ABSTRACT

The purpose of humanistic education is educating the whole person—the intellectual and the emotional aspects. Similarly, Lei (2007) believes that the aim of the humanistic educations is not only developing the cognitive and linguistic capabilities of the learners but also paying attention to the learners’ emotions and feelings. Arnold (1998) goes on to hold that humanistic language teaching does not mean to substitute the cognitive for the affective, but rather to add the affective. This paper first presents a brief overview of philosophy, rational and principles of humanism, then some points to humanize materials are recommended. Afterwards, an optimal zone is regarded for humanism, and at last some critical points are mentioned.

Key Words: Humanism, Humanizing materials, Optimal zone, Optimal learning.
1. Introduction

Philosophically, humanism's tenets are under the flag of progressivism. As pointed in Finney (2002), Kelly (1989) who proposes the process model as an approach to curriculum planning, puts emphasis on value issue and asserts that the purpose of this model is to enable the individual to progress towards self-fulfillment. In the same line, Johnson (1989), in Finney (2002), believes that in this approach language teaching is in touch with educational theory in general and with curriculum studies in particular.

Since humanistic view was developed in reaction to two other dominant views in 1940s, as behaviorism and Freudian psychoanalysis, it is also called "third-force psychology" (Woolfolk, et al., 2003).

The leading figures in philosophy are Stevick and Moskowitz; and in psychology, Maslow, Carl Rogers, Combs, Glasser, and Erikson.

As Wang (2005) notes, from 1970s humanism has shed light on education; the receiver in education is first a human being, then a learner. The term humanism was coined in 1808 by a German educator F. J. Niethammer. According to Stevick (1990), all individuals have a body, a mind, and emotions. As we have a fuller understanding of these three elements, we are more able to bring them into harmony with one another. Moskowitz (1978), in Richards & Rodgers (1986), refers to the integration of emotions, linguistic knowledge, and behavioral skills in the whole person. Put it another way, McNeil (2005) asserts that in the atmosphere of a class, emotional dimensions are added to the subject matter, thus there is personal meaning to what is learned.

Pratt (1987) refers to the underlying assumptions of humanistic psychology mentioned by Maslow:

1) Recognizing and integrating cognitive, affective and social aspects of beings can meet psychological and social health.

2) Direct personal experience is the preferred learning mode.
3) Human relations are taken as an essential basis for growth. Wealth of experimental studies has represented the effectiveness of cooperative learning in enhancing both the academic and the social development of students.

4) Growth and self-actualization are primary needs of people; this view represents that persons have an unlimited potential for growth. These persons are mature, competent, humble and stable; they listen carefully to other people; they are committed to do everything to the best of their ability; they are also open to change. These people are inner directed and have the strength and self-confidence to stand up for their beliefs and values. They feel a kinship to their fellow man and as Moskowits (1978) puts, in Stevick (1990), they have a strong sense of responsibility. They maintain harmonious relationships with other people; they are independent, respectful, peaceful, caring, creative and spontaneous.

2. Humanizing Materials

Dubin & Olshtain (1986) underscore that one of the objectives of a language program concerning humanistic view is that meaningful communication from the learner's point of view is highly emphasized and "texts should be authentic, tasks should be communicative, and outcomes should be negotiated" (p. 70).

Leaving the content open-ended is a way to achieve humanistic goal of psychological growth, so that themes are arisen spontaneously from teaching procedures and structural materials (McNeil, 2005). McNeil also suggests activities which let learners experience alternative ways of behaviors and evaluation, both self-evaluation or reflection and peer-evaluation or reactions of their friends.

Throwing a glance at literature indicates that a number of recent publications have focused on localizing and personalizing language materials (Arnold, 1999; Tomlinson, 2003). To humanize course books, Tomlinson (2008) has some suggestions as follows:

1) Subversion: Most textbooks are very serious and there are fewer opportunities for humor or fun.

2) Adding a challenge: It is suggested to add problems or questions with no apparent answers; for students should use the language not just practice it.
3) Personalization: Since students enjoy knowing some of their teacher's memories, challenges, and achievements, the teacher can share some of these impressive memories.

4) Localization: Students are asked to describe their house or write about the monuments of their own country, for instance.

5) Supplementation: Kinaesthetic view of learning is overlooked in textbooks; thus activities can be designed to make the students have physical action in response to linguistic prompts.

