

Philosophy of Teaching as an ESOL Teacher (A study on curriculum development in adult education)

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ABSTRACT

Philosophies and theories of teaching are not mutually exclusive, but each educator can select what philosophy or theory of teaching suits him or her depending on the learning atmosphere, small or large group of learners, the subject and material of teaching. All theories are just different ways to look at how personality develops and mostly they come from different perspectives of psychology such as the humanistic philosophy states: individuals especially adults have free-will and that we can actively develop themselves to the highest potential whilst the Behaviorist articulates: if something is not noticed then it will be learned.

This paper, will try to identify a philosophical perspective on adult education as English for speakers of other Languages (ESOL) teacher and present a stance as for an experienced adult educator having five years of teaching experience in this field. Furthermore, will state a set of guiding principles for teachings that to believe in, such as management, trust, and respect, empowering, engaging, nurturing and teaching not lecturing the learners in the teaching process.

Moreover, will illustrate views of different scholars who write on humanistic philosophy and behaviorist theory of teaching, such as Maslow, Chomsky, Bandura and others. In addition, will discuss other themes that show the practice of teaching such as audiolingual, learning environment in classes, the dynamic in small and large classes. Material and design of classes, the learners' autonomy and the relationship with learners, activities, assessment and feedback plans will be discussed in different paragraphs. Finally, will state an opinion about the values, ethics, and professionalism in teaching followed by a conclusion of a philosophy of teaching and a descriptive figure of figured philosophy (Figure 1, p. 13).

Keywords: humanistic philosophy, Behaviourist philosophy, ESOL, Autonomous learning.

Poxta

Veqetî Fîlozof û teoriyên hînkirinê ji hev cûdatir nabin, lê her mamosteyek dikare li gorî atmosfera fêrbûnê, koma piçûk an mezin a hînker, mijar û materyalê fêrbûna kîjan felsefe an teoriya dersê hilbijêrin hilbijêrin. Hemî teorî tenê awayên cihê hene ku meriv binihêrin ka kesayet çawa pêş dikeve û bi piranî ew ji perspektîfên cihêreng ên psîkolojiyê digirin, wek dewletên felsefeya mirovnasî: kesen bi taybetî mezinan xwedî vîna azad in û ku em dikarin xwe bi awayek aktîf pêşve bixin heya ku herî zêde Bihêzparêzî diyar dibe. : heke tiştek neyê dîtin dê wê fêr bibe. Di vê xebatê de, dê hewl bê dayin ku perspektîfek felsefî ya li ser perwerdehiya mezinan wekî Englishngilîzî ji bo mamosteyên Zimanên din (ESOL) nas bike û helwestek diyar bike ji bo mamosteyek mezin a bi ezmûnek xwedî ezmûnek ku di vê qadê de 5 sal tecrûbeya hînkirinê ye. Wekî din, dê rêzek rêgezên rêberiyê ji bo dersên ku bawerî pê tê de, diyar bike, wek rêveberiyê, bawerî û rêzgirtinê, hêzkirin, tevlêbûn, nermkirin û hînkirin ji xwendekaran re nabe ku di pêvajoya hînkirinê de fêr bibe. Wekî din dê nêrînên zanistên cihêreng ên ku li ser felsefeya mirovantiyê û teoriya behreyniyê ya hînkirinê nivîsîne, wek Maslow, Chomsky, Bandura û yên din. Wekî din, dê mijarên din ên ku pratîka hînkirinê wekî audiolingual, hawîrdora fêrbûnê di dersan de, dînamîk di polên piçûk û mezin de nîşan bide nîqaş bikin. Materyal û sêwirana dersan, xweseriya xwendekaran û têkiliya wan bi xwendekaran, çalakî, nirxandin û plansaziyên nerînê dê di paragrafên cûda de werin gotûbêj kirin. Di dawiyê de, dê li ser nirx, exlaq û profesyonelîzmê di hînkirinê de ramanek bide dû dû encamek felsefeyek hînkirinê û fîlozofek diyarkirî ya felsefeya rastandî (Figure 1, p. 13).

