

# Humanistic Approach in Teaching Foreign Language (from the Teacher Perspective)

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Doi: 10.19044/esj.2017.v13n35p194 [URL:http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n35p194](http://dx.doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n35p194)

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## Abstract

In education, attention was paid almost exclusively to the acquisition of new knowledge and developing work habits of students. As much as the two areas are important, insisting only on them does not develop the skills that students will need later in life, nor will they develop positive attitudes and empathy. Forming socially acceptable attitudes and developing empathy is extremely important if one of the goals of education is to enable students to become responsible members of society. Unlike the traditional approach to education, a humanistic approach emphasizes the importance of the inner world of students; their thoughts, feelings and emotions are put into the forefront of development.

This paper deals with the teaching of foreign languages and argues that the humanistic approach in teaching gives better results. The results of a qualitative participatory research dealing with the attitudes of teachers are presented in order to determine the extent to which teachers have awareness of the importance of applying a humanistic approach, and how much the incentive of teachers in the work influences the quality of interaction in teacher-learner and student-student approach. The results of the research indicate that the use of humanistic teaching approaches helps to develop emotionally positive attitudes in students, influences the creation of good relationships in the group, and encourages students to develop language competence.

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**Keywords:** Humanistic approach, foreign language teaching, social (feedback), approach.

## Introduction

Traditional teaching and humanistic differently define success. On the one hand, the traditional approach to success indicators in teaching takes into account only one component - and that is the extent to which the material has been covered. The covered degree is defined by the student's

grade. In this case, ignores the fact that the grade and the interpretation of the degree of material coverage is subject to the individual criteria of each teacher. It is also neglected that the individual characteristics and abilities of each student must be taken into account when assessing the covered material.

Unlike the traditional, the humanistic approach to the success criterion is based also on other criteria: the development of certain characteristics in students, the acquisition of self-confidence, the development of various social and emotional abilities. Thus, the success in learning a foreign language is determined by the cognitive structure, as well as the emotional and affective characteristics and characteristics of the personality. The ultimate goal of humanistic teaching is to create responsible civil society that accepts different cultures, in which it is greatly assisted by knowing one or more foreign languages.

The use of the humanistic approach begins with the thoughts of what makes an experience educational. A humanistic perspective advocates the view that educational value is diminished if the learning process itself is not taken into account and the conditions in which learning takes place. In today's society, the focus is shifted from achieving academic goals towards self-realization. Humanistic education basically aims to bring about the growth of the full potential of each person. The goal of education is to help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to actively and responsibly participate in a constantly changing world. This means that learners should be trained to be independent, recognize connections between school subjects and the world that surround them, and use knowledge, rely on experience, and think critically when solving life's problems.

In the teaching of a foreign language, it is important to develop language and communication skills, but also skills necessary for functioning in society. In addition to mastering the language skills, language teaching aims to develop positive attitudes and understand different cultures. Thus learning a foreign language becomes much more than mastering the language skills, the system of rules and grammar of a given language. Teaching involves the expansion of cognitive and analytical abilities, but also the change of self-perception, the acceptance of new social and cultural behaviors, and the aim of understanding the members of other communities. All this should enable students to look at their environment from a new angle.

### **Theoretical Basis**

Successful teaching implies that students are actively involved in the learning process, and this is achieved through different levels and types of interaction. This kind of work leads to the establishment of diverse relationships between teachers and students and between students and

students. The very nature of a foreign language as a school subject requires the use of a large number of communicative activities in classes. However, no matter how far the teacher plans the lesson; it has been shown in countless times that what a teacher expects students to learn during the course of time is different from what the students really get. Stevick (Stevick, 1990, p. 4) finds it difficult to determine which factors influence success in the language of a foreign language, because success depends on what is taking place in a classroom between participants in the teaching process. Taking into consideration the atmosphere in which the teaching process takes place influences on the relations between students and teachers, between students themselves, but also how students perceive themselves. In order to achieve the aims of humanistic education, Stevick (Stevick, 1990, p. 4) considers it necessary to include emotions and aesthetic experiences in the teaching, work on improving social relations, increasing responsibility and, in addition to knowledge, help students understand the content. All this will bring students to experience self-achievement.

