

THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH

Versión Manuscrita
Aceptada

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Introduction

The humanistic approach to education has had a significant influence in the field and much has been written about its advantages, although there are also criticisms of diverse aspects. In its development important figures in humanistic psychology have made major contributions which have been taken up in many educational contexts. Humanistic psychology, according to Underhill (1989:250) “is a general term given to a loose, overlapping confederation of explorations in the field of human potential that share some common beliefs and values, but which do not work from a single articulated theory.” In language teaching the humanistic perspective is an attempt to place the learner at the centre of the process of L2 acquisition. Unlike the approaches based only on the contents of the language, the humanistic orientation promotes freedom and learner initiative, considering the learner as an active part in the process of learning.

Humanistic psychology in education

Moving away from psychoanalysis and behaviourism, considered to limit a person’s control over motivational factors, Carl Rogers was one of the founders of humanistic psychology which emphasizes the importance of self-actualization, of reaching one’s

potential; he contributed influential ideas for education, such as the need for unconditional positive regard where learners feel accepted and thus have more confidence. Amini & Amini (2012: 102) comment that for Rogers, “a precondition for learning to take place is that the subject of learning be relevant to the learner and stimulate active participation of the learner”. In his book *Freedom to Learn* Rogers points out how in effective education, what is aimed for is “the student who says, ‘I am discovering, drawing in from the outside, and making that which is drawn in a real part of me’”, and so if what is done in the classroom doesn’t relate in some way to the learners and what they want to achieve, this learning “... involves the mind only. It is learning which takes place from the neck up. It does not involve feelings or personal meanings; it has no relevance for the whole person” (Rogers, 1969: 3-4). He proposed five elements of significant learning: It has a quality of personal involvement; It is self-initiated; It is pervasive (affecting behaviour and attitudes); It is evaluated by the learner, who knows if it leads toward what he wants to know; Its essence is meaning (Rogers 1969:5). Not only the cognitive side of learning but also affective aspects need to be taken into consideration. Gadotti (1994:12) says that “Education should have a vision of the pupil as a complete person, who has feelings and emotions”.

Rogers saw the teacher not just as someone who presents the subject matter but as a facilitator. Adrian Underhill describes the three qualities of a teacher/facilitator that Rogers considered support whole-person learning: genuineness, unconditional acceptance and empathy. “Teachers exercising the quality of genuineness are able to be authentically themselves in the act of teaching, rather than playing the role of teacher... A teacher with the quality of unconditional acceptance is able to respect and accept her learners for what they are, in an unconditional way....This teacher who is empathic... is able to identify with others and to feel what it’s like for them at any point in a lesson” Underhill (1989:258).

Abraham Maslow also has an important role in the development of humanistic psychology. As a psychologist, in his theory of hierarchy of needs Maslow focused on

how human potential develops and how people make important achievements. It can be seen as a pyramid where there are different levels of needs. For the highest level, self-actualization, Maslow (1943:382) notes that “It refers to the person’s desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially”. His theory was not strongly research-based, but it has been useful in psychology and in educational contexts. His view of education is holistic, taking into account all aspects of the learner – physical, social, emotional as well as intellectual.

In a posthumous book which provides a synthesis of many of his ideas, Maslow (1971, p. 195) considered that a humanistic educational approach would lead to people who are “stronger, healthier, and would take their own lives into their hands to a greater extent. With increased personal responsibility for one’s personal life, and with a rational set of values to guide one’s choosing, people would begin to actively change the society in which they lived”. It is easy to find implications for the classroom in many of his theories. For students to reach their potential, it is important that not only are their cognitive needs considered but also they need to feel physically and emotionally comfortable in the classroom if they are going to make the necessary effort to reach their potential as learners.

Positive psychology

Similar ideas are also found in Positive Psychology (PP). According to Seligman and Csikszentmihaly (2000), “Psychology is not just the study of pathology, weakness and damage, it is also the study of strength and virtue” (p.7) and they mention “four different personal traits that contribute to positive psychology: subjective well-being, optimism, happiness, and self-determination.” (p.9). When in the process of studying the language students experience these positive factors, this is highly useful for their learning. In their research with university students Macaskill and Denovan (2013:25) found that in a group where they incorporated a psycho-educational intervention that supported the psychological strengths related to confidence, there were significant increases both in

confidence measures and also in autonomous learning in comparison with the control group of students who did not receive the intervention.

