

Socially Responsible Language Teaching in a Post 9/11 World

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While the five GILE SIG Colloquium panelists at JALT 2004 gave presentations varying in theme, all shared the belief that a key lesson of September 11, 2001 is that we as language educators must promote amongst our learners the values of tolerance, respect, and caring that are surely fundamental to fostering global citizenship. David Peaty, who moderated the Colloquium, introduces the main theme. Donna McInnis then relates how language can be used as a tool for peacemaking and non-violence. Next, David McCullough explores possible roles for moral education within the context of the Japanese university language classroom. Christopher A. Bradley then outlines an ethnographic study he conducted that indicated links between teacher motivation and Global Education curricula. To conclude, David Peaty and Christopher A. Bradley summarize final panelist Doug Brown's talk, "A Call to Action," as well as part of the question-and-answer session.

2004年度のJALT学会のGILE (Global Issues in Language Education) SIGコロキウム・パネリストの5人はそれぞれのテーマに分かれた発表を行ったが、どの発表者も等しく、2001年9月11日の主な教訓は、私たち言語教育者は学生たちに、寛容や尊敬の倫理や世界の市民たる基礎をなす人への心使いなどを奨励すべきである、ということだと感じている。David Peatyはこの論文の序論を執筆し、コロキウムの議長でもあった。Donna McInnisは非暴力と平和をつくる道具として、言語がどのように使われるべきかについて述べている。そしてDavid McCulloughは道德教育というものを日本の大学の言語学習の講義内容でどのように展開していくかについて述べ、Christopher A. Bradleyは自らが手がけたエスノグラフィック・スタディーについての概略を述べ、教師の側の動機とグローバル・エジュケーション・カリキュラムとの相関関係を示した。最後にDavid PeatyとChristopher A. Bradleyは質疑応答の議事録の一部と最後のコロキウム・パネリストのDoug Brownの『ア・コール・トゥー・アクション』と言う発表をまとめた。

The events of September 11, 2001 have affected educators and their work in various ways. For example, the war on terrorism has taken attention away from a far greater threat, that of global warming - a danger now acknowledged even by the CIA. But 9/11 has also drawn our attention to the social conditions in which terrorism breeds: poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, lack of opportunity. As educators, we can bring up these concerns with our learners, and we can often help clarify some of the issues for them.

This is of course controversial. If we try to express our own views, we can be accused of indoctrination. On the other hand, if we say nothing, we are surely neglecting our responsibility as educators. After all, what is education for? To produce skilled workers who will increase the GNP? To produce cultured citizens who can discuss literature and philosophy? I believe there's a far more important goal: to make the world a better place. When your students graduate from business school, would you rather they design hedge funds that ruin third world economies or micro-credit schemes that generate income for the poor? When your students graduate with science and engineering degrees, would

you rather they design bombs, or equipment for locating and destroying landmines?

What happens in our classrooms can make that difference. It can change our students' lives. When we work with global and social issues in the English curriculum, our students gain knowledge, skills and awareness. Many of them gain more: inspiration. They are inspired - as so many before them have been - by the heroines and heroes who appear in our classrooms: people like Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi, people who changed the world because they cared. Inspiration often leads to commitment.

The need for global education is not in doubt. But what has it got to do with language teaching? Our job is to develop students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Indeed; but this requires meaningful content. What are our learners going to read and write about? What will they listen to and talk about? A curriculum based on instruction in global issues provides us with powerful and stimulating content, relevant and up-to-date resources, chances to explore and express opinions, and opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Many teachers feel that global issues are too difficult for their students. Obviously the content we introduce has to be compatible with the students' level of intellectual and emotional development. However, the students' language level need not be a problem, as long as we can fine-tune our input and our tasks. If a reading text is too difficult, we can re-write it. If a TV documentary is too challenging, we can write a new narration, turn down the volume, and become the narrator.

This may seem like a lot of work for a busy teacher. However, the workload can be shared with other teachers,

and the materials can often be used in other classes and in subsequent years. Moreover, the satisfaction that the teacher gets from the students' active involvement and interest more than justifies the effort. Students like to be treated like adults and to work with sophisticated themes. They like to understand what's happening in the world, and to find their own solutions to the world's problems. As they read, write, listen, and speak about global and social issues, they acquire real language and the ability to use it as global citizens.

I and the four panelists whose talks are summarized below believe that themes related to global education can and should be brought into the language classroom. We also feel that one of the main lessons of the tragedy of 9/11 is that we must promote amongst our learners the values of tolerance, respect, and caring that are surely fundamental to the development of global citizenship.