Humanistic approach requires that teachers have empathy for students. They will have Empathy if they try to understand how their students understand the world and if they do not set their own views on the students. Rogers (Rogers, 1983, p. 123) argues that accepting students means to perceive them as imperfect beings with a lot of potential. Williams & Burden, (1997, p. 45) state that humanistic education is based on the idea that students differ and they need to be encouraged to be as specific as possible to themselves and not to try to resemble others. The students do certain things for a certain reason and it is up to the teacher to try and understand these reasons. In addition, the teacher should accept that students have certain psychological barriers that prevent learning and can use their knowledge to create an environment that helps his students to develop.

A humanistic approach encourages students to talk about their attitudes, to think about themselves and others, and thus influence the development of positive interaction at classes. When they get to know their students, teachers can better plan teaching and adapt the interests and needs of their students. Freeman (Freeman, 1996, p. 103) considers that teachers constantly interpret the world around them: they interpret the subject they teach, the environment in which the classes are conducted, as well as the actions of the students. Classrooms and teaching are not just a place where teachers can apply their ideas; they also represent a framework for interpreting what teachers know: when and how they should react, what information to present and how to explain them, when to correct students, how to evaluate what they have taught.

Everything the teacher does during his time is in line with his vision of a foreign language learning process. Sauvignon (Sauvignon, 1976, p. 296)

considers teachers' attitudes to learning influence the way in which they teach. He adds that while critical attitudes and motivations of teachers are not considered critically, it is impossible to understand the obstacles that are in the way of creating an environment that corresponds to students. Teachers who are willing to think about their students, about how their classes are more interesting to young people, are ready to think about their actions and how their behavior influences the student's reaction.

Almost in all situations where the language is taught, in addition to cognitive and affective components, relationships that are created during classes must also be taken into account. Dornyei (Dornyei, 2009, p. 227) thinks that the acquiring of a language cannot be separated from the social context in which it takes place. A good part of our being is formed through our social identity, and the classroom is one of the places that contributes to the creation of identity, both for students and teachers. The social context affects the participants, and in order to understand one's behavior in the group, the affective and cognitive factors must also be taken into account. However, the curriculum introduces the smallest change in the area that is most critical, which is the quality of interaction in the classroom and the way in which students and teachers base their mutual relationships.

The social aspect of language is important in teaching, because the language is used for establishing and developing social relations. In line with the importance of social interaction, a great shift is increasingly paying attention to the conversation that takes place during the course and its pedagogical value. Through conversation, we establish, maintain and change our social identity. Hatch (Hatch 1978, p. 404) argues that language learning evolves from learning how to conduct conversations and how to communicate. Socio-cultural learning theories emphasize the importance of the role of conversation as a medium of learning for all. It is from this point of view that the idea that successful teaching is actually a "long conversation" (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 2).

The importance of interactive relationships is emphasized by the social aspect of the task. Allwright (Allwright, 1983, p. 192) views time as a socially certain event, the product of the interactive work of all present. Both teachers and students influence the development of relationships in the group. Teachers create activities that include both cognitive and emotional, and students take part in them. The teaching of a foreign language should be an opportunity to get real communication, and communication and linguistic and social aspects are equally important. Through relationships, identity develops and each student gets his or her role. In addition to developing identities, through interaction between pupils and teachers, students and students, young people are given the opportunity to form their views on

language learning, learn more about the way they learn and establish relationships with others.

The nature of interaction is the key to learning. This is especially noticeable in the case of language learning, where the use of language is a pre-social activity, and communication in a foreign language is an integral part of the learning process. Thanks to the good interaction during the course, a student can develop a sense of belonging and show the desire to be active in learning. Not only the students will be more engaged during the course of time, but they will also control their behavior. The nature of interaction in a foreign language, especially affect the quality of learning. Heron (Heron, 1999, p. 45) assumes that the dynamics of the group are based on feelings. Dornei & Murphy (Dornei & Murphy 2003, p. 25) point out that if the students feel that the teacher wants to help them, they themselves are ready to help the others. The dynamics of the group is especially important for the development of speech skills and understanding of speech that are interactive language skills by nature. They encourage students to tell others what they think and to know new things that way. If interaction is such as to establish good dynamics, both teachers and students have a lot to say to each other.