As Dewaele, Chen, Padilla and Lake (2019) point out, “For many years, a cognitive perspective had dominated research in applied linguistics. Around the turn of the millennium researchers became increasingly interested in the role of emotions in foreign language learning and teaching”. This has led to diverse applications of PP in the second language acquisition context such as those MacIntyre and Mercer (2014:154-5) discuss; they consider that “PP has been designed to address three topic areas: the workings of positive internal experiences such as emotions, positive individual characteristics such as traits associated with living well, and institutions that enable people to flourish” and so “PP aims to contribute another perspective to psychology by studying what we can do to increase strengths and attributes such as resiliency, happiness, optimism and the like in the general population”. These things are important in any educational context but even more so in language learning where affective factors can influence significantly the results of the learning process. For example, students having to speak in front of others in a language that they do not always control well is common in most second language acquisition contexts and it may produce anxiety in many learners. Thus it can be important to establish an atmosphere in the classroom that contributes to confidence and security. MacIntyre and Mercer (2014:156) point out that

Many language educators are aware of the importance of improving individual learners’ experiences of language learning by helping them to develop and maintain their motivation, perseverance, and resiliency, as well as positive emotions necessary for the long-term undertaking of learning a foreign language. In addition, teachers also widely recognise the vital role played by positive classroom dynamics amongst learners and teachers, especially in settings in which communication and personally meaningful interactions are foregrounded.

Affect in language learning

Affect in education includes both intrapersonal aspects, such as learners' motivation and confidence, and also the group relationships established in the learning context. Stern (1983:386) wrote that "the affective component contributes at least as much and often more to language learning than the cognitive skills". According to neurobiological research on this, the two areas cannot be separated; as the neuroscientist Antonio Damasio (1994) has pointed out, there is a need to take into account the affective component of learning to establish the neurological conditions which can lead to more effective functioning of the brain. Schumann (1994:232) states that "the brain stem, limbic and frontolimbic areas, which comprise the stimulus appraisal system, emotionally modulate cognition such that, in the brain, emotion and cognition are distinguishable but inseparable. Therefore, from a neural perspective, affect is an integral part of cognition".

The classroom atmosphere and the relationship between teacher and students and between students can have a lot to do with facilitating learning. In the field of education much has been written on group dynamics which Heron referred to as "the combined configuration of mental, emotional and physical energy in the group at any given time; and the way this configuration undergoes change" (Heron 1999:51). He points out how the group dynamics may lead to positive aspects such as when the group is task-oriented, expressive, interactive but there may also be negative aspects such as when among members of the group there is competitiveness, emotional and physical isolation, anxiety. In the communicative language teaching context where communication is both the goal and the means to reach the goal, the group dynamics are especially important, and learners often are involved in activities where they need to interact with others because in order to learn to speak the language they have to **speak**. A well-functioning group can be considered a learning community and can play an important role in success in language learning. Effective classroom learning is facilitated by "great teachers who can create a positive classroom atmosphere [and] transmit insights in language and culture in such a way that learners will perceive it less as a 'transfer of knowledge' and more like a 'self-discovery of knowledge'" (Dewaele 2011, 37). The role of the teacher is essential in establishing positive group dynamics which contribute to learners' confidence, motivation and achievement.

Stevick (1990) explained that with humanistic teaching methods there are many options for students to share ideas and feelings about topics of personal relevance, and that this makes possible not only the development of linguistic knowledge but also the creation of a sense of community which facilitates the acquisition of linguistic knowledge. A further benefit for teachers from working to create a good learning community is that they themselves may learn more when they are teaching and enjoy the process more.

Humanism in language teaching

In the 1960's and 1970's humanism was a term being used in diverse contexts. Exactly what it meant was not always clear. The term was taken up by experts in many areas of foreign/second language teaching. In his book *Humanism in Language Learning*, Earl Stevick offers a proposal of five components of humanism:

- Feelings, including both personal emotions and aesthetic appreciation.
- Social relations. This side of humanism encourages friendship and cooperation, and opposes whatever tends to reduce them.
- Responsibility. This aspect accepts the need for public scrutiny, criticism, and correction.
- Intellect, including knowledge, reason, and understanding. This aspect fights against whatever interferes with the free exercise of the mind
- Self-actualization, the quest for full realization of one's own deepest true qualities.

