Ethical ELT: Teaching English as a unifying language

Maggie Lieb
Meiji University

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Ethics means standards of right and wrong that guide behaviour, and striving to develop and enhance those standards (Velasquez et al., 2009). Ethical work means high quality work that goes beyond perfunctory performance and serves the wider community (Gardner, 2008). Many professions have adopted ethical codes to ensure they serve society with integrity and honour. However, little attention has been devoted to educational ethics. This paper argues that since educators have the capacity to influence attitudes and behaviour, educational ethics are crucial, especially in English Language Teaching (ELT). The author offers a definition of ethical ELT which, in addition to "good", "high quality" teaching, should make a positive contribution to the wider community, and be engaging and meaningful. Under this definition, examples of ethical and unethical ELT are described, as well as a framework for adopting an ethical orientation to ELT.

倫理（ethics）とは行動を導く善悪の基準のことであり、それらの基準をさらに発展させ高めるよう努力することである（Velasquez et al., 2009）。倫理的な仕事とは、おざなりの仕事ではなく、より広範囲の社会に役に立つ、質の高い仕事である（Gardner, 2008）。多くの職業は、高潔さと道義心をもって社会に奉仕できるように倫理基準を設けている。しかし、教育の倫理にはほとんど注意が払われてこなかった。本稿では、教育者は態度や行動に影響を与える立場にあるので、教育の倫理は非常に重要であり、とくに英語教育において重要であることを論じる。筆者が定義する倫理的な英語教育とは、「すぐれて」「質が高い」ティーチングに加えて、より広範囲の社会に積極的な貢献をし、やりがいがあり意義のある教育である。この定義のもとに、倫理的な英語教育と非倫理的な英語教育の例を提示し、倫理的な英語教育をどのようにおこなうかについても述べる。

English language teaching (ELT) often entails teaching English as a *foreign* language. However, this shouldn't necessarily mean teaching *foreignness*. Teaching English as a *unifying* language focuses on commonality and bridging cultural divides. This paper argues that this can be achieved through ethical ELT—high quality instruction that "takes into account its implications for the wider community", and is engaging and meaningful (Gardner, 2008, p. 128). Ethical ELT can generate positive affective outcomes and make a positive contribution to the international community. This paper begins with a brief description of ethics and ethical work. Then, the author discusses ethical education, and situates ELT within that context. This is followed by an examination of ethical ELT with examples of ethical and unethical practices. Finally, a framework is offered for adopting an ethical orientation to ELT.

Ethics

Ethics can be defined as "rules for distinguishing between right and wrong", or "norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behavior" (Resnik, 2007, p. 1). Velasquez et al. (2009) describe ethics as "standards of behaviour that tell us how human beings ought to act in the many situations in which they find themselves, as friends, parents, children, citizens, businesspeople, teachers, professionals". Perhaps Flew (1979) offers the most useful definition: "A set of standards by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behavior—to distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of their aims from what is not" (p. 112). This establishes a goal or purpose to justify ethical standards, and assesses the efficacy of each standard "in terms of the contribution it makes, or possibly fails to make towards this end" (p. 113).

Philosophers and ethicists recommend basing ethical standards on the following framework:

1. The utilitarian approach—maximizing good and minimizing harm.
2. The rights approach—protecting human rights, such as safety, security, protection from injury, and self-determination.
3. The fairness or justice approach—equal treatment for all.
4. The common good approach—making a positive contribution to society.
5. The virtue approach—actions that reflect our highest potential and demonstrate "truth… honesty, courage, compassion, generosity, tolerance, love, fidelity, integrity, fairness, self-control, prudence" (Velasquez et al., 2009).

Ethical work

Ethical work means "good" work that goes beyond perfunctory performance and self-interest (Gardner, 2008). "Good" has three aspects. It should be excellent in quality; it should contribute to the greater good of society; and it should be engaging and meaningful (Gardner, 2008, p. 128).

