

The Importance of Using Humanistic theory in Teaching English

Hayder AbdulHasan Hamzah

Middle Technical University, Technical instructors training institute, Technical Electronics Department, Baghdad, Al Za'faraniya, Iraq

Article Information

Received: Nov 13, 2023

Accepted: Dec 22, 2023

Published: Jan 06, 2024

Keywords: Humanistic theory, approach, teaching, learners, and English language

ABSTRACT

Humanistic theory is used as one of the main theories in language leaning inside the class. It strives to help people maximize their well-being and fulfill their potential emphasizes. It looks at the whole individual and stresses concepts such as self-efficacy, self-actualization, and free will. Rather than concentrating on dysfunction. In this study, we have explored the theoretical background of humanistic theory, and clarified the main role of the teacher and the learner in order to have clear ideas about the value of humanistic theory in the process of teaching. Analyzing the principles of the humanistic theory is the evaluation of this study in language teaching / learning field, the study has been investigated on how much learners' needs is adequate in this approach. Results would help to make decisions about the adequacy of other methods of teaching and justify suggesting new methods of different approaches.

Chapter One

1. Introduction

(1.1) The Problem of the study:

Humanistic theory is a language teaching method which emphasize on the progress of human values, growth in self – awareness and emotions, and sensitive to human feelings and in the understanding of others. Through the establishment of interpersonal relationships with learners, Therefore teachers become facilitators of learning. Teachers and learners relationship is a special interpersonal relationship and this relation is made through emotional communication and cognition.). Khatib, et al. (2013:45) State that humanist education “emphasizes the importance of the inner world of the learner and places the individual’s thought, emotions and feelings at the forefront of all human development.

(1.2) The Aim

The present research aims to investigate the importance of using Humanistic theory in teaching English.

(1.3) The Value:

The results of this research hoped to be of some value to those who are involved in the teaching-learning process whether the teachers of English, syllabus designers or the learners. It can be of some value to the teacher since it shifts the process toward the learner rather than the teacher. It can be of some value to the learners since it gives them great opportunity to involve in the process with enjoyment. As for syllabus designers, they may supplement textbooks with activities that foster teaching and learning, such as new methods of teaching. Finally, it may fill in an important theoretical gap in the field of EFL.

(1.4) The Limits:

The study is limited to analyze the importance of using humanistic theory in teaching English among Iraqi English teachers.

(1.5) Definitions of Basic Terms:

Here are some definitions for the terms that are used frequently in the present research:

- **The importance:** the fact of being important, or the degree to which something or someone is important (Rundell et.al ,2009).
- **Humanistic theory:** is an educational theory that believes in teaching the 'whole' learner. It has a strong focus on learners' emotional wellbeing and eternally view children as innately good 'at the core (Drew, 2022: 2).
- **Teaching:** Brown (2007: 8) define teaching as showing and helping someone to learn how to do something, giving instructions, guiding in the study of something, providing with knowledge, causing to know or understand.

Chapter Two

(2.1) Theoretical Background:

In the later decades of the twentieth century, a number of new and radically different approaches came to the fore, often grouped together under the heading humanistic because of the way they focused on tapping into inner skills and abilities assumed to be present in all learners. (Crystal, 2007: 440) Ellis (2003) defined Humanistic theory as an approach to language teaching that emphasizes tasks involving the development of human values and sensitivity to the feeling and emotion to others. It has found expression in approaches that place the experiences and feelings of the students at the center of learning process. (Nunan, 2006, 308) 165 Proponents of humanistic approaches believe that learning should be aimed at the deeper levels of understanding and personal meaningfulness to be maximally effective. Such methods (e.g. desuggestopedia and silent way) emphasize the need to reduce anxiety and tension. (Hadley, 2003, 86) 441 Humanistic theory based on the view that the brain has great unused potential which can be exploited through the power of suggestion. It aims to provide an environment which keeps the amount of teaching to a minimum and encourages learners to develop their own ways of using the language elements introduced. (Crystal, 2007, 440)

Rivers (1981) clarifies that humanistic approach has resulted in the inclusion in language learning materials of vocabulary and activities for expression one's feelings, for sharing one's values and viewpoints with others, and for developing a better understanding of others ' feelings and needs. Education should speak to the whole person, in other words, not just to a small language - learning facility. In a humanist classroom, students are emotionally involved in the learning, they are encouraged to reflect on how learning happens and their creativity is fostered. The teacher can achieve this by keeping criticism to a minimum and by encouraging them, in plain terms to feel good about themselves. In a humanist classroom, learning a language is as much an issue of personal

identity, self - knowledge, feelings and emotions as it is about language. (Harmer 2009, 58) A language class is a particularly suitable environment for meeting affective needs, because much of the activity can take the form of role playing, simulation games, and small group discussions. masks and puppets help the more inhibited to express themselves with less risk. (Rivers, 1981: 89) Humanistic approach focuses on the development of human values, sensitive to human feelings and emotions, and growth in self awareness and in the understanding of others. (Richards & Rodgers, 2010: 265)