Through dialogue and collaboration with other students, the development and awareness of individuality is enabled (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 56). Effective learning occurs when students help during conversation, when an active mind develops through dialogue with others. Social interaction is an inevitable part of a large number of teaching situations. Through conversation, work, play, learners learn the values implicitly and explicitly, formally and informally, through teachers' actions and through the teaching content.

Therefore, learning is achieved in areas where good relationships between the participants are established. Lindquist (v. Head & Taylor, 1997, p. 36) states that successful learning depends on the extent to which a community is developed in a given group and to what extent students feel and are involved in the learning process. The true spirit of communion stimulates what is best in students and teachers, and achieves creativity, expands aspects and enables self-awareness. Each person has different cognitive and affective characteristics and the more a teacher knows about a student, the more he can help him to develop.

### **Objectives and Methodology of Research**

This qualitative participatory survey was conducted in the period from March 2016 to December 2016. In research, teachers are consulted to establish how much a humanistic approach and stimulating interaction have the experience of teaching foreign languages. The aim of the research was to

determine the role of the humanistic approach in the teaching of foreign language through interviewing secondary school teachers. The humanistic approach takes into account the cognitive side of the learner, but it also attaches importance to both the affective characteristics and the emotional development of the personality. Encouraging interactive responses is related to the social aspect of language, because learning comes in a social context. The research stems from the desire to provide teachers with the opportunity to describe classes of a foreign language and to explain what, in their opinion, a teacher can do to make learning more successful.

The material is methodologically collected, systematically processed and represents "first source". The data collected in this study enabled detailed descriptive analysis to be made. Since the research has not been calculated on a representative sample, there is no possibility of generalization.

In order to determine how teachers' perspectives on humanistic approach and the quality of interaction affect the quality of foreign language teaching and to what extent lead to better results, the teachers wanted to find out the following:

- to what extent teachers are aware of the importance of applying a humanitarian approach;
- how much the approach of teachers at work affects the quality of interactions between teacher-student and student-student.

### **Data Collection**

In this study, deep qualitative interventions were used. They were led to learn about things that cannot be directly observed; in this case, they tried to find out more about the feelings, thoughts and intentions of high school teachers. Through semi-structured conversations, pre-formulated questions were set in the same order. The questions were of an open type and the teachers had the opportunity to express their perceptions of some phenomena or problems. All questions were posed to all participants, but during the conversation new questions were also introduced to clarify certain points. With four teachers the interview was conducted individually and two teachers were interviewed together.

A total of six in-depth interviews with teachers were realized. All teachers taught students at secondary school age. Three teachers were from a private school institution, two taught in private language schools and one teacher taught at the state school. They were selected from private and state schools in Prishtina, Kosovo. All teachers are guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of the information. The interviews, with their permission, were filmed and transcribed, which enabled a later detailed analysis.

The interview was conducted with teachers whom their colleagues, and in some cases students, characterized as "extraordinary". When choosing a teacher, colleagues from numerous teachers were consulted. They were asked to indicate the names of colleagues whose mode of work was characterized as exceptional and who had a good relationship with students. More such teachers were identified, and among them, six agreed to be interviewed. The questions of the semi-structured type provided the opportunity for respondents to initiate a conversation about any aspect of language learning that seemed to them important. The conducted discussion focused on understanding the attitudes of teachers in relation to various aspects of the teaching process, as well as on personal experiences that are part of the teaching and the learning process. After the in-depth interventions, additional discussions were conducted with some of the teachers. In this way, through this research, new insights emerged that came out from the scope of the initial scope of research.

### **Results of Research and Discussion**

All the interviewed teachers knew about humanistic techniques and occasionally used them in the teaching of a foreign language. Some teachers have stated that they have a lot of experience in using these techniques and expressed them in the following way: "There is a special connection between me and my students. I cannot explain what kind of chemistry it is, or when it happened, but we are more and more respected. "One teacher states that he regularly uses these techniques and says: "Time goes faster, I do not see that non-interest view on students." These comments show that the teacher, as well as the student, enters a special growth process and through the application of these technique not only students, but teachers also promote better relationships with others and learn new things about themselves.