For a profession, ethics are critical. Gardner (2008) defines a profession as "a highly trained group of workers who perform an important service for society… (and are expected to) serve in an impartial manner and exercise prudent judgment under complex circumstances" (p. 128). This earns status and autonomy for the profession. Maintaining the respect and trust of society requires members to self-regulate and adhere to recognized standards, "or risk… being disbarred… from their professional guild" (Gardner, 2008, p. 129). Therefore, ethics are essential for the medical, legal, business, and journalism professions, and they should be for education too. The 2008 global economic crisis with its disastrous consequences demonstrates the impact of lapses in ethical standards.

Ethical education

While many professions have adopted ethical codes, educational ethics have received little attention. This is problematic. If we are to consider education a profession, logic demands that we adhere to a code of ethics. Since educators have the capacity to influence attitudes and behaviour, ethics are essential.

Some may argue that educational ethics are unnecessary since education simply involves teaching cognitive and academic skills. But this discounts the importance of the affective domain. Failure to consider the affective domain "does not mean there is no affective component to the instruction…. It is simply not possible to design… instruction without including some affective component" (Main, 1992, p. 25). All instruction, including selection of materials and methods, communicate an educator's values and underlying belief system (Lieb, 2006, p. 121). Therefore ethical education requires a "systematic considera-

tion of affective objectives… as it is usually mastery of affective techniques that sets apart the master teacher from the mediocre" (Main, 1992, p. 12).

Ethical education, like ethical work, should go beyond perfunctory performance and be excellent in quality, contribute to the good of society, and be engaging and meaningful.

Excellent in quality

Excellent educational practice involves integrity through "consistency of thought and action" (Resnik, 2007, p. 3). It also requires critical reflection, accurate record-keeping, and rigorous protection of student confidentiality. It also means openness to new ideas, and constructive criticism. Excellence mandates that we never discriminate, and that we maintain expertise "through lifelong education and learning" (adapted from Resnik's principles for research ethics, 2007, p. 4).

Contribute to society

Ethical educators should consider their long-term impact on society. As Kramsch (1998) states,

> It is an advantage to have a broad map of the terrain sketched out before one considers its more specific features on a smaller scale, a general context in reference to which the detail makes sense… (C)lose scrutiny can be myopic and meaningless unless it is related to the larger view. (p. vii)

Resnik's (2007) principles of research ethics are applicable to education, particularly his principles of social responsibility and objectivity. Education should "strive to promote social good and prevent or mitigate social harms" (Resnik, 2007, p. 4). This incorporates Velasquez et al.'s (2009) utilitarian and common good approaches. Objectivity and avoidance of bias are key in contributing to a harmonious society, as misrepresenting segments of society is divisive. This also incorporates Velasquez et al.'s (2009) fairness or justice and rights approaches. Ethical education maintains a balance between shaping society versus being shaped by society. Consider the indoctrination that was prevalent in Nazi Germany and, in more recent times, schools under the control of Islamic fundamentalists.

Engaging and meaningful

Engaging, meaningful education involves responsible mentoring (Resnik, 2007), promoting students' welfare, critical thinking, and freedom of expression. This corresponds with Velasquez et al.'s (2009) virtue approach, encouraging students to strive towards "the full development of [their] humanity" (p. 4). It necessitates attention to the affective outcomes of instruction which generally remain after cognitive outcomes have faded. Advertisers, politicians, religious leaders, and entertainers have long known the value of affective principles. Educators can employ the affective domain to enhance student welfare and address many of society's most pressing problems, such as violence, intolerance, and discrimination, that are rooted in the affective domain.

Ethical ELT

Like ethical education, ethical ELT should also be excellent in quality, contribute to the good of society, and be engaging and meaningful.

Excellent in quality

An enormous amount of ELT research is devoted to new, innovative approaches to instruction. While this is admirable,

again, the focus is usually on cognitive outcomes to the neglect of affective outcomes. Kramsch (1998) points out that "Linguistics is well served with… expositions and explanations which are comprehensive, authoritative, and excellent in their way…. However, their way is the essentially academic one." (p. vii)

Contribute to society

Ethical ELT requires that we go beyond perfunctory performance and consider the context in which we conduct our educational practice. In the case of ELT, the context is both global and local. The global context is the international community, and the local context is the host culture.