Including supplementary materials is another technique to humanize the materials. Genuine challenges, for example, to Wang (2005) can provoke the students' interests and motivation and to Khatib et al. (2013) can contribute to autonomy. Other supplementary materials can be bringing the text of the breaking news of the day or week to the class; replacing one of the boring or old listening parts with a recent song by a famous singer; or to have a lively class asking the students to take their tablets to the class for the following session and teach the teacher an application. Biography of successful people or celebrities can also be motivating for the students. Dreams can be used as a basis for creative writing or discussion; to McNeil (2005), dreams contain "the emotional impact of messages from the unconscious" (p. 17).

3. An Optimal Zone for Humanism

Reviewing literature volumes, it has been concluded that an optimal zone can be considered for humanistic approaches taken in EFL classes. First a continuum is depicted; the two extreme ends and also disadvantages following them are regarded. Thereupon, an optimal zone is preferred.

The instructional objectives of perennialism and essentialism are educating the rational person and promoting the intellectual growth of the individuals (Ornstein, 2010). Accordingly, educators of those eras overemphasized the subject matter, methodology, and techniques in order for teachers to transmit information to students. The teachers also had a very authoritative role in the class. Concerning this issue and behavioristic approach toward learning, Yount (2010) argues that "learners are more than learning machines to be programmed by teachers or computers" (p. 313). Students possess attitudes, emotions, and values.
On the other hand, after the emersion of progressivism and reconstructionism, some educators overstressed the role of affective domain in education and they provided the greatest liberty for the learners in terms of subject matter, tasks, topics, evaluation, assignments, and decision-making in a very less stressful atmosphere.

Concerning learners' differences and different learning styles, Leer (1973), in Rossiter (1976), remarks that some students take a democratic approach and free attitude of a teacher, as her/his weakness. Such students, to me, find such an atmosphere a better place to shirk (hedge) their homework.

Another negative consequence of over-humanizing a class is that some students take the class and learning for granted, so that there is no engine to make them incentive; that is why humanistic approach is not always a change for the better. Stevick (1980), in Wang (2005, p. 2), states that "in a language course, success depends less on materials, techniques, and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom". But it is also a kind of extreme view.

Taking all the above-mentioned points into consideration, humanistic approach and humanism can be placed on a continuum. To clarify the point, there are degrees of humanistic approach in education; various elements contribute to "what degree" should be taken, such as the context, the students, their different learning styles, their level, age range and their needs, the teacher, her/his capabilities and dexterity, the institution, and so on. Put it in nutshell, since humanization is not a quantifiable or measureable concept (Dale & Hyslop-Margison, 2010), we can depict an optimal zone for humanistic approach in the class. To put it another way, there should be a kind of balance between affective domains and cognitive domains to bring about optimized learning. To some extent the role of the teacher is of paramount value. Thus, the teacher should be careful and cautious enough about the borderlines of such an approach.

According to Arnold (1998, p. 8), "affect must be given to the already cognitive concentration to optimize language learning: it is not a problem of lowering standards for students' cognitive development, but a question of realizing that it is beneficial for teachers to opt to focus at times on affective issues". In the same vein, Rossiter (1976) reiterates that the teacher's orientation, rather than any technique s/he employs, determines if the classroom will contribute to the development of the whole person or not.
To have optimal learning in this zone, McNeil (2005) refers to the idea of individualism supported by humanistic curriculum. Such a curriculum helps students discover who they are. In the main, Maslow asserts that we learn more about ourselves by examining responses to peak experiences such as joy or anxiety. McNeil goes on to say that following Maslow's concept of peak experience and the need to realize one's potentialities and restrictions, the focus has been on experiences called "flow"; they are optimal and enjoyable experiences in which the activity at hand is emphasized. At the most challenging level, these experiences make the person exceed self; if the activities in an experience are intrinsically enjoyable, the person develops her/his intellectual ability to the fullest. Flow experiences occur when environmental challenges match one's competencies and skills (McNeil, 2005, p. 7). On one hand, over-challenging situations make the person anxious, and on the other hand, if the person is over-skilled for the task, s/he becomes bored. As a result, challenges should match one's capabilities; as the capabilities grow, the person should be exposed to greater challenges to stay in flow. Providing such a condition in a class, students can develop their capabilities to match appropriate challenge and competency. In this regard, students learn "to find out challenges, to turn complexity into manageable task, and to trust their skills" (McNeil, 2005, p. 7).