(Stevick 1990:23-4)

In their language learning process learners are not only influenced by their contact with the materials to be studied. There are many other factors that play an important role in the process: their feelings about themselves such as confidence, anxiety, boredom, interest; how they see the relationship of the language and their academic and personal goals; if learning is personally meaningful, etc. Their feelings are always present, though they may

or may not be taken into consideration by the teacher. If not considered, the learning process will be less effective.

In a humanistically focused class, the teacher will be sensitive to the affective aspects of the learners and will help them to accentuate the positive such as interest and enjoyment related to activities and to deal with any negative matters such as fear of speaking in front of others, related to the notion of the Affective Filter (Krashen 1985). Just as negative affect can close down the mind and prevent learning, positive affect can provide invaluable support for learning. For this to happen, empathy with students is a central feature. Teachers do not need to agree always with their students but to try to understand how they are feeling, to listen to them - not just the language produced but also the person who is speaking.

The importance of affect in Humanistic Language Teaching (HLT) has been considered as providing support for autonomy in the language learning process; however, Arnold and Fonseca (2017:49) affirm that “what matters most for the development of autonomy is often invisible, not innovative technology or teaching materials, important as they may be, but rather what happens inside and between the participants in the learning community we create in the classroom”.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), in language learning autonomy “can be promoted if ‘learning to learn’ is regarded as an integral part of language learning, so that learners become increasingly aware of the way they learn, the options open to them and the options that best suit them [...]” and then they can be “brought increasingly to make choices in respect of objectives, materials and working methods in the light of their own needs, motivations, characteristics and resources” (Council of Europe, 2001: 141–142).

One of the authors who dealt most directly with humanistic language teaching in its early stages is Gertrude Moskowitz. While her ideas and options have not been taken into account in all language teaching contexts, her work has had a strong influence on the

development of diverse pedagogical proposals in language teaching. The assumptions she presents in the introduction to her book *Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Class. A Sourcebook on Humanistic Techniques* seem very useful:

- For learning to be significant, feelings must be recognised and put to use.
- Human beings want to actualise their potential.
- Having healthy relationships with other classmates is more conducive to learning
- Learning more about oneself is a motivating factor in learning. Increasing one's self-esteem enhances learning.

(Moskowitz, 1978: 18)

Using activities with a positive focus which encourages interaction in the target language can be important because they “help develop powerful interpersonal skills which are often lacking in our communication but which can be learned” (Moskowitz 1978:25).

Stevick discusses Moskowitz's work on humanism in education, which he notes involves “concern for personal development, for self-acceptance and acceptance by others”, something which she sees as closely related to humanistic psychology as well as to the human potential movement, including how learners feel about themselves and dealing with the education of both the intellectual and the emotional dimensions, that is, the whole person. (Stevick 1900:24-25). In language learning for learners to learn the language it is important for them to experience the feeling of success in the process, which can help to motivate them and to help them be less afraid of taking risks as they continue to learn.

Humanism was also very present in the work of Wilga Rivers, an authority on language teaching and learning who made many contributions to the field. She stressed how John Dewey, psychologist and educational reformer, felt that education was not just about receiving knowledge of the subject taught but also about how to live one's life and reach one's potential. Rivers also summarized how “In the individualization movement of the 1970s humanistic education continued its struggle for recognition of the primacy of the

individual personality against deterministic behaviorist emphases”, and she pointed out how while “content is not neglected in a class that uses humanistic techniques, in an affective or humanistic approach, students are encouraged to talk about themselves, to be open with others, and to express their feelings” (Rivers 1983: 23-24) She emphasized the emotional aspects of foreign language learning and stressed the need to make material meaningful for learners.