Satyagraha ("Holding Firmly to the Truth") and Language: Building the Foundation for Peace and Nonviolent Futures

The effect of each individual thought or word is very small, yes; but taken together, the effect of our thoughts and images is not at all small. When certain kinds of thoughts and images become habits, they can become worldviews. (Michael Nagler, 2001, p. 237)

Shortly after the school shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, a young boy in Alberta, Canada walked into a school, killed one boy and seriously injured another. When interviewed, a girl who knew the shooter said tearfully,

“He wasn’t very popular and most kids were really rude to him. And I always felt bad for him... but I was rude to him sometimes too. And I think that’s one of the reasons...”

What did she mean by ‘*rude*’? Did the other kids taunt and tease him; did they make fun of him whenever he was in earshot? What kinds of cruel remarks would prompt a child to kill other children? Here in Japan, our young people are killing *themselves*, leaving behind letters revealing that they can no longer bear the mean and cruel words and actions of their classmates who bully them.

It is remarkable that it was only *after* the terrible tragedy in Alberta that the young girl was thinking about the effect of her words and actions on the boy who did the shooting. The story is the same with other recent violent tragedies: efforts to help increased in *reaction to the violence*.

Very few of us have been actively and systematically taught to think about the way we communicate with others or to manage and resolve interpersonal conflict in positive ways. Most often, the way that we manage our conflicts and relationships depends upon patterns of communication and behavior that we *observed* in our families and immediate social groups while growing up. Needless to say, this “hit or miss” kind of “learning” is simply not sufficient for the challenges that we face in our everyday lives. Very often, the “skills” that are “learned” are very destructive indeed. Yet we continue to use them because that is what we know!

Positive relationships are built on a foundation of healthy communication. All too often, language teaching focuses on the *mechanics of language* (teaching so called *skills* rather than teaching people to *talk* and to *really listen* to other people). In our language classrooms, we can help our

students become very aware of the power of their words; how the words that **they choose** to use can contribute to building positive relationships, to mend and to heal, or can have quite the opposite effect, destroying relationships, causing pain, emotional devastation, anger, and violence.

Nel Noddings (1992) emphasizes that the main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people - emotionally intelligent people (see Goleman, 1995). This notion of caring requires creativity, connection, and respect. It is very difficult to engage in violence and other destructive behaviors when you feel “connected” with and respect for yourself, the environment, and others. By proactively, intentionally and systematically creating a peaceable “community” in our classrooms we help our learners develop the capacity to care and instill in them hope for their futures.

This involves us in teaching our language learners a whole new way of communicating and *being* with others. Reardon (2001) stresses that we need to focus on educating the whole person with essential skills: communication skills; interpersonal skills; intercultural skills; and conflict processing skills. Communication for promoting healthy relationships between people, groups, and nations includes active, empathic, and “reflective, listening; participatory hearing; articulate speech; and the ability to clarify” (Reardon, 2001, p. 101). People with a well developed repertoire of skills to use language, to recognize the feelings, needs, concerns, fears, hopes and values of self and others can avoid the frustration that can produce the anger that so often leads to violence, hostility, and conflict. When mutual enhancement, peace, and nonviolence are the ultimate goals, emotions and thoughts are

expressed in ways that respect the dignity and humanity of those with whom individuals may have differences.

People also need to be awakened to the systematic, intentional use of language to shape our thoughts and world view and to obfuscate or conceal truth. Can a person be described as a “terrorist” or as a “freedom fighter”? I contend that neither label is accurate or true. We are talking about people who use violence to get what they want (Nagler, 2001). Also, who would employ the term “friendly fire”? Certainly someone on the *receiving* end would not!

All language users need to be made aware of “semantic dehumanization and linguistic warfare” (MacNair, 2003; Brennan, 1995), the subtle and not so subtle role language plays in dehumanizing or demonizing “other” to facilitate violence. How we perceive “other” people or groups is determined by the words, phrases, and linguistic constructions used to describe them by our political leaders or our media. Particularly during times of conflict, images of the enemy or “other” are constructed in many different ways. The people being attacked (“other”) are portrayed as deficient humans, non-persons, animals, parasites, diseases, inanimate objects, waste products, enemies worthy of attack, monsters, demons, or simply evil. As MacNair (2003, p. 3) puts it, “Evidence that they are real human beings is an interference, so this is ignored or scoffed at.”