The optimally developed person has not merely possessed encyclopedic knowledge, but s/he can live well and treat the various circumstances and situations wisely (McNeil, 2005). Optimal development can be found in personal knowledge in engagement with others. In the same line, Richards et al. (2005), cited in Khatib et al. (2013), remark that humanistic education prioritizing students' psychological states can provide optimal learning conditions; thus critical thinking would be fostered in the learners.

Teachers should strive to consider two important aspects highlighted in humanism: cognition and affection. Making appropriate balance between cognition and affection is of the great value and it requires teacher's dexterity; so that optimal learning occurs on the condition that the teacher considers the optimal zone in her/his humanistic approach.

4. A critical look

Education should be used to help a person grow and develop in many aspects such as intellectual, emotional, and social aspects. Education should also create awareness (Khatib, Sarem, & Hamidi, 2013). Taking humanistic approach into consideration, Underhill (1989)
argues that students may find it disturbing to take responsibility for their own learning or teachers may lack experience or knowledge in providing the conditions for this change. Indeed, all students are not in a position to take responsibility and to decide for themselves and recognize what they need to know. It is worth noting that, the sense of responsibility depends also on the age of the students; for example adults usually take more responsibility of their own learning.

Overemphasizing individual is another charge against humanists that McNeil (2005) refers. Similarly, Gadd (1998) holds that the students’ inner self is considered as a source and material of learning, so that they do not have opportunities to learn from outside. Gadd also continues that in humanistic language teaching language acquisition is as a secondary goal and usually teachers impose their moral values on their students.

McCarty, cited in McNeil (2005), considers humanistic education as chaotic that lacks a set of common goals; in the same line, McNeil (2005) criticizes that humanistic curriculum lacks sequence at times. Sequence requires focusing on a single element (such as value, attitude, and problem); in this education students have little opportunities to expand a single aspect of their development.

5. Concluding remarks

As Tomlinson (2008) puts, the purpose of education as a life-long learning process is promoting professional growth and competence. Blending humanism and social constructivism, boundaries of the humanistic curriculum are broaden, so that there would be a movement from self-study to political socialization and areas like medicine, parental care, journalism, and injustice, for example (McNeil, 2005).

The important point to be considered here is that based on various factors involved, there should be a kind of balance between the affective domains and cognitive domains. As Rubin (1974) states, cognition is an important aspect in shaping attitudes, and attitudes have an essential role in controlling the emotional responses. On one hand, Pratt & Conrad (1981, p. 171) impart that "part of the baggage that students bring to college includes patterns of beliefs, values, aptitudes, attitudes, abilities, and interests". On the other hand, Zucca-Scott (2010)
believes that designing a curriculum that allows flexibility and freedom of intellectual exploration makes students feel supported to develop their capabilities and individualities, although benchmarks and goals are regarded as indicators for educators. Therefore, teachers can take these aspects into consideration and manage the blueprints of an optimal zone for their humanistic approach in the class, although sometimes the institute, sometimes the curriculum, and sometime the teacher herself/himself do not tend to follow such an approach.

Consequently, humanism in education does not mean to be a kind and tender minded teacher; humanism is not allowing students to be free and choose their class activities based on their own interests; humanism is not making students motivated in all situations and all times; humanism is not forgiving or overlooking the students' inattentiveness or mistakes. Rather humanism in education sometimes requires a serious, stressful, and challenging atmosphere to make students more committed and responsible for their own learning; thus such an occasion pushes students to learn more in order not to be dehumanized.

To optimize learning, teachers, techniques, methods, materials, and curricula should consider optimal zone of humanistic approach, thereupon they interact with each other in a complementary fashion; if every one of these elements goes to extremes, counterproductive effects will be experienced.

Finally, the complexity of students and teachers as human beings in Palmer's (1997) view and infinite and incalculable values of every person in Ayers’s (2010) view make the delicate job of teaching complicated.
REFERENCES


Author Bio

Katayoon Mansouri is currently teaching at Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, Rasht, Iran, and a PhD candidate of TEFL at Azad University, Science and Research Branch, Tehran, Iran. She has taught English for ten years at different institutes and universities. She has published some articles and she has a book under publication. Her research interests are testing and assessment, second language acquisition, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. She is also a member of Teaching English Language and Literature Society of Iran (TELLSI).