

"Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class" 研讀心得

英文科 林書正老師

書 摘

Teacher	Shu-cheng Lin (林書正)
Book	Caring and sharing in the foreign language class
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Content Introduction	This book provides useful humanistic techniques for language teaching. The idea of humanistic education is discussed through several humanistic exercises. As exercises are presented, the purposes of both affective and linguistic sides, procedures, and information necessary for the success of conducting each exercise are also given.

Abstract

Humanistic education in language learning is deeply discussed in this book. Furthermore, not only the theories of humanistic education but also the effective techniques that can be used in real class are presented in detail. From the viewpoint of the author, in order to successfully implement affective activities in class, we, teachers, should always try to establish a warm, supportive, and accepting learning environment for students. Also, the positive aspect should always be the focus. That is, we must help students identify their strengths and always give them positive feedback instead of negative one. By doing so, affective exercises can be successfully and easily used with our existing teaching materials.

Humanistic Exercises

A few humanistic exercises chosen from this book will be introduced in this section. Moreover, both linguistic and affective purposes of each exercise will also be mentioned.

I. Search for Someone Who

This exercise is especially useful for the first day the class meets. The affective objective is to encourage the students to make contact with their new classmates. On the other hand, practicing asking and responding to questions with correct verb tenses are the linguistic objectives. In order to achieve these objectives, teachers have to design a work sheet that includes several interesting questions related to the students. With the sheet, for each question students have to find at least one classmate who has the positive answer. Besides, every question should be responded by different classmates. One-word answer of 'Yes' or 'No' is not accepted. The student who collects the most answers within the time limit will be the winner. By doing so, students should ask for answers from others and give answers to others, and in the process, they can not only practice English but also know each other better.

II. One-word Dialogues

To experience how students' messages are understood when they talk to others is the major affective purpose of this activity. In terms of the linguistic purpose, students will learn how to communicate with others by using a limited vocabulary. At first, students are divided into several

groups of four. Two students in each group have to start a conversation first. They can only use a word to express their idea each time, while the other two in the group write down the “complete” conversation by the limited words in the conversation and their imagination. The students can check out if their messages were successfully sent through the conversation written down. In real life, most people had experience of using a limited knowledge of English to communicate with foreigners. This activity can not only give students opportunities to practice speaking English with limited words but also encourage them to communicate without perfect English.

III. I like You Because...

To build students' self-confidence, we must let them know what positive qualities they have. This is a famous activity teachers usually apply in class to help students recognize their strengths. The main affective purpose is to reveal the strengths that may be unknown to students. Additionally, by giving and receiving positive feedback, students can practice using adjectives of positive qualities. At the beginning of the class the teacher should remind the students that they all have many positive thoughts and feelings about their classmates; however, they seldom express them. This activity gives them an opportunity to tell others the good they see in them. To make the activity successful, the teacher can introduce to the students some sentence patterns used to praise others and adjective describing positive qualities in advance. Students have to give positive feedback to their classmates sitting next to them within the time limit, and then they have to move to another classmate to exchange positive thoughts.

IV. What Made Me Me

This exercise is especially suitable for advance students. During the activity, students have to share their personal experience with others. The affective purpose is to create a deeper closeness among students. As for the linguistic purposes, students will practice free writing and have a brief monologue of their life story. Before carrying out this exercise, students are asked to write down some critical life experiences that have had positively influenced them the most by thinking back from their earlier memories. Then, during the exercise, students share their experiences with their group members.

V. Fireman, Save My...

This exercise aims to encourage students to discover what things they place a high value on. That is, students will think about what they value

in life during the exercise. Furthermore, the conditional tense will be the emphasis when students sharing their ideas with others. At the beginning of the exercise, students are asked to imagine that their houses are on fire, and luckily all their family members are safe. However, the things inside the house are almost ruined. Firemen can only save one thing in the house. Students have to decide which belongings inside they cherish the most and want it to be saved. Then, by using the conditional tense they have to share with their group members what thing they really care about and why they chose it.

Reflection

At the beginning of the methodical history of language teaching, the cognitive or intellectual side of learning was especially emphasized. The grammar translation method, for instance, gives attention to grammar rules, translations of texts, and vocabulary memorization. Similarly, the audiolingual method focuses on learners' linguistic competence (Brown, 2000, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Nowadays, more and more problems of the youth, however, are arising. The increasing number of students' dropouts, crime, mental illness, and suicides all point out that the youth of today are not satisfied with their lives or even themselves.

In order to live up to the expectations of their parents and teachers, most students believe that getting good grades and entering schools that have good reputation are the most important things in their lives. Furthermore, under the stress of tests, students usually compete and are compared with others that cause them to lose their interest in learning. Consequently, the students never know what is really important to them and what they really want from life. It seems that receiving education at school is a torture for students. "Today's youth cry for education that will help them make sense of their lives and the world around them. They want learning which is more personal and human" (Moskowitz, 1978, p. 7).

In response to these problems, more and more attention has been recently paid to the affective side of learning. According to Moskowitz, "today there seems to be a shift in our society's focus from one of academic achievement to one of self-actualization" (p.10). That is, in addition to academic knowledge, how students feel about themselves while learning become the new area of emphasis. After reviewing this book, we have learnt that the idea of humanistic education should be included in our recent

teaching. By implementing humanistic techniques, teachers can help students become aware of their own strengths, build up their confidence, and share their feelings with others. I believe that the more students believe in themselves, the more likely they are to be responsible for not only their learning but also their lives.

References

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