Contemporary examples abound! The language used, read, and heard often socializes people into violence (Schaeffner & Wenden, 1995, p. 212). Vague, inaccurate, dehumanizing, demonizing, euphemistic, metaphoric, or mythic (Leshan, 2002) language may precede violent action, support action perpetrated by others, serve a key role in perpetuating

a culture of war and violence. As users of language we may unconsciously contribute to the perpetuation of these ideologies and the maintenance of the very social behaviors that we are working to change.

Through our teaching, modeling, and encouragement, we can instill in our students an acute awareness of the language they use, the language they hear and read, and their behaviors as well as daily actions. Most importantly, we can provide experience and practice in building a nonviolent future in the classroom, with family and friends, and with global others. I conclude with some thoughts from Michael Nagler (2001, p.237):

...taking some care to use nonviolent, accurate words, and imagery becomes second nature in the course of time, and creates an incalculable influence toward peace. The habit of truth is also formed by small, repeated, doable efforts... – I don’t hesitate to call such humble efforts constructive programming. They constitute, each of them, a truth act, available every moment, to everyone; they are non-confrontational, even unpolitical, if you will, and yet so powerful. To speak and eventually to think as though life were sacred and human relationships mattered – that would be powerful. Because after all, it is so true.

Can the Language Teacher Be a Moral Educator?

When I look out over a classroom full of young Japanese faces and ask them to think about an issue such as “How do we deal with racism?” I am faced with inevitable questions

about the validity of doing so in an English language class. Can morality be taught? Do moral questions have a place in language classrooms? How can Western educators even understand, let alone surmount, the cultural differences between their values and those of their students? These are complex questions, questions that I would like to place within the context of recent thinking about moral education.

The past thirty years have seen a major shift in thinking about moral education throughout the world. Not so long ago the teacher's role in training students to think about moral issues was more clearly defined. An example can be seen in a handbook for teachers produced by the Irish Department of Education (1971, p. 23):

The teacher should constantly inculcate the practice of charity, justice, truth, purity, patience, temperance, obedience to lawful authority, and all the other moral virtues. In this way he will fulfill the primary duty of an educator: the molding to perfect form of his pupils' character.

However, as traditional values weakened in Western societies, teachers became reluctant to enforce values and students less willing to accept them. Social values adopted a significantly less important position in classroom discourse in almost every developed economy.

In order to place the shift in moral education within a theoretical context I would like to draw upon the work of Perth University's Brian Hill (1991), who has proposed the following four paradigms for values education: (a) Religious Monopolism, in which educational values are derived from the dominant religious values prevalent in society; (b) Moral Universalism, which constitutes an attempt to define values

which are common to all people and to help students identify and absorb these values; (c) Consensus Pluralism, whereby the variety of values in the world are considered and students are encouraged to discuss their own values in contrast with those of others in a non-confrontational manner; and (d) Moral Vacuum, in which no clear value position is promoted or explored.

In Western countries, education moved directly from Religious Monopolism to Moral Vacuum in the latter part of the twentieth century with many teachers feeling it just wasn't their job to talk about morality. However, the other paradigms show that there are approaches to morality which are not dependent on state or church sanctioned views. Recently there has been a major revival of interest in education for values and moral education. This has been driven in part by state bodies wishing to respond to societal demands that children need moral education. In Britain, for example, Citizenship Education, with education for values at its core, has been introduced as a formal part of the curriculum. Individual teachers have also been taking the initiative in reintroducing moral education to the classroom as a result of their own sense of what is necessary. An example of this development is Global Education which is very much part of a revival of moral education from the bottom up.

How has this international process of change in education for values affected language teachers in Japan? I carried out a small study of native-speaker English language teachers at my university (McCullough, in press) and found the following: (a) More than half felt it was important to convey their own sense of values to students, (b) two thirds agreed

that a consideration of values was important in the language classroom, (c) many teachers regularly included study of peace, racism, the environment and equality in their classes, and (d) most teachers were against the idea of changing student values. Clearly, many teachers are thinking about these issues and have some sense that values are important to what they do in the classroom. It is also clear that many teachers are uncertain about their boundaries when entering this area of work.

How can a language teacher justify discussing morality in a language classroom? For many thinkers, language education is inextricably bound up with cultural learning. Language socialization theory is opening a window on the idea that when we learn a language we learn how to behave as members of a society. Morals and values are so central to any conception of society that it seems that something is going to be missing if we shy away from these areas. It is important to recognize that language teachers are often the only contact a Japanese student will have with a foreign person on any kind of regular basis. As English teachers we can open a window not just on Western cultural values but also on international debates on values conducted in English. Gaining another perspective allows students to develop a “critical cultural awareness” of their own and other societies. This critical awareness can often be significantly underpinned by learning about the variety of values held in other cultures. The current debate around capital punishment in Japan, for example, can be illuminated for many students when they come into contact with the stances of American or British teachers on this question.