PEIVEN SEREKE: Felsefeya mirovantiyê, felsefeya Behaviourist, ESOL, Fêrbûna Xweser

1. Introduction

In the following paragraphs focuses on the humanistic approach to ESOL, considers humanistic education and its application and approach in the learning process. It begins by work and ideas of some psychologists such as Maslow (1968), Brown (1971) and Moskowitz (1978). The humanistic approach to ESOL appears since the 1970s as a movement against the structural approaches that means that all learners learn in the same way and they are as if machines and the educator are controlling the learning process in classrooms (Richard and Rodgers, 2001). I believe in the humanistic approach, as it makes the learners actively engaged in class. Besides, the process of creating the curriculum is made by both the educator and the learners above and beyond it treats the learners as individual human beings not just as machines, thus gaining cognitive and emotional understanding.

In another view, Gardner (1985) supports the socio-educational model by which he emphasizes the effect of motivation and cognitive as being effective in the successful acquisition of a second language. I have confidence in in the different views of humanistic approach that mentions by Stevick (1990) self-actualization, the quest for the full realization of one's own deepest and truest qualities; intellect, including knowledge, understanding, and reason; responsibility; social relations and feelings, including both personal emotions and aesthetic appreciation (pp. 23-24). I think that these components are crucial and should be applied in my classes and I try to cover these during my teaching sessions.

As mentioned above, one of my guiding principles when working with adults is to respect the autonomy of the learner as Moskowitz (1978) states "Humanistic education is related to a concern for personal development, self-acceptance, and acceptance by others; in other words making students more human" (p. 12). In language teaching classes, I believe there should be a total respect for the ideas and needs of the learners. I would behave as a facilitator in the class and try to avoid personal agendas. Instead, my aim should be to make the learners more integrated into the involvement and process of building the curriculum. The learners in a humanistic climate are not considered "full-time linguistic objects at whom language teaching is aimed", but are seen as "human individuals whose personal dignity and integrity, and the complexity of whose ideas, thoughts, needs, and sentiments should be respected" (Medgyes, 1986, p.109).

As outlined earlier, I correspondingly have confidence that it is significant to nurture the adult learner. In my practice, I aim to support learners and respect their feelings and emotions similarly encourage their social relationships, for example, friendship and cooperation among learners, and between learners and educators. Furthermore, helping the learners to develop awareness about their learning and inspire them to discover their hidden abilities and talents as well as develop a positive self-image. These features can be reflected in the principles of humanistic education. Huitt (2009) mentions the following basic principles of humanistic approach: learners learn best in a non-threatening environment; self-evaluation is the only beneficial approach of

learners work; feelings are as significant as facts; learners will learn best what they need and want to know and the act of how to learn is more significant than acquiring a lot of knowledge.

2. Autonomy in the learning environment and adoption

In my point of view, according to Huitt (2009), the principles of the humanistic approach are vital to give the learners the opportunity to choose and decide what they want to learn and the way how to learn, and the most important point is that, relating the learning materials with what the learners need in their lives. For example, if my students are immigrants or asylum seekers in the UK, I will try to seek for the materials that relate to their circumstances like the employee rights, minimum wage-rate, job center, CV and motivation letters, zero-hour contract, life in the UK and other subjects related to health, renting, bills and so on. I will try to gain my autonomy as an adult educator and try to be free from the strict roles of some agencies that deliver a fixed kind of curriculum in the UK due to some policies and regulations such as the British council curriculum that is delivered in mostly further education colleges in the UK (Lester, 2011). As pointed out in the introduction to this paper, the cognitive side of ESOL classes can be more integrated into behaviorist theory as anything cannot be learned unless it has been noticed (Schmidt, 2001). The behaviorist theory in second language acquisition also has implications for me as an ESOL educator. Originally, the behaviorist theory did not have much to do with language at all. It was behavioral psychology, the idea that all actions whether by humans or animal are all learned behaviors and it can be learned and unlearned. Pavlov, a behavioral psychologist, had discovered a process in which a previously neutral stimulus came to evoke a specific response by being repeatedly paired with another stimulus (1897). His famous experiment involved dogs. He rang a bell at the dogs' mealtimes. Over time, he changed the experiment, ringing the bell without serving food to the dogs. The dogs would still salivate, showing that they had been conditioned to expect food at the sound of the bell. Pavlov called this classical conditioning.