The international community

Linguapax (a UNESCO initiative) situates "language education within a wider framework of education for peace" (Marti, 1996, p. 33). EFL teachers are entrusted with "enhancing mutual understanding, respect, peaceful co-existence, and cooperation among nations" (Marti, 1996, p. 37). This requires revisiting our rationale for ELT. Are we simply facilitating business and commercial interests, global economic trade, international travel, and access to scientific and technological information (McKay, 2002)? Or can we more effectively serve society? Sampedro and Hillyard (2004) state that "language [is] a natural vehicle for fostering cross-cultural, cross-boundary understanding" (p. 6). We are well-positioned to generate cross-cultural unity and goodwill. Linguapax advocates a linguistic response to world problems through materials and methodologies that integrate global solidarity "while eliminating stereotypes and negative prejudices" (Marti, 1996, p. 35).

On July 24, 2008, then-candidate Barack Obama emphasized the importance of global solidarity:

> In this new world... dangerous currents have swept along faster than our efforts to contain them…. No one nation, no matter how large or powerful, can defeat such challenges alone…. Partnership and cooperation among nations is not a choice; it is the… only way, to protect our common security and advance our common humanity…. That is why the greatest danger of all is to allow new walls to divide us from one another…. Let us build on our common history, and seize our common destiny, and once again engage in that noble struggle to bring justice and peace to our world. (Obama, 2008)

The host community

ELT also impacts the host community. Worldwide, while Mandarin has the greatest number of speakers, English is currently dominant. Thus, we should be cautious of the perception we generate. Mufwene (2008) writes, "The language of the most powerful prevails, regardless of how this state of affairs obtains." There is potential for marginalization of indigenous languages. If students receive the message that "the language through which they have expressed themselves up to this point in their lives is deficient, and must be replaced by a superior model… human potential is being diminished" (Cummins, 2003). ELT should validate the host culture, offering English as a supplement, not a replacement for indigenous languages.

The Japanese context: A special case

A relatively homogeneous society, with less than 1% of the population foreign-born (Hammond, 2006), Japan has a "largely self-induced 'island mentality'" known as the "Uchi-Soto" (inside-outside) wall that emphasizes "an inherent difference between the Japanese and the rest of the world" (Yoneoka, 1999,

cited in Yoneoka, 2000, p. 11). In this context, fostering appreciation of cultural diversity is important, but care must be taken not to exacerbate pre-existing notions of separateness. Instead, ELT should enable Japanese students to discover the commonality they share with other cultures, and thus contribute to global solidarity.

Engaging and meaningful

Finally, ethical ELT is engaging and meaningful. "Language acquisition is meaningful only when it is viewed as part of the human condition" (Sampedro & Hillyard, 2004, p. 5). ELT must go beyond the demands of globalization and foster cross-cultural friendship. We should consider what affective messages students receive not only about the English language and those who speak it, but also about their own culture. This corresponds with Resnik's (2007) principle of responsible mentoring and Velasquez's (2009) virtue approach.

> Language and the human spirit are inextricably intertwined…. Language can bring us together or set us apart. It can be used to include… [or] exclude…. Language can establish community and solidarity at the same time as it can be used to erect boundaries and divide communities…. We can no longer conceptualize language as some kind of neutral code that can be taught in classrooms in splendid isolation from its intersection with issues of power, identity, and spirituality. (Cummins, 2003)

ELT should bring people together, establish community (local and global) and be inclusive, not exclusive. Teaching English, as a *unifying* language, has the potential to accomplish this, making it engaging and meaningful.

Practical examples

Everything from major decisions about curriculum design to minute, spontaneous classroom interactions should be geared towards cultivating awareness of commonality, and generating cross-cultural goodwill. The following are anecdotal examples.

Examples of ethical ELT

Random classroom interaction: Tatemae

A Japanese student said in class one day that "tatemae" (outward appearances) is very important in Japan. He was shocked when I told him that this concept is also important in Western cultures. His impression was that "Westerners" made no distinction between inner feelings and outward expression. When he enquired further, I told him that professional demeanor differs from social behaviour. I also reminded him of "white lies", used to spare feelings.

Random classroom interaction: Keigo

Many Japanese have the impression that only they utilize a hierarchical system of polite language known as "keigo". I have explained to students that English speakers have other strategies for showing deference and respect, including register, intonation, sentence length, and word choice.