An advantage of taking into account the affective, humanistic dimension of learners is that it can make it much easier to address something that is a concern in many language teaching contexts today: learner diversity. Humanistic teachers, aware of their students as individuals, in subtle ways can communicate to them acceptance of and respect for their individuality. This can lead to a positive atmosphere in the classroom, which contributes to one of the chief goals of HLT, the creation of a well-functioning group that supports the learning process. There, diversity may be seen less as a problem than as an interesting challenge. One aspect of diversity that has been often dealt with in education is related to the Multiple Intelligence Theory of Howard Gardner (1993), which shows that intelligence is not limited to that which can be measured only according to verbal and numerical means and that success in life is often determined by other intelligences, such as the musical, spatial, kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, which often are not taken into consideration in our educational programs. There are many ways we can work in language classes to use all learning capacities and all types of intelligence in order to support language learning and achieve better results.

One aspect stressed in humanistic education is the opportunity for reflection. When learners are encouraged and given time to reflect on what has been done in class, this can lead to deeper learning and more security. If all that they do is complete one exercise after another in the textbook, it is not as easy to connect to what they already know and to see how they need to proceed in order to have more control of the language and ensure that what they have worked on becomes a permanent part of their knowledge. It is useful if they reflect individually or together with others in the class, including the teacher, and negotiation about best ways to study may be part of this process. Reflection on the

learning/teaching going on in class is also important for teachers. Their systematic reflection can lead to greater professional competence and the ability to create an atmosphere in class that encourages learning

Humanistic Methodology

The origins of HLT come in part from the work in the 1960s and 1970s of psychologists such as Rogers and Maslow. They showed a concern for the development of the whole learner with affective and physical, as well as cognitive needs, and this concern is reflected in the alternative methods born then, though not limited to the methods, which are part of a broad, systemic view of experience where learning, teaching and living are interrelated. Some of important aspects of HLT are: consider the whole person of the learner taking into account insights from psychology; see the role of the teacher as facilitating learning; work with learning strategies to move towards autonomy; create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom; bring personal meaning into the classroom and include the learner's own experience as an important resource. These aspects are reflected both in the general idea of a humanistic approach to teaching and in the HLT methods.

Humanism in language teaching doesn't require adopting one of the specific humanistic methods. Moskowitz in her work on language teaching offers "some specific ways foreign language teachers can weave humanistic strategies into their already existing curricular materials" and she states that this doesn't mean "total abandonment of what teachers are expected to teach, but supplementing these materials where appropriate" (Moskowitz 1978: 1).

Humanistic approaches offer language teachers options for teaching the language that can make significant differences for learners in their language learning experience.

We can opt for teaching the language in a way that may teach the structure of [the language], but certainly nothing more (for example, an activity in which students practise question forms with superficial, non-meaningful items); alternatively, we can

teach it in a way that, while practising the same forms, permits students to share part of themselves with others, and in the process perhaps learn more about themselves and each other. (Arnold 1998:235)

Besides general concepts, specific methods were developed for L2 teaching which have aspects closely related to humanistic psychology: Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia and Total Physical Response. However, Underhill (1989:250) notes that often these methods have just been considered for their colourful techniques for the classroom “without serious attention to the *values, attitudes* and *awarenesses* that inform those practices”, and he also points out that it isn’t essential to use one of the specific humanistic methods “in order to facilitate learning in a way that is consistent both with the values of humanistic psychology, and with our own individual awareness, knowledge and skills”. Even without teaching specifically with one of the humanistic methods, there are aspects related to these methods that can be of use in many of our language teaching contexts.

Representing a major change in approaches to language teaching from those prominent in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the HLT methods were developed during similar times, though in many details these methods are quite different. However, some principles are found in several, if not all of the methods.

- Learner-centred teaching. Richards and Rodgers (2014) consider that teachers should try to establish a pleasant sensation in the classroom and take into account that learners learn in different ways.
- Teachers work towards establishing learners’ well-being. In HLT effective activities for learning are seen as those that, along with presenting the linguistic information to be learned, have personal significance for learners, take into account mind, emotions and the body, include the possibility of choice and lead to good group dynamics.
- Use of music. There are many advantages to using music in the classroom. Fonseca and Toscano (2012) point out that it can reduce stress, relax the body,

keep the mind alert, and in different ways it can stimulate creativity and improve concentration and be the basis for many types of language learning activities.

