play – language acquisition suffers. When the filter is down, it benefits. (Krashen)

This leads us to conclude that as Affect plays a very important role in second language acquisition, it needs to be taken into consideration by L2 teachers so that they make sure that the students' affective filter is low at all times for learning to take place. In other words, for effective language learning to take place, problems created by negative emotions have to be overcome first. Positive emotions that promote or facilitate learning have to be created so that they can gradually replace those negative emotions or feelings. Learning a second language can be less daunting if positive values like encouragement, optimism, self analysis, self confidence, goals, initiative and such other virtues are stressed as part of the learning experience as these can help in doing away with affective factors like stress and learner anxiety.

In a classroom where learners are faced with the L2 learning situation, in this case - English, the focus should be on providing a conducive, encouraging atmosphere so that learners can get over their inhibitions and learn the language freely. This is more so in adult L2 classes. Here the stress on values from the given lessons makes the learner more confident and provides him with a greater motivation to shed inhibitions and unmindful of the fear of making mistakes, learners can proceed with learning the language. As the learner concentrates on focusing on the values, language learning takes place slowly and imperceptibly.

**Life goal and Language goal**

Another important reason for focusing on affect in the classroom goes beyond language teaching and perhaps even beyond what has traditionally been considered the academic realm. Daniel Goleman has convincingly presented his case for an 'expanded mandate' for all educational institutions. He laments about the 'emotional illiteracy' that plagues our society. "These are times," Goleman states "when the fabric of society seems to unravel at ever-greater speed, when selfishness, violence and a meanness of spirit seem to be rotting the

goodness of our communal lives.....” He puts forth as a solution “a new vision of what schools can do to educate the whole student, bringing together mind and heart in the classroom.” (xii, xiv).

Jane Arnold in her article ‘A Map of the Terrain’ refers to Ehrman who opined that the purpose of classroom learning was not only to convey content information and to Stevick who spoke of bringing to language teaching a concern for ‘deeper aims’ for pursuing new ‘life goals’ not just for reaching certain ‘language goals’ (3). As we teach the language, we can also educate learners to live more satisfying lives and to be responsible members of society.

This stress on values was seen in Humanistic Theories propounded by Abraham Maslow in 1954 and Alderfer in 1972 which were highly value driven. They emphasized the natural innate desire of every learner to learn and master language. Therefore, they maintained that the learners need to be empowered and take control over the learning process thereby relegating a facilitator’s role to the teacher.

From Maslow’s ‘Hierarchy of Human Needs’ we understand that there is a huge potential for personal growth once the basic needs of an individual are met. (fig 1)

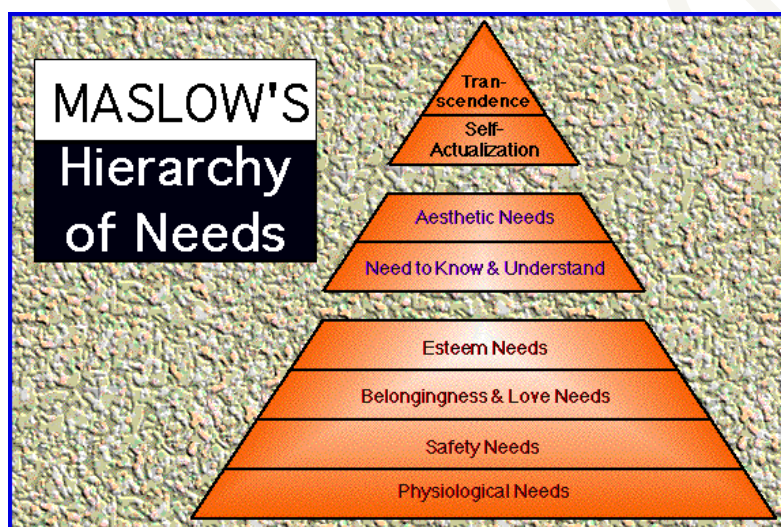


Figure 1

Humanists stress the need for personal growth. They place a great deal of emphasis on the total person, in short, a blossoming of an integrated human personality. This is an aspect which has to be explored further in our classrooms.

Williams and Burden argue that educational psychology shares much with humanistic approaches to language teaching especially in the need to go beyond mere language instruction to a concern with “making learning experiences meaningful and relevant to the individual, with developing and growing as a whole person. We would argue also that it has a moral purpose which must incorporate a sense of values”. They also state that “there is a

difference between learning and education which implies that in order to be of value, a learning experience should contribute to a person's whole education as well as to their learning of an aspect of the language." (E. Murphy, slide 27/28).

In the past, proponents of psychoanalytic theories like Erikson and Sullivan have proposed that interpersonal and social relationships are fundamental to language learning as they encourage cooperative learning. In fact, Erikson's Theory of Socioemotional development veers round the development of values or a value system as an individual matures from infancy to adulthood (Erikson). Thus we can see that language acts as a powerful vehicle of expression and therefore mastering the language helps the learner to build a sound value system provided there is the right amount of emphasis on value based learning.