After Pavlov, another psycho-behavioral theory that is usually attributed to an American psychologist named Skinner 'if you offer reward or reinforcement following the response to stimulus then the response becomes more likely in the future'. What does all this have to do with second language acquisition? In the 1950s and 1960s, it becomes popular to apply behavioral psychology to all types of learning including language learning. Two psychologists have most known for applying behavioral psychology to learning, and especially language learning is Watson (1930) and Skinner (1971). This application and behavioral psychology to learning eventually led to the behaviorist period second language acquisition.

3. Behaviorist view and the experimental evidence on language learning

Turning now to the experimental evidence on language learning in the behaviorist view, which is a process of habit formation, limitation, practice, and reinforcement (feedback on success). Chomsky (1972) argues that children are born with a specific innate ability to discover for themselves the underlying rules of a language system based on the samples of a natural language they are exposed to. Information processing in second language acquisition involves building up knowledge that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding.

Long (1990) modifies the interaction hypothesis which is necessary for language acquisition. The interactional modification makes input comprehensible. Comprehensible input promotes acquisition and negotiation of the meaning promotes language development. Noticing does not itself result in acquisition but it is the essential starting point. Wertsch (1979) describes Vygotsky's work where he refers to the socio-cultural perspective that means language development arises because of social interaction and thus creates a developed kind of behaviorist theory and it is worth mentioning the direct "Nothing is learned unless it has been noticed" (Schmidt, 2001, p.13). Moreover, learning is thought to occur when an individual interacts with an interlocutor within his or her zone of proximal development that is in a situation in which the learner is capable of performing at a higher level because there is support from an interlocutor. All the above statements show how important interaction is for the sake of building language acquisition, and I should emphasize these interactions by keeping the learners practicing language on daily basis and in class and on online platform portals as a distance education exercise.

Referring back to behavioral theory, the learner is the organism whose behavior is being conditioned. The stimulus is what is taught the response is the learners' interaction and repetition of the stimulus. Reinforcement is provided by the approval of the teacher and fellow students. As well as self-satisfaction language, mastery is represented as acquiring effective appropriate language stimulus-response chains. By considering language stimulus-response chains, we can take a brief look at audiolingual some, which is the teaching method that originated from the behaviorist theory. Audiolingualism can best be identified as the teaching method that uses the behaviorist theory in language learning that equals to habit formation. Dialogues and drills are the preferred methods of instruction and correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, and intonation are emphasized. Error prevention and error correction also were heavily emphasized following classical conditioning from behavioral psychology; correct responses received positive reinforcement thereby encouraging the desired behavior. On the other hand, Chomsky (1972) says the language is not a habit structure. Ordinary linguistics behavior characteristically involves innovation and formation of new sentences and patterns under rules of great intricacy. It is worth mentioning that behaviorist theory is not popular in adult education but the key importance in language teaching.

4. Bandura's view of social interaction learning

Some weaknesses of the behaviorist application lead to a new vision called social interaction learning. This vision was developed by Albert Bandura (1973) and was named as a social learning theory. Bandura's view of social interaction learning adds social elements to the traditional behaviorist learning theory. It brings out the fact that people learn new things by watching others. This includes learning their behavior attitudes and reaction. The theory emphasizes the importance of observation and imitation that people can learn from others. Bandura states that the reward and punishment of the teacher are not the only factors that contribute to the students' motivation (Bandura, 1973). I agree with Bandura's statement and I think that the motivation comes from the inside of a learner and plays a huge part in their learning.

