



Value Based Activities for the EFL Classroom

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English language educators are increasingly realizing the importance of values in foreign language education. Among the various approaches to the subject of values in language education is the Living Values Education Project, or LVEP which uses values as the basis for its curriculum, activities, evaluation and classroom management aspects of education. The LVEP offers language educators both skills and tools to create a positive atmosphere in their class and practical approaches for including and adapting values into their language curriculum. Some of these activities are discussed as well as the general background to the topic of LVEP and values in the EFL classroom.

英語教育者は外国語教育における価値観の重要性をますます実感している。言語教育で個人を評価する方法は様々あるが、その中の1つにLVEP (the Living Values Education Project) というものがある。LVEPとは、教育の側面であるカリキュラム、アクティビティー、エバリュエーション、クラスルームマネジメントを評価の基準としたものである。LVEPは言語教育者に技術や手段を提供し、積極的な教室の雰囲気や言語カリキュラムに評価を組み込むための効果的なアプローチ方法を創造してくれるのである。LVEPに関する一般的なバックグラウンドやEFL教室における評価だけでなく幾つかのアクティビティーについても述べる。

English language educators are increasingly realizing the importance of values in foreign language education. Some approaches contextualize their concerns including issues on the moral role of the teacher in the classroom, teaching Global Issues in English, Peace Education and teacher development and education to name a few. As such, how might one begin to implement a values-aware education?

While many EFL educators may agree that there is no one single quick and easy answer to this question, ongoing educational projects such as *Living Values: An Educational Program*, have been working on ways to respond to this general educational concern about a missing dimension in educational systems around the

world for children of all ages everywhere (Tillman, 2000). UNESCO's Delors Report, *Learning: The Treasure Within* cites the fundamental role of education in personal and social development and the necessity of building the awareness and ability to operate within humanistic values we all share (Tillman, 2000). The ELT classroom is naturally a part of this ongoing work and the *Living Values Program* provides tools and skills for educators to introduce into their class a values-based educational approach.

The Living Values Project

The Living Value Educational Initiative started in New York as a joint effort between a group of twenty educators from around the world, UNICEF, UNESCO, The Planet Society, and the Brahma Kumaris. *The Living Values Educators' Kit* was piloted in 1997 and expanded into the four levels of curriculum components by 2000: Children Ages 3-7, Children Ages 8-14, Young Adults, and Refugee Children Affected-by-War. The curriculum is based on 12 key universal values: peace, love, respect, freedom, humility, honesty, tolerance, cooperation, happiness, simplicity, responsibility, and unity. As stated in the *Educator Training Guide*, one of the aims of this program is to "encourage educators and caregivers to look at education as providing students with a philosophy of living, thereby facilitating their overall growth, development and choices so they may integrate themselves into the community with respect, confidence and purpose." (Tillman, 2000, p.21) The LVEP program is currently ongoing in at least 64 different countries and continues to offer assistance to educators everywhere. A website is also available for news and project information.

The Living Values project curriculum activities menu offers practical application-oriented ideas that can be directly adopted or creatively adapted by ELT educators into their multi-level classroom. This kind of approach emphasizes the joint values-based role of the teacher and the students in the classroom on various levels including the role of the teacher, relationships with students, activities, discipline, and evaluation issues. Johnston (2003) states that it is in the best interest of ELT educators to become "aware of the moral meanings our words and actions may convey and to sensitive ourselves to this usually invisible but always important dimension of classroom interaction" (p. 32). This concern is addressed by the LVEP program, which uses values as its core. It focuses on raising awareness of these values for both educators and students alike and outlines skills and tools for creating such a value-based class atmosphere.

This essay will describe some LVEP activities presented in the Poster Session on the Living Values Project at the 2006 JALT National Conference in Kokura, Japan. EFL educators may wish to utilize these in their own classroom as way to introduce values-based approaches their own lesson plans.

Value based class activities

Group creative poster activity

The first activity is called "A Peaceful World Poster" in which students break up into groups to think about what they would create in their *new world*—people, places, ways of life, environment, etc. Students write out ideas for words and pictures they want to put on their poster. Each group

can take this assignment as homework and produce the posters in the following class. Allowing enough time for the students to write their ideas out in English and finish poster production, a positive oriented follow-up survey of each group's "Peaceful World" is conducted by the teacher, acknowledging each group's work. For the most part, in this kind of activity, the teacher plays the role of facilitator.

All class English language theme banner

Another group based visual arts oriented activity is a "Happiness Banner". The teacher introduces the topic of *Happiness* to the students from a personal experience as a warm-up to the topic. Then the class is divided into small groups to brainstorm their ideas of "Happiness Is ..." on paper. Each group then uses colorful markers to cooperatively make in English a banner to put up on the wall of their classroom. As before, a follow-up of each banner by the teacher completes the activity. As an additional follow-up the teacher can ask students to write short paragraphs about their favorite happiness topic. Teachers are advised to encourage students to take this and the above activity with a sense of English language learning and in the spirit of responsibility and actively discourage student choice of either inappropriate visual images or profanity in their posters.

Storytelling with illustration boards

Another oral communication activity that can be adapted to class levels from grade school through university is storytelling. With illustrative boards from a story, perhaps a fairy tale that reflects an important virtue such as love or

honesty, the teacher tells a story that communicates a values concept for the students to absorb and enjoy. One way to use this in an upper level university EFL class is to tell the story to the student audience with storyboards and then ask them to repeat the story in their own words to their partner. A key word vocabulary list can accompany this to assist the students in their own storytelling and introduce value-based topics such as honesty, self-confidence, respect, or freedom. As a follow-up homework activity, students can write their own one or two page original story and read them in groups in the following class.

Values based group board game

Finally, board games offer students a way to enjoyably interact in a cooperative group situation and use value-based target language such as patience, courage, forgiveness, and love. One such game is "Tree of Life" in which students move their tokens around the board and landing on various question squares. They answer these in English and get points for each answer. For example, one square may have a request, "Say one time you forgave someone," or ask, "What are 3 virtues that begin with P?" In the middle of the game board is a space for *Life Cards*, which have various additional questions or requests to which the students respond and accumulate additional points. For example one might say, "Say something nice to the player on your right," or "What are 2 important values for a family?" There are also squares on the board in which the player may lose points—"You got angry. Lose 10 points," or "You cheated on the test. Lose 20 points," for example. At the end of the board the players reach the "Tree of Life" to finish the game.

Students tally up their points to see how they did in the *game of life*. This game can be constructed by the teacher to fit the language level of the students and can be used as a supplemental activity to round out a class. Dice and game pieces are required to use the game board.

Conclusion

These are just a few of the many values-based activities based upon or found in the Living Values Project Curriculum Guidebooks. All of these activities are cooperative in design and often use the teacher as facilitator, putting the student at the center of the activity. These kinds of activities are helpful in creating a values-based atmosphere and motivate both educator and learner. Motivation, many language teachers will agree, is a key for learning English. An important aspect of improving the intrinsic motivation of your students is to be a caring teacher. Of course there are various factors that assist the language teacher in creating a unified and motivated atmosphere, among them the positive energy of the teacher who offers students positive content-based activities to use while learning English. LVEP activities can help to foster such an atmosphere and can be used as a strategy to create a sense of community among teachers and students as they teach and learn in a positive and cooperative environment based on values.

It is worthwhile for EFL educators to consider the constructive and practical value-based options that the LVEP offers them for their classroom. Learning and using English through such activities is not only productive for the students but it also gives the educator a motivating experience in which her own awareness of values is heightened and enriched.

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