However, although teachers are aware that techniques of the humanistic approach induce students to use their language, to simultaneously encourage creativity and to ignore the importance of emotions, they emphasize that their material does not allow them to use these activities to the extent they would like. A teacher from a private language school says:

*"If I didn't have to prepare them for exams, I would rather have time to talk about things that interest them and in the way that is interesting to them."*

### **Consciousness on the Needs of Students**

All foreign language teachers are aware that teaching and learning a foreign language has a "seasonal" rhythm. While planning time, teachers have in mind whether it is September or November. Teachers also take care of having first class in the morning or after a break. The "seasonal" rhythm is

seen as something that is implied. Teachers are aware of the importance of the previous class or the time of the day:

*"When they have mathematics before English, I know they will come angry, and then it's better to do vocabulary or grammar. If you ask them something, they will tell you about how hard it is mathematics. I'm sorry it's hard for them, but what can I do? "*

A teacher from a state school has a similar comment: "I have to go through the material, so for good things it's always a lack of time."

### **Establishing Terms of Language Learning**

The basic need of all persons who learn a foreign language is the need for security. Curran (Curran, 1976, p. 12) emphasizes that emotional security is necessary in order to learn. The role of the representatives to create a sense of security has not diminished in modern society. In order to be able to devote themselves to this task, teachers themselves need to be safe. Curran further notes that students feel the personal emotional structure of teachers, before they experience the influence of the intellectual content provided by the teacher. An important task of teachers is to develop self-esteem among students. Coopersmith (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 53) states that self-esteem is an evaluation of one, and is expressed through the views that an individual has of himself. The self-esteem of the mind depends on the experience that an individual has with people from his surroundings. The way the individual sees the environment in a large part will form the image that the person has of himself. Adolescents are in their lifetime when their opinion of the society, and especially their peers, are important for them to feel accepted. The students are in a position to create conditions that allow freelancers to feel well and want to communicate, and in such an atmosphere, students must be more motivated to learn. Learning the language is inextricably linked to what is happening during the class, so teachers have an important task to work on creating conditions that will make the classroom not a place where students' weaknesses are revealed, but the place where they are they developed. One teacher gives his opinion on the importance of what is happening at school: "What is happening to students in school is very important. They spend a good part of the day in school and its environment affects them in many ways. "Another teacher points out that the school and classroom is" a place where children learn love and hatred and impatience ... it's a place where they realize their small life.

In everyday contact, participants in communication influence someone to feel better or worse. Having in mind the position of teachers, Moskowitz believes that teachers influence the atmosphere in group with every word they pronounce (Moskowitz, 1978, p. 19). In teaching foreign languages, creating a positive environment can help using techniques that

increase self-awareness. In this way, teachers encourage both the personal growth of students and the learning of a foreign language. In doing so, teachers show that affective goals have their place in the curriculum. Teachers strive to be interesting to students. One teacher describes the way he plans the class and says: "I try to make my classes dynamic, to break the monotony of the time of 45 minutes to different activities, that it must be something that is fun, and I wrap here something that is not." Another speaker states: "An atmosphere should be created that no one, literally anyone, will have the fear of speaking, saying a sentence, to get in, to make a mistake". The same teacher considers that he will be more productive if the student and the teacher are relaxed, and in order to achieve this, he does the following: "If I see something that does not go, then I change it immediately."

### **Responsibility for Learning**

Interviewed teachers are aware of their responsibility for the development of students, but they are also aware that students need to become independent as soon as possible. Nevertheless, they all consider themselves responsible for everything that happens in classes. One teacher says: "When it comes to the relation of a child and an adult, the adult is more responsible." Other teachers say, "I am responsible for how my kids are and what kind of students are my children".

*"The responsibility is on the professors, the responsibility is on parents, on society, you cannot let him grow like a crazy plant, learn things from the Internet and after that ask him to be a good man, the much you have invested in him, the much you will get back, and I really think it's hard for them."*

It is necessary to direct young people and help them to grow up, and at the same time giving them the opportunity to make their own decisions. However, although teachers feel responsible for their students, this does not mean that they want to make all decisions themselves instead of their students. Thus, one teacher points out: "They do not need to draw them everything, they should be released; In this case they are much relieved and therefore have no in-depth." The other teacher has a similar view: "A good school gives you a lot, but it leaves you to do a lot too." The teachers are aware of how much it is necessary for the students to come to the solution themselves and how important it is to bring them into the situation to be responsible for their decisions.