(2.2) The Principles of the Theory:

The cardinal principles of humanistic language teaching include:

1. Respecting learners as people, including fostering the individual learner's self - esteem / promoting mutual esteem among learners, and developing each learner's awareness of self and others.
2. Recognizing the affective as well as the cognitive nature of the learning experience, this means working productively with the learner's emotions response to the foreign language and culture and to the learning situation.
3. Rethinking traditional syllabuses and materials. Humanistic approaches encourage learners to express their own meaning rather replicate model utterances. This methods used as person related and the learner's personal experience and perspective are seen as primary resources for both lesson content and language form and function. This contrasts with more traditional approaches which focus on declarative rather than procedural knowledge. (Byram and Hu 2003: 1)
4. Focusing on the learner's desire for positive growth, subjective feeling, needs, self - concept, choices in life, and interpersonal relationships.
5. Feelings and emotions are the keys to learning, communication, and understanding Humanists worry that in today's stressful society people can easily lose touch with their feelings, which sets the stage for emotional problems and difficulties in learning. (Bestable, 2006: 56)
6. Learner not educator choose what is to learned, this mean that educator serve as a resource persons whose job is to help and guide learners.
7. The role of any educator and learner is to be a facilitator..
8. The humanistic perspectives is largely a motivational theory.
9. The assumption of the humanistic learning theory is that each individual is unique and that all individuals have a desire to grow in a positive way. (Ibid: 330)
10. Students should be allowed to negotiate learning out comes; to cooperate with the teacher and other learners in a process of discovery, to engage in critical thinking, and to relate everything they do in school to the reality outside the classroom.
11. The teacher should allow time to students so that they can discover facts and principles for themselves.
12. Classroom activities and material in language teaching should utilize meaningful contexts of genuine communication with students engaged together in the process of becoming " persons " (Brown, 2007: 98) .
13. Through the establishment of interpersonal relationships with learners, teachers become the facilitators of learning.
14. Students must feel positive rather than negative about what they are learning.
15. Human beings will learn all they need to, If a context of learning is properly created (Ibid: 97) .

Students interests are awakened and will have a motivation to learn the language, If teachers provide them with genuine and real challenge. Role playing, class debate on a topic, English speeches or song contest, are the activities practicable used for motivate learners. Students are expected to do a lot of work in these activities; they require using group task, collecting materials, oral English practice and simulate the native speakers. (Ibid: -98) .

Johnson and Johnson (1998) list a number of features for activities that humanistic classroom context among which are:

- Students should avoid negative focus and accentuate the positive.
- They should be used low risk, i.e. non - personal threatening activities.
- Students are given the opportunity to verbalize before others something like about themselves.
- They should encourage looking at their peers and focusing on seeing the beauty of others.
- Linguistically, teachers should give their students the opportunities to practice the language for expressing.
- students are given the opportunities to practice the vocabulary.

(2.3) The Role Of The Teacher:

Byram and Hu (2013) state teachers role in humanistic theory as entertainers or performers who first decide and then fill the knowledge gap that exists between themselves and their learners. A humanistic approach regards teachers as facilitators who support learners to discover themselves, not as teachers. Jola Bastable (2006) mentions another role for the teacher to encourage and evaluate changes in learner's need, self concept, and feeling. Freedom to choose and opportunities for spontaneities and creativity.

Through the enterprise s special relationships with learners, teachers need to become facilitator of learning. They must first be real and genuine, second, they necessitate to have acceptance, and a award of the other person the student - as a worthy, helpful individual. Third teachers have to to communicate with their students freely and empathetically. Teachers with these characteristics will also be effective teachers and better understand themselves (Brown, 2007: 98) . According to the humanistic theory the role of the teacher is to be a model. He is also need to teach learning skills in general, provide a reason and motivation for each task, foster group work,, and give their students to choose suitable tasks (Rivers, 1981, 88) .

(2.4) The role of the learners:

In humanistic theory learners' role is limited to explore and observe. They can observe and monitor their own behaviors and make needed changes by using self - evaluation techniques. Learners also require taking responsibility for their own learning and making their goals realistic. because of a belief that “I am not capable,” a learner with low self- trust might not challenge difficult projects, whereas a learner with a high level of self- efficacy can go ahead of the direct instructions of a task to adapt the assignment to fit their needs of learning. Students with Highly self-actualized show themselves as dynamic beings who are being able to grow and change (Tolan, 2017:66).

Teachers would have the learners to work in collaborative groups, if they were to use a humanistic theory to teach a unit in multiplication. There, learners can intimately monitor the behavior of peers and assess their own progress. They are giving much of the effort for the learning which occurs through their experiences and imminent. Self – evaluation is the most valuable assessment, so learners are expected to consider that kind of learning needs and evaluation to focus on features that add to achieving important results or to solve significant problems (Rivers, 1981, 89) .