- Use of images. Language learning of course is a question of learning words but for this purpose it can be useful to work with mental images. Many of these options are seen in activities suggested in Arnold, Puchta and Rinvolutri (2007): facilitating memory, critical thinking, connecting with imagination, making activities motivating and personally meaningful.
- Movement. One of the HLT methods, Total Physical Response, has movement as a central element but it is good to use it once in a while in any class since as Arnold and Foncubierta (2019) indicate, it gets oxygen to the brain, strengthens concentration, leads to more participative learning, and helps to change the rhythm of the class.
- Creation of good group dynamics. Dornyei and Murphey (2003) mention possible feelings of students when a new language class begins: general anxiety and anxiety about using the L2, doubts if they will understand the teaching and know what to do, insecurity about their competence with the language, general lack of confidence. However, they also present factors that will facilitate the creation of a good group, of a learning community: the positive model of the teacher who gives space to diverse opinions, closeness, knowledge of others in the group, cooperation, satisfaction of completing tasks together.

HLT methods have in common a concern for whole person in language learning and for the role of the teacher to create a supportive atmosphere in the classroom but each method has several special characteristics which we will now consider.

Community Language Learning (CLL) is a method which was developed by Charles Curran, coming from his work with Counseling Learning but focusing specifically on language learning. As Richards and Rogers (2014:303) point out, “counseling is one person giving advice, assistance and support to another who has a problem or is in some way in need. CLL draws on the counseling metaphor to redefine the roles of the teacher (the *counselor*) and learners (the *clients*) in the language classroom”, which is where

“the content of the language class stems from topics learners want to talk about and the teacher translates their requests into an appropriate syllabus... [and] the basic procedures can thus be seen as derived from the counselor-client relationship”. The teacher is not doing therapy, though, but rather recognizing that learning can be somewhat stressful and providing needed support for the students, while little by little encouraging their independence.

With the CLL method students sit in a circle with a tape recorder in the centre and the teacher stands outside the circle and has them think about what they might like to say. This gives them the opportunity to prepare mentally before speaking. Then a student says something in their L1 and the teacher stands behind the student translates it to the L2. The student takes the tape recorder and records this. Several other students do the same until they have a conversation taped. The material recorded is transcribed on the blackboard or a large sheet of paper and the teacher reads it to the class. The learners look at the text and work together doing activities with it, furthering their knowledge of the language and stimulating communication in the group.

This method aims to reduce anxiety which can occur when students have to speak. Larsen-Freeman (1986:96) points out the usefulness of the teacher's position in the CLL class since “... if the teacher does not remain in the front of the classroom, the threat is reduced and the students' learning is facilitated.”

Richards and Rodgers (2014:306) stress the importance of communication as interaction. They point out how in CLL the interactions between learners “deepen in intimacy as the class becomes a community of learners”.

Related indirectly to CLL is the concept of Professional Learning Communities where groups in a learning context form to deal with diverse school issues, having “the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. This simple shift—from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—has profound implications for schools”; the groups and are involved

in working together, focusing on questions such as “What do we want each student to learn?, How will we know when each student has learned it?, How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?” (DuFour 2004:6-7)

Suggestopedia is a method that was created in the 1970's by Georgi Lozanov, a psychiatrist and educator from Bulgaria. Lozanov considered that much of the brain is not normally used in learning and that suggestion can help to increase its potential and lead people to their “reserve powers”. Stevick (1996:136) describes Lozanov's view of learning: “people are able to learn at rates many times greater than what we commonly assume to be the limits of human performance”. These issues are studied in what Lozanov termed Suggestology. Positive suggestion comes from the teacher to help remove barriers to learning; this may be direct (comments on how they will be successful in their learning process) or indirect (use of music and a pleasant environment in class).

According to O'Connell (1982:111-112) for Lozanov “joy and relaxation are the prerequisites of all effective, fast learning. In language learning this means that students must feel comfortable, unthreatened, secure, and at the same time interested, amused and involved in meaningful activities using the new language”, and in this state learners will “respond to the teacher's desuggestion/suggestion, encouraging them to perform beyond their normal expectations.” Central to the process is the teacher's authority which, as O'Connell (1982:112) says, “is entirely benign. While teachers must have authority they are always supportive and positive”. Richards and Rogers (2014:320) stress the importance of authority in Suggestopedia where “students experience the educational establishment and the teacher as sources having great authority” and this leads them to have more confidence in their learning context and their ability to learn the language.

