



Humanizing Foreign Language Instruction Based on Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

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Abstract: Humanistic ideas in education are widely known since in the 60s and 70s the work of well-known psychologists such as Rogers or Maslow put forward theoretical bases for the humanistic movement. The writings of proponents of humanistic language teaching such as Moskowitz (1978), Stevick (1990) and Arnold (1999) have focused on the cognitive, affective and physical needs of the learner and several alternative methods for language teaching have offered different ways of putting all these ideas into practice. Humanistic language teaching places great emphasis on the human natural capacity for learning. This article emphasizes that humanistic education is more dependent on the inner need for self-evaluation. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs is an example of emphasizing the inner value of learning for individuals which can be used as a framework for foreign language teaching. Basic needs, safety needs, belonging needs, esteem needs, and self actualization needs all have their own implications to our language teaching in a humanistic framework.

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1. Introduction

The development of this innate capacity is based on personal meaning, that is to say, For education to be an enriching experience the meanings that emerge must become personal, and they must be significant and important in some part of the person's life. Meanings must also be viable, that is they must prove useful and effective in mediating one's transactions; transactions with stored knowledge, with people and with the world. (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 51)

Therefore, learners' personal experience is considered as valuable knowledge that can be used as a resource for language learning. Language learning is strongly linked with interpersonal communication skills. These communication skills are not only based on cognitive aspects such as the knowledge of the language *per se*, but also on affective ones as, for instance, the capacity of relating to others that, at the same time, depends on personal security and self-confidence. Stevick (1990) affirms that pupils learn more and better if they feel comfortable with themselves and with their group, and that a teaching method which emphasizes their personal strength will lead to more effective learning. Moreover, from a humanistic point of view, the way teachers present material to their students, the steps followed to involve students in language learning and the type of feedback teachers give to students' responses are also

carefully to be considered as all these pedagogical interventions can influence learners' belief of their ability to participate successfully in any language task.

Another point that humanistic language teaching stresses is that learners are responsible for their learning. It means that the teacher has to favor students' learning autonomy and this can be achieved through reflections about learning styles and strategies, and self-assessment tasks. Learners are seen as active participants that cannot be filled with teacher knowledge, but that have to construct their personal understanding of the world.

In the humanistic classroom students are involved in something else than in doing mechanical exercises in the second language, they are given the opportunity of encoding their own thoughts into the FL. Humanistic teachers take on the task of guiding, without discouraging, learners' first attempts at saying what they really wish to say in the foreign language. The perception teachers have of their function, their own L2 experiences and proficiency influence the views they have of their goals, and not until they take a critical look at their attitudes will they be ready to eliminate the obstacles that lie in the way of creating the kinds of learning environments that are most constructive for students. The role of language teachers is to facilitate students to handle real-life situations, to find satisfaction in discovering

the ideas of others and in gaining new ways of self-expression.

One problem with HLT is that it has several different definitions and there is no established common definition. In some definitions, HLT is only a general term for certain methods such as the Silent Way, Community Language Learning and Suggestopedia. Others consider it as an approach which has broader meanings than these methods.

2. The Ambiguity of the Term 'Humanistic Language Teaching'

There are several different definitions of HLT. For instance, Nunan (1991) and Gadd (1996) state that HLT includes Community Language Learning, the Silent Way, and Suggestopedia. Nunan (1991) and Gadd (1996) refer to Stevick as the most influential advocate of HLT, who has not developed his own method, but has been an enthusiastic champion and interpreter of HLT.

Underhill (1989) defines HLT as an approach consistent both with the values of Humanistic Psychology, and with our own individual awareness and knowledge. He states that it is not necessary to use the Silent Way or Suggestopedia or Community Language Learning, or any other particular way or method or approach in order to apply HLT. Richards and Schmidt (2002) defines Humanistic Approach as below:

Humanistic Approach (in language teaching) is a term sometimes used or what underlines Methods in which the certain principles are considered important: the development of human values, growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others, sensitivity to human feelings and emotions, active student involvement in learning and in the way learning takes place (p. 242).

2.1 The Definition Proposed by Moskowitz (1978), Underhill (1989) and Brown (2000)

Moskowitz (1978) is one of the major exponents of HLT. Referring to Maslow and Rogers, Moskowitz (1978) explains that "Humanistic Education is concerned with educating the whole person--the intellectual and the emotional dimensions is most directly related to what is referred to as the 'third force,' or humanistic psychology, and the human potential movement" (p. 11). Moskowitz emphasizes the importance of associating learning with learners' feeling and emotion:

Moskowitz (1978) has devoted more explicit attention than anyone else to the meaning of the term 'humanistic' as applied to language teaching. One of

her statements is that 'through the ages man has been striving to become *more human*' (p. 10). Moskowitz further comments that youngsters in particular are searching for their identity and are in need of self-acceptance' and that they 'complain of feelings of isolation and detachment' (p. 11). She says that what is called "humanistic" education is related to a concern for personal development, self-acceptance, and acceptance by others, in other words, making students *more human*.

Underhill (1989) also discusses that the learning processes in HLT classrooms are based on Humanistic Psychology of Maslow and Rogers. Brown (2000) introduces Humanistic Education as an education depending on Humanistic Psychology of Rogers, quoting his philosophy about education. Moskowitz (1978), Underhill (1989) and Brown (2000) define HLT by using the term 'Humanistic Psychology' directly.

Foreign language teachers must contribute to the self-actualizing process.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) say that 'humanistic techniques engage the whole person, including the emotions and feelings as well as linguistic knowledge and behavioral skills' (p. 114).