Dispelling stereotypes

Many commonly-held stereotypes should be dispelled in ELT. One example is the perception of Westerners as individualistic and Japanese as collectivist (Lewis, 2007). I have offered students several examples of collectivism in American society such as the strong sense of community especially evident in times of disaster (floods, tornadoes, earthquakes) as well as the generous

volunteer and charitable ethic. Many K-12 schools have community service as a graduation requirement. This collectivism is evident even at government level, which incorporates a complex system of checks and balances to ensure power-sharing, and is embodied by the words, "We the People".

Avoiding self-fulfilling prophecies

Asian learning styles are sometimes referred to as "Confucian" suggesting compliant, non-questioning students who respect the authority of the teacher, value self-effacement and silence, and are group-oriented (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995, cited in McKay, 2002). Kubota (1999) states that this depiction is not supported by extensive classroom observation. Furthermore, the portrayal of students as passive recipients of knowledge can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. If we expect students to be intrinsically motivated and capable of critical and creative thinking, there is a strong likelihood that they will rise to the challenge. This corresponds with Velasquez et al.'s (2009) Virtue Approach which encourages students to achieve their full potential.

Validating indigenous culture

Classroom discussions, assignments, and presentations validating indigenous culture communicate to students that their culture is valued. I often ask my students to write about an aspect of Japanese culture that they would consider of interest to foreigners. Asking students how they would say certain expressions in their L1 further validates the indigenous language. Also, care should be taken when asking students to avoid their L1. It is better to encourage English practice than to "outlaw" the native language.

Using Venn diagrams

I often use Venn diagrams to show that while customs may differ from culture to culture, the underlying objective is often the same. For example, returning to the apparent absence of hierarchical language in English, I would write the common communicative goal in the overlap, in this case, "showing deference". Then, in the Japanese circle, I would write "keigo" and in the English circle I would write "register", "intonation", "sentence length", and "word choice".

Examples of unethical ELT

Whether intentional or not, examples of unethical ELT exist. An investigation by Cates (1993) into images and values in foreign language textbooks revealed that often, "Rather than contribute to international understanding… these images contribute to international misunderstanding" (p. 342). He cites Starkey (1990, p. 239), who stated that "foreign language textbooks are amongst the most fertile grounds for discovering bias, racism, and stereotype."

Textbook excerpts

A university textbook, sometimes used in culture studies classes, states, "Although North American students can seem friendly, their friendliness is rather superficial and insincere…. To international students, Americans appear to be self-absorbed and uninterested in making friends" (Gareis, 1995, cited in Shulman, 1998, p. 8.). It also states the following:

> American restaurants... prepare food in only three ways: boiled in water, grilled, and deep-fried; apart from these there is no other variety…. The sight of a hot dog dripping with red tomato sauce… is enough to take your appetite away…. But when you are hungry, there is nothing to do

> but close your eyes and swallow it…. Being invited to dinner is a big treat for Americans, but I find it a painful assignment…. [T]errible tasting food must be praised to the skies…. [I]t is not filling and you have to make yourself another meal after going home…. I had to say "delicious, delicious". It was unspeakably painful…. The foreigners talk and laugh, and we… do not understand what is being said. It is really unbearably painful. (Nengying, cited in Shulman, 1998, p. 15)

Another example from a Japanese high school textbook contrasts views on dogs in Japan and England. The excerpt describes an icebound Japanese observation crew in Antarctica who, before escaping by helicopter, decided to abandon their huskies rather than engage in "mercy killing". Their reasoning:

> The members of the crew just could not stand the thought of killing the dogs they loved... but when they returned… one year later, two of the dogs were still alive…. In this case, it was not the human-centered way of disposing of domestic animals, but the Japanese way… that won, at least from the standpoint of the dog's happiness. (Suzuki & Miura, in Milestone, 2003, p. 104)

The excerpt goes on to highlight the "differences" between Western and Japanese thinking as follows:

> Christianity does not recognize animal souls, whereas traditional Japanese religions have strong elements of animism and shamanism…. To the English, cruelty probably means not to treat a particular animal according to the role they have assigned to it from a human-centered viewpoint. (pp. 106-107)

The implication is that Japanese thinking on this issue is superior to "Western" thinking. The English are indirectly criticized and no attempt is made to clarify Western thinking. Using a Venn diagram could provide a more balanced approach. Other textbook excerpts are included in the Appendix.