In the Suggestopedia classroom there are very comfortable chairs for learners in a semi-circle in the room which is decorated with posters, some of nice scenery and others with grammar points which provide what Lozanov refers to as “peripheral learning”. Also, music is a basic element, used for its capacity to put learners in a relaxed state. The use of

music in language teaching is now emphasized in many contexts. Fonseca-Mora and Herrera-Machancoses affirm that "Melodies and rhythm can create an attractive and enjoyable environment fostering learners' willingness to participate in the language classroom" (2016: 362).

At the beginning of a Suggestopedia class the teacher may put on music and have learners close their eyes, relax. Also, to reduce inhibition students take on a new identity in class, getting new names and a profession they choose which are used in many activities throughout the course.

A typical part of the class is the concert, where students sit comfortably and the teacher reads a long dialogue in a soft voice and with music playing. As Larsen-Freeman (1986:79) comments, "On the conscious plane, the learner attends to the language; on the subconscious plane, the music suggests that learning is easy and pleasant. When there is a unity between conscious and subconscious, learning is enhanced". The reading may be repeated, and after the reading, various types of activities, sometimes games, related to the text may be used to reinforce the language learning process.

Richards and Rodgers (2014:321) point out that "Suggestopedia aims to deliver advanced conversational proficiency quickly. It apparently bases its learning claims on student mastery of prodigious lists of vocabulary pairs and, indeed, suggests to the students that it is appropriate that they set such goals for themselves".

The Silent Way, developed by Caleb Gattegno in the 1970's, concentrates more on how students learn than on how to teach. McNeill (1982:119) comments that "learners develop 'new inner criteria' every time they come to feel that they know something from within themselves, rather than echoing the teacher or memorizing rules. Learners must begin to trust themselves". Learning is seen as creative problem solving. In class the method involves working with somewhat unusual things: a Fidel chart (a colour-coded chart with symbols for the sounds of the language), vocabulary charts and Cuisenaire rods

(small wooden rods of different colours and different lengths). Underhill (2014:213) notes that during the 1970s and 1980s, many language teachers knew something about the Silent Way and he finds that “They may associate it with coloured rods and word charts, but the Silent Way is neither of those things and is better seen as the language learning application of Gattegno’s much larger vision for education, the Subordination of Teaching to Learning”. However, the charts and rods which are used in Silent Way classes, due to their concrete, visual nature, can help learners retain what they work with. The teacher generally speaks little – is often silent – and points to things on the charts or to the rods to guide students to what they need to say, often giving non-verbal responses. Rather than getting explanations for everything, the students are involved in problem-solving. The teacher will speak if needed but lets students work more independently and thus become more autonomous.

McNeill (1982:119) points out that “The silences which occur in the lessons provide students with a chance to process thoroughly in their minds the few things that have been given by the teacher. The absence of any comment by the teacher when students offer a correct response is intended to increase their self-reliance”. All aspects of the language are dealt with but there is a special emphasis on pronunciation: “Just as babies practise making individual sounds before they pronounce words, so Silent Way learners first practice isolated sounds before progressing to meaningful expressions” (McNeill 1982:120). After the first work with pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary are dealt with, often with the rods representing what they need to learn to say.

Richards and Rodgers (2014:291) summarize the learning hypotheses of Gattegno’s theories: learning is facilitated “if the learner discovers or creates rather than remembers and repeats what is to be learned;...by accompanying (mediating) physical objects...by problem-solving involving the material to be learned”. These things can lead learners to trust themselves.

Total Physical Response (TPR), a method developed by James Asher involves, as its name suggests, movement in the classroom and stresses the importance of listening

comprehension. When children are learning their first language, their parents give them many commands (come here, get the ball...), and before they begin to speak, they respond with movement. Asher used this for L2 learning, teaching the language through physical activity where one advantage is that it reduces stress since students are not required to produce language in the beginning, just show comprehension of what they hear (stand up, put the book on the table...), something easy to do.