This is also known as intrinsic motivation. Bandura creates a new approach in behaviorist theory, which is called the modeling process and he states that there are four steps of this process:

1. **Attention:** for the students to learn they should pay attention. Anything that detracts attention is going to harm observational learning.
2. **Retention:** remembering what the students had paid attention to. This includes symbolic coding, mental image, and cognitive organization.
3. **Reproduction:** once the students paid attention to the model and retain the information. It is time for them to actively perform the behaviour they observed.
4. **Motivation:** Finally, for observational learning to be successful, the students must be motivated to imitate the behaviours that has been modelled besides that reinforcement and punishment play an important role in motivation.

In my case as an ESOL teacher, I will try to motivate the learners by such a modeling system that can be applied in addition to regarding the students' self-motivational desire in learning, also taking account of the instructions that support social learning.

As an adult educator, I pay attention to the learning environment in my class whether a small or large group engagement. It is crucial to make sure there is a supportive learning environment in the classroom, where the learners can get emotionally involved in the learning process. The learners must be encouraged to evaluate and monitor their performance; thus, I should aim to provide a teaching climate that is an enjoyable experience for them. In humanistic and social teaching, there should be an emphasis on both the emotional and intellectual aspects of the learners to make sure that each learner is engaged. In other words, I must make sure that the head, as well as the heart of the learner, is in the learning process to guarantee the 'whole person' development (Moskowitz, 1978).

Regarding the humanistic class, it is learner-centered class, that learners acquire new language skills by using materials that are relevant to them and by taking into consideration their needs and preferences, and by learning with others. Terrell (1982, p. 281) suggests, "The significant humanistic activities are those which explore the learners' goals, opinion, values, ideas and feelings as well as their experience". According to the above quote, I found the important approaches of the humanistic

class by which the psychological and cognitive aspects of learners are mostly focused on acquiring both aspects besides their linguistic progress.

It is worth to mention I should be aware and attend to any barriers in the class settings whilst practicing teaching from humanistic and social learning approaches. For example, physical constraints and large class size which can cause learners to have poor language skills and lack of confidence in expressing their feelings in front of others (Brown, 2001). It is my duty as an educator to allow learners to express their opinions, feelings, and emotions and more significantly to share their experiences with others in the classroom. The learners in my class can actively participate, emotionally engage themselves, and even be decision-makers in the learning process. I should encourage my students to discover their real self so that they can be able to use their hidden potentials that lead to a positive feeling about themselves for better learning as learning is affected by how students feel about themselves (Moskowitz, 1978). I believe that cooperative learning is important rather than competition among students and individual style of learning in class and enclosed tasks, in other words, the learners can “work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Ning, 2011, p. 61).

In terms of a small and large group of students, the dynamics are quite different. The engagement of the students in a large group of students is a bit challenging but certainly, it is possible. There are some differences in building a relationship with students in both groups. In my experience, I always feel that there are a few students that somehow, I have just missed connecting with. In a large group class, I cannot have an in-depth personal discussion and get to know the students as well. Thus, I have to compensate for that by actually increasing my enthusiasm, increasing my strategies for engagement because students will not be naturally engaged in a large class. I believe I have to be a little more of a performer to realize that I have a larger group audience that subtle and personal connections are not going to happen automatically. Thus, in a small group class, I can build personal connections with each person but on the other hand in large group classes looking for connections and engagement I must work harder to get that job done.

As well as the learning environment, I also have to think about the material and design of classes. The material in humanistic and social learning teaching should make the learners actively engaged in the learning process. The educator should not stick to a fixed textbook rather than that he or she must try to develop and modify materials that suit his or her needs (Huitt, 2009). “A pupil tends to remember only what he has experienced and what is in harmony with his personality” (Stevick, 1982, p.115) which means, I should not only emphasize technical matters of teaching a new language but also issues related to everyday life and include learners’ experience. It is my duty as an educator “to feel competent to supplement or gradually replace material whenever it is found wanting” (Stevick, 1982, p. 117), I would also allow my students to choose the materials. In some cases, I should be aware of the materials due to the size of the class and time of the teaching as well, in order not to miss the connection with the learners.