These have been the innumerable studies to name a few, undertaken by path breaking proponents in the past who pointed out that there was more to language learning than just mastering the language. English language learning becomes effective when values are integrated into the lessons. It helps in the blossoming of a complete personality in the long run while helping the learner to master the language.

### **What do we mean by Values?**

According to Rokeach, 'Values are defined in literature as everything from eternal ideas to behavioral actions. As used here values refer to criteria for determining levels of goodness, worth or beauty. Values are affectively-laden thoughts about objects, ideas, behavior, etc. that guide behavior....., (12). The act of valuing is ..... the acquisition of and adherence to a set of principles. We are covering values as part of the affective system. However, once they are developed they provide an important filter for selecting input and connecting thoughts and feelings to action and thus could also be included in a discussion of the regulatory system.' (W. Huitt)

Thus a value can be explained as any positive virtue that helps to discriminate between the right and the wrong and helps an individual to grow and develop as a responsible member of society. While the primary human values are Truth, Love, Peace, Right Action and Non violence, there is a whole gamut of sub values running through these primary values like consideration, sacrifice, tolerance, trust, empathy, friendship, contentment and the like. Literature is strewn with these gems and for a discerning and committed teacher, integrating them or eliciting them even as lessons are being taught in the class becomes a rewarding exercise. Values cannot be taught in isolation and a resourceful teacher can blend them along with the lessons.

### **Objectives of this article**

1. To stress that values can be integrated into English language so that learning becomes purposeful and help the learner to grow as an individual besides enabling him to gain proficiency in the language.

2. That this integration of values can be done gradually and progressively at all levels namely
  - Elementary
  - Primary
  - Secondary
  - Tertiary and
  - L2 Adult learning classes.
3. That integration of values into the English language helps in maintaining a low affective filter, thereby facilitating language acquisition/ mastery.
4. When teachers use a value based approach to teaching English, imparting the language becomes a lot more rewarding as it helps them to lead a life of fulfillment with a sense of achievement, of going beyond their routine call.

In her work *Affect in Language Learning*, Jane Arnold quotes Van Lier (Personal Communication) who states that in teacher training he finds it useful to set teacher development within a broad spectrum of experience. He refers to three components

Having- relates to the knowledge (of subject matter and pedagogy, of self and others) and resources, teachers have available

Doing- to their skills and their abilities to construct learning opportunities and

Being- to their personal qualities, their vision and their sense of mission

Thus as part of their professional training, teachers can benefit from working on their personal development (4). This precisely is what this article proposes to assert, that using a value based approach while teaching English helps the teacher to mould the learner, at the same time enriching them personally as well.

How can this kind of integration be done within the context of the existing syllabus? Here's a poem which can be used to drive home the point.

A sample lesson:

**A Sea of Foliage-Toru Dutt**

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,  
But not a sea of dull unvaried green,



Sharp contrasts of all colours here are seen;  
The light- green graceful tamarinds abound  
Amid the mango clumps of green profound,  
And palms arise, like pillars gray, between  
And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls lean,  
Red- red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.

But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges  
Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon  
Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes  
Into a cup of silver. One might swoon  
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze  
On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

**Objectives:**

- Explain the meaning of the words and phrases from the poem
- Read the poem with correct intonation and phrasing
- Help the students understand the poem and realize the beauty of nature
- Contrast the greenery presented in the poem with the concrete jungles of today.

**Understanding the Values**

- Appreciation of nature
- Care of the environment
- Student's role in preserving a green earth.

**Motivation:**

Nature Poems by other Poets.

Presentation.

Teacher's activity

Read the poem. Understanding the poem.

Learner's activity

Have you observed nature? Does it move you? What are the feelings when you see a beautiful tree with colourful foliage?

Understanding and appreciation of the poem.

Elicitation of values

Appreciation of the world around us.

The vivid contrast of colours in nature.

Application

Our responsibility in preserving them for posterity.

Conserve resources, help in planting more trees.

Thus every class can be used to help understand the lesson and also convey the values that are there in every lesson. All it requires is the creativity and commitment from a teacher.

### **Implications of using this approach**

In theory it will help learners absorb the nuances of language a lot better if values are explored in the classroom through the available or prescribed material in hand as there would then be a greater motivation for the students to learn the language. Values like self confidence, self esteem etc when brought out in the class help to keep the affective filter low thus facilitating language learning.

As a policy, value integration into subjects is mandatory and is recommended by the Central Board of Secondary Education and higher education bodies. In practice it will help create a society or a future generation of right thinking men and women whose outlook to life at large is humanistic, which is the crying need of the hour. All over the world there is a need for students to accept responsibility for their actions so that they can lead a life of harmony and bring back the balance which is lost today in selfishness, in pursuit of self- centred goals.

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