Teaching about culture: Silence

In his LMR (linear/multi/reactive cultures) model, Lewis (2007) depicts reactive cultures—such as Japan, Korea, China—as highly tolerant of silence in conversation. "The opinions of the other party are not to be taken lightly, or dismissed with a snappy or flippant retort" (p. 74). If presented to students without explanation, this could suggest that linear-active cultures—such as the U.S.A. and Europe—do not afford the same respect to others in conversation. It should be made clear to students that there are different ways to show respect. In linear cultures, a response is required to validate the speaker. Presenting the material in this way highlights the universal value placed on respect.

Teaching about culture: Polarizing characterizations

It is important to avoid polarizing characterizations of Western and Asian cultures such as "talkative vs. reserved"; "extrovert vs. introvert"; "half listens vs. listens carefully" (Lewis, 2007). While some of these characterizations may contain elements of truth, they can be demeaning and ignore the fact that national identities are not monolithic (Kramsch, 1993). They can lead to "ideas of otherness and foreignness" (McKay, 2002, p. 106), and are contrary to UNESCO's goal of "promoting languages as a means of dialogue and international integration" (2007).

ELT is unethical if it promotes "Othering" or describing a cultural group "in a way that makes that group seem inferior to or different from one's own" (Johnson, 1999). Othering can "create and perpetuate, rather than reflect cultural difference" (Kubota, 1999, p. 16). Said (1978, cited in Susser, 1998) takes this concept further by cautioning against "Orientalism", which he

defines as "representing Japan as the Other, limiting what we can know of Japan, and in some cases expressing prejudice or hostility" (p. 49). Equally dangerous is "Occidentalism", defined as "stereotyped and sometimes dehumanizing views on the so-called Western World, including Europe, the United States, and Australia" (Buruma & Margalit, 2004). Othering does not belong in ELT practice.

> When one uses categories like "Oriental" and "Western" as both the starting and end points of analysis… the result is usually to polarize the distinction—the Oriental becomes more Oriental, the Westerner more Western—and limit the human encounter between different cultures, traditions, and societies…. [T]his division itself is an expression of hostility. (Said, 1978, in Susser, 1998, p. 50)

Adopting an ethical orientation to ELT

Reflective teaching is essential to ethical ELT. Gardner (2008) writes, "Ethics involves an abstract attitude—the capacity to reflect explicitly on the ways in which one does or does not fulfill a certain role" (p. 130). Reflective teaching includes two things: awareness of Weltanschauung and engagement in critical pedagogy.

Awareness of Weltanschauung

Weltanschauung, a German philosophical concept, is made up of two words: *Welt* meaning "world", and *Anschauung* meaning "view". Weltanschauung has come to mean "a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). ELT requires awareness of our "Weltanschauung", or value system which will be communicated to students. Consider the English teacher who described English Language Teaching as: "A stealth crusade…. A form of a Christian mission…. A cultural bomb… [that] has the capacity to colonize the mental universe of the people on whom this language is thrust" (Khan, 2008). If this kind of inflammatory rhetoric characterizes a teacher's Weltanschauung, and is adopted into students' core belief system, it dims the likelihood that they will achieve any cross-cultural friendship. This is unethical. Awareness of Weltanschauung reminds us that we "are imparting, although often unconsciously, a system in which meanings are interpreted and subjectivities are constructed" (Hammond, 2006).