(2.5) The Relationships Between Teacher And Learner:

Maslow (1970) argues that the most basic type of behavior for people is the emotional communication between teacher and learner. Teachers and learners have a special kind of relationship and this relation is made through cognition and affecting communication. The teacher must get the student's belief as the doctor treat the patient, and should take into consideration the student's needs. He can lead the students to organize their learning activity and simultaneously, he can give them some necessary conditions. Student's self - assessment is the fundamental consideration to establish learning independence. In self evaluation students should compare with themselves not with other students.

(2.6) Techniques Used in Humanistic Theory:

The techniques used in humanistic classroom are the following:

- **Small group tasks:** In small groups of working, students can do a lot of different activities.
- **Peer correction:** Teachers should encourage students to help their peers when he or she experiencing difficulty.
- **Role play:** Students act as someone else and introduce themselves as that person. (Freeman, 2000: 84)
- **Class debate on a topic.**
- **Simulation games:** English speeches or song contest (Rivers, 1981: 89)

(2.7) The advantages of this theory:

There are many advantages of humanistic theory as following:

- Humanistic principles focus on the student's achievement' full potential for development by allowing the importance of the emotional measurement in learning as well as cognitive.
- Learners are encouraged by Humanistic theory to distinguish their feeling and put them to use caring for and participating with others, thus increasing their own self - esteem and their motivation to learn. (Ellis, 2003: 31)
- Study the ability of human beings to adopt and to grow in the direction that enhances their experience.
- The facilitation of change and learning is the goal of education. Focus on his or her personal sense of reality, and the growth of an individual's self – concept. these internal energy that cause a person to act (Brown, 2007: 98)
- Humanistic theory focuses on the sensitive to human feelings and emotions, the improving of human values, and development in self-consciousness and in the sympathetic of others (Richards & Rodgers, 2010: 265) .

(2.8) The disadvantages of the theory:

- Student talk about their himself, saying how they feel about their lives could be harmful.
- The view of teaching and learning has a strong bias which would be inappropriate in certain situation.
- Teachers ignore their students ' cognitive and intellectual development, by giving affective learning concentration.
- Students can practice special kind of language, may limit by a concentration of the inner self.

(2.9) Conclusion:

Humanistic theory is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes tasks, sensitivity to the feeling and emotion to others, and involving the development of human values. It has found expression in approaches that place the experiences and feelings of the students at the center of the process of learning. Such approaches involve students to be actively concerned in understanding the processes of language learning, since they work with a foreign language. The main principle for this approach is to Focusing on the learner's desire for positive growth, needs, subjective feeling, choices in life, self - concept, and interpersonal relationships. Emotions and feelings are the keys to learning, understanding, and communication. Therefore, as the doctor treat the client, the teacher should get the student's trust and he should pay attention to the student's needs, because the most basic type of behavior for people is the emotional communication between teachers and students. And also teachers have to encourage learners to distinguish their feeling and put them to use caring for and participate with others.

References:

1. Bestable, s. (2006) **Essential of patient Education**, London, Jones and Bartlett publishers.
2. Brown, H. (2007) **Principles of language learning and teaching**, 5th ed New York, pearson Education.
3. Byram, M. and Hu, A. (2013) **Rout ledge Encyclopedia of language teaching and learning**, 2nd ed. , London, Routledge.
4. Crystal, D., (2006) **How language works**, London, penguin books.
5. Drew C. (2022) **What Is The Humanistic Theory In Education?**, Chicago <https://helpfulprofessor.com/humanist-theory-in-education>
6. Ellis, R. (2003) **Task - based language learning and teaching**, Oxford, Oxford university press.
7. Freeman, D. (2000) **Techniques and principles in language teaching**, ed. , Oxford, Oxford university press.
8. Hadley, A. (2003) **Teaching English in Context**, 3d ed. , Boston, Heinle & Heinle Publisher. ed.
9. Harmer, J. (2009) **The practice of English language teaching**, 4th New York, pearson Education .
10. Johnson, K & .Johnson, H (1998) **Encyclopedic dictionary of applied linguistics: A Hand book for language teaching**, Oxford, Blackwell publisher.
11. Khatib, M., Sarem, S. N., & Hamidi, H. (2013). **Humanistic Education: Concerns, Implications and Applications. *Journal of Language Teaching & Research*, 4(1), pp. 45 – 51**
12. Maslow, A. (1970) **Motivation and Personality**, Harper & Row publisher
13. Nunan, D. (2006) **Second language teaching & learning**, Boston, Heinle & Heinle Publisher.
14. Richards, J. and Schmidt, R. (2010) **Longman dictionary of language teaching & applied linguistics**, 4th ed. , Edinburgh, Pearson Education limited.
15. Rivers, W. (1981) **Teaching Foreign - language skills**, 2nd ed. , London, The university of Chicago press .
16. **Rundell M., Potter L., Carey S., Nicholls D. (2009) Macmillan dictionary**, New York, <https://www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/american/importance>
17. Tolan, J. (2017). **Skills in person-centered counseling & psychotherapy**, 3rd edition, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.