5. Teacher-student relationship principle of humanistic approach

Besides, I also have to consider the teacher-student relationship and learner autonomy. The crucial principle of humanistic that I should care about for my learners' freedom because "any sort of humanistic approach to language teaching would be self-defeating if it was imposed on students against their will" (Appel, 1989, p. 266). In humanistic teaching, the teacher plays a vital role in developing good relations with the learners both inside and outside the classroom. In this case, I should be teaching friendly and cooperatively with students, and I would have a positive attitude towards them and show sympathy and empathy for them. There should be a sense of mutual respect and trust between the educator and the learner. The easy and friendly relationship between my students and me will facilitate the teaching-learning process.

To engage students, I also have to consider activities, assessments, and feedback that I will use in class. In humanistic and social learning classes, the activities and tasks should be enjoyable and the teacher should make activities interesting and try to relate the content of the lesson and the tasks to their lives and level of competence. Various activities can encourage learners to share their experiences and create a cooperative climate by activities such as simulation, role-play, and debates and so on.

The activities and performances of the students need to be evaluated continuously. There is no formal type of examination in the humanistic learning atmosphere because the formal evaluation will create a threatening environment in class (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). The learners will gradually develop cognitively and affectively (emotionally) if there is a continuous assessment process, which I want to focus on in my teaching practice. Patterson (1977) states that when the learners are evaluating their work as self-evaluation. This activity increases their freedom as one characteristic of humanistic learning. I agree with the idea of self-evaluation and encouraging learners to monitor and assess their performance but also I believe there should be also a formal examination by the educator as a final assessment towards the end of each semester or end of studying period to reassure learners' learning. Following class activities or tasks and assessments, there should be feedback from the educator. The feedback should not only flow from educator but it "will also flow from the student to teacher and between students" (Underhill, 1989, p. 257).

6. Self-autonomy and professionalism in teaching

Finally, my commitment to my job as an ESOL teacher means I must explore my values, ethics, and professionalism in teaching. Teaching as a job has a wide range of responsibilities and accountabilities. People when come into teaching they are bringing values and their values to make professional judgments. How I can bring my values to merge with professional judgments?

There are many ethical themes that I should be responsible for such as, how I can make the learners successful and confident learners, how I put the interests, well-being, and developments of adult educators first. There are some challenges also I should take into account for example: how I would strive to establish a productive

partnership with learners' parents; how I promote equality respect, diversity, without any discrimination towards religion, gender or age group. To be aware of these challenges I should negotiate with myself to reach the ultimate goal of my teaching. What is it to be as a teacher and how to start, endorse and affirm the principles that underpin my practice plans? My job as a teacher will express my values to the students, to the parents, and the public that I am trying to serve.

To sum up, language learning in humanistic class means considering both the heart and brain of the learners and in the behaviorism, perspective is a matter of conditioning utilizing imitation, reinforcement and habit forming, although this theory has its shortcomings. It has merits as well, and still influences the teaching of a second language, though certainly not to the extent that it did when it was first introduced. My role as a teacher is to guide students to understand better their world through the core practice of language literacy, composition, and speaking. I wish to nurture every student in a fashion that enables him or her genuinely trust me as an educator. I wish to empower my students to be self-motivated learners, seekers of knowledge and self-betterment in the realm of language via interactive social learning and humanistic atmosphere that I would like to create in the class. I highly believe that while I am a course facilitator my students will practice and carry discussion-based analysis and a student-based exercise. As a firm believer in the humanistic theory, I want my students to be always engaged in doing the curriculum not just listening. I want my students not to feel inhabited by black or white, right or wrong based lessons but rather an explorative journey of figuring out the answers building up to the future generation of English scholars that is what I am after and with that for the utmost progress.