What practical measures, then, are open to a language

teacher who wishes to raise the great moral questions of the day in classrooms? How can one be a socially responsible teacher in the language classroom? Let us return to Brian Hill’s paradigms for values education. In the context of Moral Universalism we can use our classes to explore what moral perspectives young Japanese people share with the rest of the world. Global Education can help students see that ideas about peace, protecting the environment and combating poverty have more than just local perspectives. By working within the framework of Consensus Pluralism we can help students understand that different people and different societies often have different views and help them consider the importance of respect for those who do not always share our values. Thinking their way through the complexities of morality is what trains young people to develop their own sophisticated moral apparatus. In the context of a language class students are able to compare and contrast the moral stance of other cultures with their own and thereby ‘de-centre’ from their own moral world.

Can the language teacher be a moral educator? I believe that the answer is yes, although we need to describe this kind of teaching in an appropriately modern way. As foreign language teachers, the fact is that through our actions in class and through our choice of materials we express our values at all times. In the light of the darkness and tragedies of recent history, what is most vital is that we demonstrate to our students that our own values include a belief in their humanity, a belief in their unlimited potential and a belief in their ability to change the world for the better.

Charity English and Teacher Motivation: An Ethnographic Pilot Study

Teacher Motivation in the Literature

Zoltan Dörnyei (2003) asserts that while the applied linguistics literature on L2 learner motivation has been increasing quickly in recent years, there is little research on the motivation of ESL and EFL teachers. Regarding the Japanese context, I have been unable to find any studies that address teacher motivation. This pilot study is a modest attempt to pioneer such research.

Salmon (1988) notes that good teaching involves much more than simply doling out knowledge. Rather, it is “an attempt to share what you yourself find personally meaningful” (p. 37). To date, however, I have been unable to find empirical research in the disciplines of Applied Linguistics or general education in which teacher motivation is shown to correlate with opportunities to teach meaningful content.

H.D. Brown (1994) holds that teachers’ lack of autonomy can make their jobs extremely stressful: “Institutional constraints are sometimes the biggest hurdle you have to cross” (p. 129). Since such constraints, as well as other factors, can cause teaching to be such an emotionally draining job, this led me to wonder where some teachers get the energy required to go the extra mile to volunteer their time to what they perceive to be worthy causes. The extant literature on teacher motivation in various fields related to education does not address this issue.

In reviewing much of the existing literature on student de-motivation in second language education contexts,

Dörnyei (2001) concludes, “...teachers have a considerable responsibility in this respect” (p. 155). It appears that Dörnyei is laying the blame for learner de-motivation squarely upon the shoulders of teachers. By contrast, very few authors of published studies in the disciplines of applied linguistics or general education consider the effects of learner motivation upon the motivation of teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to begin to address the gaps in the literature noted above. With a view to beginning to fill these holes, I formulated the following research questions:

1. To what extent can opportunities that classroom teachers have to teach what they perceive to be meaningful content increase their motivation to teach.
2. In a profession that is already known for inducing stress, why do teachers volunteer their time outside of regular working hours?
3. In what ways can learner motivation contribute to teacher motivation?

Method, Setting, and Participants

In order to try to find tentative answers to these research questions, I undertook an ethnographic study at a setting called MT School (a pseudonym). The 3 teachers interviewed for this study, who I shall call Max, Aline, and Ernie volunteered their time to be instructors there. All held paying jobs outside of MT School. While these

teachers focused in their MT School classes on similar issues related to global education, each group of students concentrated on a different area of the world. For example, Max had his learners study materials pertinent to child neglect and orphanages in the Czech Republic, while Aline fostered discussions with her learners on child neglect in the Philippines.

The learners at MT School consisted of college students, salaried workers, and homemakers. Each of the three MT School class groupings I observed met once a week for 75 minutes on a weeknight from late September to early December, 2003. All learners paid a fee of approximately 5000 Yen per month to attend the class. These tuition fees were donated in their entirety to domestic and overseas charities chosen by the teachers.

I gathered my data for the research questions from field notes I wrote based on my observations of each of the three MT School classes, and by conducting interviews of approximately 25 minutes with the three teachers (one interview per teacher). While I had already formulated a number of questions that I wanted to ask these teachers, I conducted the interviews in a semi-structured format so that I could maintain a certain amount of control over the interviews, while at the same time being open to unexpected turns taken in the interviews that might of themselves yield valuable data. Unfortunately, space limitations for this paper do not permit more than a small sampling of the interviews.