### **Strengthening Group Development**

To create good relationships in a group, you need to be honest. One teacher describes this in this way:

*"I think I have the biggest influence on children by having a fair attitude towards them. Otherwise, I do not like con artists in my life. I do not like converting, and especially with children. I do not let them do what they are not. "*

It is important for the students to be honest and when the teacher does not know anything about the language: "It's fair to say if I do not know a word, I say that I do not know." Another teacher points out: "If I did not review my homework, I say I had no time" and concludes that it is crucial:

*"honest relationship with everyone in life, especially with children. This is the basis for my cooperation. How we will cooperate if we lie."*

Teachers achieve the closeness in different ways. One of the interviewed teachers has a very informal relationship with the students:

*"All my students address me with informal "you" and we are very happy to cooperate."*

Good dynamics of the group encourage learners to set themselves up topics for discussion. One teacher talks about what he talks to his students:

*"The first time they come they are in grief. Of course, I do not let it turn into a psychological workshop, but somehow you get rid of it, and then you can use a phrasal verb to do as much as you can."*

And other teachers are ready to dedicate time to their students and find out what is troubling them:

*"Some of them, for instance, were absent from classes, so I know that there were some private issues in question. I am so happy now, one girl has so much fit now, and so much wants to show she has changed, as she is now on the good side. "*

It is very difficult to estimate whether the students have been maximally involved in classes:

*"What is the main gauge for me is whether it was good or not: if a child after class says something else on the subject, I know it was okay. If no one says it, then I know that I got them bored and tired. And I know they were fine and they had to work, but I do not feel good. We worked, everything was ok, and they all understood it, but they did not ..."*

## **Conclusion**

The importance of the humanistic approach in teaching foreign languages is seen on identifying the importance and role of emotions in communication and the inclusion of emotions in the learning process, highlighting the importance that each student reveals the meaning and ability of everyone to have different goals. In addition to the cognitive and affective components, the importance of group dynamics and the role that students got

and develop in the course. Some teachers intuitively use the humanistic approach and their humanistic orientation stems from the way they experience their interest, their subject and the young people they teach. It is exactly these aspects of their influence that influence the way they involve students in the teaching process, how they introduce teaching materials, and how students give feedback. It is not only what is important what teachers are doing on class, but what they think about the teaching process at all.

The teacher in the teaching process not only brings his experience, knowledge of subjects and methodology, but also his personality, attitudes and interests for the students. Interviewed teachers emphasize the importance of creating a positive atmosphere over time and the importance of developing good relationships among students. In addition, they consider that in their work they take into account the individual differences of students and the way they work so that they meet the needs and characteristics of the group. All these attitudes are humanistic.

The teacher views his students from several angles and does not measure their success only through intellectual achievement. The success of students is also greatly influenced by how the teacher is experiencing it, and those expectations are in line with his student's perception. If students are little expected, they are less motivated, and every failure is the underpinning of negative teacher attitudes. Interviewed teachers were very pleased with the work of their students and stated that their departments were "good" or "strong" groups, those students were worthwhile and that they achieve results in accordance with the effort involved. It is probably one of the secrets of the success of these people and the faith they have in their students. Teachers should help their students to develop positive self-perception. When they have confidence in their students, they accept them as worthy individuals and help them to build a positive image of the seas, thus creating a community in which the ocean of subsistence develops. The experience of students and attitudes that others have toward him are important factors that determine his image of himself. Research shows that all actions, feelings, behavior, and even beliefs are always consistent with the image that a person has about himself.

Teachers who are interested in getting to know their students can help them develop social, emotional and ethical characteristics that are important for success in school and in life. In this way, attention is given to both the intellectual and emotional aspect, and teaching content is linked to the feelings and experiences of the learner. For teachers, this means taking into account individual classes in class and to provide activities that match the way different students learn. This requires the development of a broad repertoire of teaching strategies, the development of the ability to vary the

topic in accordance with the learner's abilities and interests, and the ability of teachers to be flexible when the activity fails.

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