The transition from where they have been to where their future is heading is in my hand during the minutes of teaching. I have to personalize and manage my curriculum, time, attitudes, resources and industry relations each year. Trust and respect are the core of building a successful teaching atmosphere by taking care and responsibility, preparation, equality and diversity, privacy besides considering health and age. Students deserve my time and the time of their peers. It is my job to create spaces and let knowledge happen everywhere.

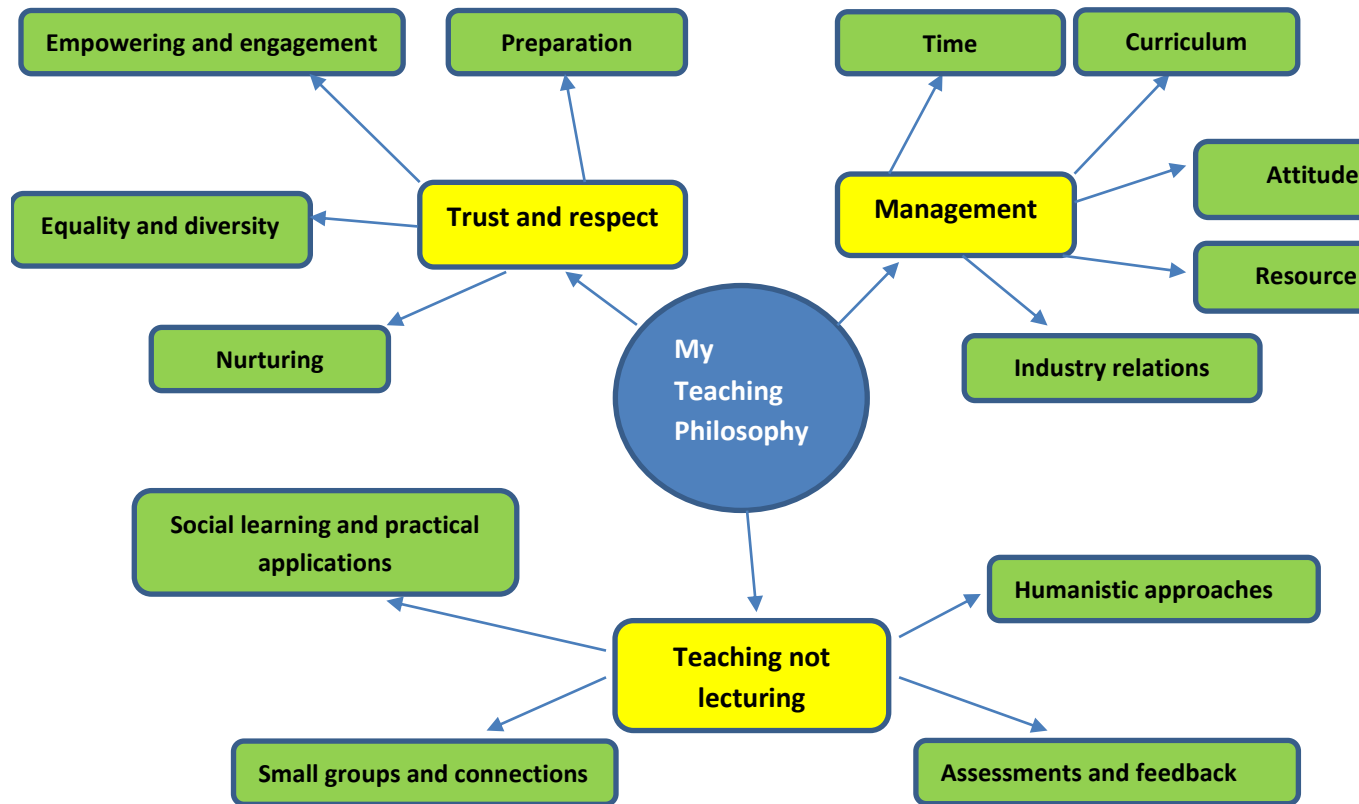


Figure 1: A descriptive diagram shows my teaching philosophy

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