The teacher performs the actions with the students at first so they will understand what the words mean, and production is dealt with after comprehension. Asher said that “most of the grammatical structure of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor” (Asher 1977:4). After a while, the students begin to produce the language by giving commands to other students, and also to read and write the language.

Richards and Rodgers (2014:281) explain that in the beginning “Imperative drills are the major classroom activity in TPR... to elicit physical actions and activity on the part of the learners” with other activities being role plays which “center on everyday situations” and also slide presentations “used to provide a visual center for teacher narration, which is followed by commands, and for questions for students”. TPR has generally been used mainly in the early stages of language learning, and it has been considered compatible with other methods.

Another aspect of TPR is that it is fun - some of the commands may produce laughter and games are often included. This can help make students enjoy learning the language. As the learning process is similar to learning their native language which was done in a non-stressful way, they can relax more. This is a HLT method that has had a strong impact, and aspects are often used in language classes with children. Thornbury (2013:73) mentions how TPR “exploits the physical nature of the classroom ecology”, and he points out how “the embodied nature of language strongly supports a role for incorporating the kinesthetic and gestural aspects of communication in language learning.”

Implications for practice

Future directions and conclusion

Especially important currently in studies on second language acquisition is the focus on the learner and on interaction between learners and between teacher and learners, and this is stressed and exemplified in the HLT methods in different ways. The philosophy behind the humanistic approaches to language teaching can be very useful as it focuses on learner-centred teaching. Things such as autonomy, confidence and different learning styles are important factors in HLT and they are present in many language education contexts today. Broadening our vision of the learning/teaching process can take us, as Foncubierta and Gant (2016: 150) say, to “a more multisensory way of learning in the classroom”, and where with “the use of images, the emphasis on the emotional gaze of the learner, along with the sensations that are awakened by musical instruments and the experience that we gain through activities based on physical movement or through the feeling of moving through imaginary situations, can contribute to the development of a more multisensory way of learning in the classroom”.

When we consider the role of learners in the language learning process, we are aware that “language teaching is not simply about teaching language. A learner-centered approach to teaching has as its goal to provide learners with learning resources that they can use both in and outside the classroom and ways in which learners can focus and manage their own learning” (Richards and Rodgers 2014:342). With holistic perspectives, teachers take into account both the cognitive and the affective aspects, something supported strongly today by the neurosciences and which can be a key element in facilitating learning and promoting whole person development. Humanistic approaches can continue to provide inspiration and positive influence in different ways on the process of language teaching and learning.

Key points 5

- Humanistic psychology and Positive psychology have strongly influenced education and HLT methods.
- HLT is not a new methodological orientation but it has endured the test of time and continues to be relevant in many teaching contexts at present.
- HLT consists of both a general approach to L2 teaching and several specific teaching methods. The principles in the approach can be used in different ways, and the techniques/activities in the methods may be incorporated in diverse teaching situations.
- In the HLT context teachers are viewed as facilitators who bring in concerns other than just presenting the material in the textbooks.
- Knowing learners' interests can be useful for developing some activities to be used in class which can be more relevant than what is presented in the textbooks.

Reflection questions 5

1. Do you think the key principles of humanistic language teaching proposed in the 1960s and 1970s continue to be relevant at the present time? If so, how?
2. In education, why is it important to see psychology as dealing not only with problems but also with positive matters?
3. How could ideas from HLT help to promote intercultural communication, learner autonomy, and motivation?
4. What can we do in class to reduce anxiety and to make learners feel more confident?
5. In your opinion are there contemporary circumstances which may indicate the need to focus on human values as promoted in the HLT classroom context?

Recommended Reading

- Larsen-Freeman, Diane. 1986. *Techniques and Principles in Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Larsen-Freeman presents a clear description with concrete examples of traditional methods and of the five humanistic methods, including Observations and Principles of each one.

- Richards, Jack and Theodore Rodgers 2014. *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Third edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. This book provides a solid introduction to early developments in language teaching, to current approaches and to alternative twentieth-century humanistic approaches and methods.

- Stevick, Earl. 1990. *Humanism in Language Learning. A Critical Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Stevick clarifies here terminology and concepts related to humanism and discusses how it has been used in philosophy and education and by different authors dealing with language teaching. Examples of the HLT methods are presented and humanistic elements outside the methods are also discussed.

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