Results and Discussion

With regard to the first research question, the teachers in this study consistently brought up the idea that it was very important for them to be able to teach meaningful content. As Dörnyei (2001, p. 169) observes, teachers tend to be de-motivated when they lack intellectual challenges in their work. In my interviews with Max and Ernie, they indicated that such challenges were not lacking for them at MT School:

Max: It's authentically engaging because I'm doing something that's both intellectually and emotionally stimulating and that's what I want to do. That's the sort of teaching I want to do.

Ernie: One thing about the MT School that I like in addition to helping everybody is that I can learn a lot myself about, in this case, senior citizens' issues.

When trying to find answers to the second research question, when I asked Aline why, despite her busy and stressful job teaching English at a vocational school, she responded as follows:

Aline: Because of the whole experience that you are contributing. If nothing else, you're contributing some money to a worthy cause, and at the college, you are, or I am, only babysitting in a way.

Max put a similar sentiment even more strongly:

Max: You know, I think it has to be a nagging question – "How can I make this world a little better?"

The wish on the part of the three teachers participating in this study to make a tangible contribution should not come as

a real surprise, given that most of the 100 participants in an important study by Pennington and Riley (1991) on teacher motivation rated “moral values” and “social services” (p. 47) as the highest of 20 facets leading to job satisfaction.

Regarding the third research question, as noted earlier, few scholars in education or applied linguistics have been willing to look at the role played by some learners in de-motivating teachers. Referring to her work at the vocational college, for instance, Aline opined thus:

Aline: So, there’s nothing for them that’s meaningful, so it becomes less meaningful for the teacher as well I think, yeah?

Aline lamented as well about how she had gone out of her way to prepare what she felt were meaningful materials related to global education content, but that these learners, in contrast to those at MT School, responded with apathy.

Conclusions

Due to the limited number of participants in this pilot study, as well as its short duration, I do not purport to provide finalized answers to the three research questions. However, for the three educators profiled briefly in this study, it was obvious that their enthusiasm and motivation for teaching was at its highest when they had the autonomy to teach content that was meaningful to them and to their learners. In this case of these teachers, this was content related to Global Education. The initial results of this study indicate promising directions for future research on the motivation of EFL instructors in Japan. Such enquiries could include quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods research

on teacher motivation conducted in cross-sectional or longitudinal formats.

A Call to Action

The last speaker, Dr. H. D. Brown, gave a talk entitled “A Call to Action.” He described a survey which he and some other instructors conducted amongst their colleagues at a language institute that was part of a large American state-run university. During the course of this survey, the teachers, who were generally of a fairly liberal persuasion, were asked how they would respond if their learners expressed opinions in class that could be deemed controversial. Most of them said that they would engage students in a discussion or gently challenge their opinions if those students expressed an extreme right-wing opinion in class. By contrast, if a student gave a strong opinion that reflected a political position that was to the left of center, most of the teachers who were surveyed said that they would give a passively supportive response (e.g., “Oh! That’s a very interesting point!”) before moving on with the lesson.

Question and Answer Session

After Dr. Brown finished his presentation, a few audience members asked questions. The most provocative of these concerned how language program directors should deal with teachers who attempted to push agendas with extremist viewpoints (for example, blatant racism) upon their learners. Dr. Brown had actually been in such a situation, and in the case he described, he asked the teacher concerned to change his coercive agenda or to withdraw from the program.

After describing this incident, Brown stated his belief that if teachers were able to set up a climate of critical thinking, such problems could often be avoided.

One wonders if, by posing the question in the first place, the audience member was implying that merely by stating what could be perceived as controversial opinions, teachers are imposing their own views upon their unwitting charges. Donna McInnis addressed this issue head-on, asserting that teachers should never be afraid to express their convictions in class, and to thereby question dominant ideologies when necessary. To illustrate, she held that right-wing viewpoints were pervading media outlets, particularly in the United States with its plethora of conservative “talk radio” programs, and that therefore our learners needed to be given the opportunity to hear alternative perspectives from individuals who strove to challenge this hegemony.

Other answers offered to this question were that instructors should provide multiple sources of information in order to allow students to pick and choose from various points of view, and that if students had opinions which were clearly based on false information, teachers should provide corrective feedback. Unfortunately, a lack of time prevented further discussion of this very important issue. Perhaps a future colloquium could be devoted entirely to the delicate question of advocacy in the classroom.

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