Engaging in critical pedagogy

Engaging in critical pedagogy raises awareness of how educational practices are "shaped by wider, socio-political forces, and in the interests of dominant social groups" (Hammond 2006, p. 549). It facilitates avoidance of "hidden assumptions and acts that constitute and maintain inequality" (p. 545). The following framework (adapted from Velasquez et al. 2009) can cultivate "a trained sensitivity to ethical issues and a practiced method for exploring the ethical aspects of (each) decision":

1. Did I maximize good in my teaching and minimize harm? (The utilitarian approach)
2. Did I respect the rights of all who have a stake—the source culture, the target culture, the institution, myself? (The rights approach)
3. Did I treat people equally or proportionately? (The justice approach)
4. Did I serve the wider community? (The common good approach)
5. Did I enable students to be the best that they can be? (The virtue approach)

The potential of ELT

Anyone who doubts the potential of ELT to positively impact society need look no further than Kosovo, where violence and atrocities since the 1990s have destroyed the dream of ethnic harmony. In May, 2008, sponsored by the U.S. State Department and the Kosovo Education Center, Michael Medley of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, traveled to Kosovo to conduct teacher-training workshops. Medley describes a society "with strong ethnic divides ... with minimal opportunity for people to communicate with one another across cultural barriers or even to become familiar with and appreciate their cultural differences" (2009, p. 11). The result has been growing distrust and hatred between Serbian and Albanian residents leading to the deployment of NATO peace-keepers.

Medley (2009) writes, "Language instruction does not take place in a socio-political vacuum" (p. 12). Engaging and meaningful ELT must consider the background and history of the people. Medley incorporated peace-building concepts into his ELT workshops:

> I saw the potential that Kosovo ELTs have to be peace-builders… to teach communication skills that build inter-cultural understanding and to teach a language (English) that can be a medium of communication between groups that are suspicious of each other or completely hostile. (p. 12)

Medley also said that the U.S. Embassy English language program, ACCESS, "in which Kosovar youth from different ethnic backgrounds study English together and enjoy extracurricular activities", is allowing students to "forge friendships that bridge the ethnic and linguistic divide" (p. 12).

Conclusion

Ethical ELT should be excellent in quality, make a positive contribution to society, and be engaging and meaningful. Fostering cross-cultural goodwill and friendship, while validating indigenous languages in accordance with the objectives of Linguapax, should be a hallmark of ELT. Ethical ELT requires reflective teaching, examining our worldview, and engaging in critical pedagogy. Ultimately, if we teach English as a *unifying* language, rather than as a *foreign* language, we can contribute to global solidarity. In the words of the Dalai Lama: "Of course there are different cultural backgrounds, and different ways of life, different… faiths, and different colours, but we are the same human beings…. If we can leave the differences aside, I think we can easily communicate, exchange ideas, and share experiences" (1998).

Bio data

Maggie Lieb teaches and conducts research at Meiji University, Tokyo. Her research interests include inter-cultural communication, the affective domain, EAP, and multiple intelligences.

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Appendix

Examples of unethical ELT: Other textbook excerpts

Food migration

The following is another excerpt from the Japanese high school English reading textbook mentioned above.

> The meeting of different worlds enriches our menus, but… there are some drawbacks as well. The cultivation of potatoes and corn helped to decrease famine in Europe and contributed to population growth. In a way, this helped European industrialization come into being, which in turn led the world to many unfortunate invasions and wars under colonialism. (Food Migration, Milestone, 2003, pp. 32-33)

This could be interpreted to mean that decreasing famine in Europe is a "drawback". But the final sentence makes enormous leaps of logic that can only be described as a rash generalization at best, and anti-Western propaganda at worst. No attempt is made to clarify the statements, offer proof or examples, leaving the reader (a Japanese high school student) to ponder, speculate, and draw his/her own conclusions.

Emphasizing inferiority

A textbook commonly used in Japanese university culture studies classes does make an attempt to highlight commonality but also falls short in more subtle ways. In describing differences between American and Japanese culture, it claims that "It is polite in both cultures to deny your own superiority [but] to emphasize your own inferiority is polite in Japanese, but… not polite in English" (Sakamoto & Naotsuka, 1982, p. 5). This is not accurate. In English, the strategies used to emphasize the inferiority of the speaker include putting other people's names first in sentences and refuting compliments. In some cases, it is actually polite to respond to a compliment with some form of self-effacing remark.

Age differences

The same textbook claims that Americans don't emphasize age differences. While it may be true that Japanese tend to focus more on age, it should be noted that Westerners also show deference to elders and superiors at work. Commonality should be the focus. This textbook is divisive by claiming that Americans' underlying belief is: "We are all individuals", while for Japanese it is: "We all belong to groups" (Sakamoto & Naotsuka, 1982).