Roberts (1982) mentions opposition to the authoritarian teacher-centered classroom and emphasis on enhancing personal security and promoting a genuine interest through a deeper engagement of the learner's whole self that is characteristic of this approach' (p.101). This is related to what Richards and Rodgers (2001) called the 'interactional view', according to which 'language is a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals' (p. 156).

2.2 The Definitions Proposed by Stevick (1990)

Stevick (1990), an enthusiastic interpreter of Humanistic Education in language teaching, proposed his own 'five emphases of humanism' by referring to different definitions of HLT by many language teachers. His 'five emphases of Humanism' are:

- a) Feelings: Personal emotions and aesthetic appreciations should be encouraged. This aspect of humanism tends to reject whatever hurts people and supports aesthetic enjoyment. In a humane language classroom, the learners' feelings are respected.
- b) Social relation: This encourages friendship and cooperation. The learners develop interpersonal skills that accelerate language learning.
- c) Responsibility: This aspect accepts the need for public scrutiny, criticism, and correction and disapproves of whomever or whatever denies their importance.
- d)

Intellect: It includes knowledge, reason and understanding. This fights against whatever interferes with the free exercise of the mind and is suspicious of anything that cannot be tested intellectually. e) Self-actualization: The quest for full realization of one's own deepest true qualities. This aspect believes that since conformity leads to enslavement, the pursuit of uniqueness brings about liberation.

3. The Fundamentals of Humanistic Psychology According to Maslow and Rogers

Underhill (1989, p. 250) explains that Humanistic Psychology is a general term given to a comprehensive confederation of explorations in the field of human potential and do not come from a single articulated theory. Underhill (1989, p. 250) also explains "Maslow and Rogers have been particularly associated with the development of Humanistic Psychology in recent years", and summarizes some common principles of Humanistic Psychology given by Maslow and Rogers as:

1. High-level health and well-being
2. The whole person.
3. The human motivation towards self-realization.
4. Change and development.
5. Education as a life-long process.
6. Respect for an individual's subjective experience.
7. Self-empowerment (Underhill, 1989)

According to Underhill (1989, pp. 250-51), "high-level health and well-being" is the quality of living beyond mere normalcy or absence of sickness or neurosis and mental condition where a person possesses a dynamic for growth and self-actualization". "The whole person" views a human being as a whole person who has physical, emotional and social features as well as a cognitive feature.

"The human motivation towards self-realization" comes from the principle that human beings have an inherent ability to grow in the direction to enhance themselves and, given a nonthreatening environment, move towards realizing their own individual and unique potential. "Change and development" involves an idea that the goal of education is not feeding learners with quantities of knowledge but facilitating learners' change and development (Brown: 2000, pp. 90-91). "Education as a life-long process" (Underhill, 1989, p. 251) claims the important role of education to cultivate learners to be independent learners who can take the initiative in studying on their own for a life-time. "Respect for an individual's subjective experience" (Underhill, 1989, 251) is based on Rogers' theory that experiential learning has to be self-initiated. Experiential Learning is to learn through direct experience such as action and reflection and, in experiential learning,

students make discoveries and experiment with knowledge themselves instead of hearing or reading about the experiences of others. In order to facilitate learners' change and development mentioned above, Rogers recommends self-initiated Experiential Learning because the sense of discovery and motivation comes from the inside and only the learner can evaluate whether the teaching is personally meaningful (Underhill, 1990).

"Self-empowerment" indicates that learners must take their own initiative in their learning. According to Underhill (1989, p. 251), "Rogers proposed a shift of focus in education from teaching to learning and from teacher to facilitator."

Attention to these themes in the classroom requires an attention to what is often called process. Process concerns the way in which the content of a lesson, syllabus, or curriculum is taught and learnt from the point of view of the learner, and how that content can become directly relevant to the lives of the learners (Brookfield, 1995). Process focuses on the immediate subjective reality of the individuals in a learning group, and is concerned with how participants relate to themselves and each other in order to carry out the task. Whatever contributes to the ambient learning atmosphere, including the attitudes, values, and awareness of the teacher and of the learners, is part of the process.

Process is important precisely because it affects the quality of the outcome of the task. The problem for process is that it takes place at least partly beyond our consciousness. But this does not have to be the case, and the aim of a facilitator is to become more awake to process, while at the same time fulfilling the requirements of the task.

This notion of empowerment lies at the heart of the work of Mezirow (2000). They argue that when students are empowered, they learn better. Mezirow, in his complex theory of transformative learning, argues that the goal and process of learning are the development of critical reflection which transforms the learner's perspectives of the content of study, its methods and its underlying assumptions. In so doing, it changes the learners' views of reality. The phases that learners undergo are:

- Initial empowerment through freedom to participate and personal decision-making
- Critical self-reflection through consciousness-raising and by challenging assumptions
- Transformation of learning through the revision of assumptions and actions supported by other learners and teachers
- Increased empowerment that leads to further transformative learning.

4. The three elements of the humanistic learning (Aloni, 2007)

Reflective learning

Articulate one's own interests, feelings, ethical and aesthetical concerns, meaning making, and moral values

Inquire into the own identity development and reflect on the own learning process

Regulate the own learning process and taking responsibility for own autonomy and giving meaning

Dialogical learning

Communicate in an open way with other people

Analyze and compare different perspectives

Analyze the social, cultural and political power relations involved

Democratic learning

Concern for others and appreciation of diversity

Openness to jointly building agreements (developing norms)

Stand for your own autonomy and critical thinking and action

Involvement in enlarging humanity and in building democracy as a permanent process

5. Humanistic Perspectives

5.1 Andragogy

The major contributor to theories of how adults learn is Knowles (1990). He developed guiding principles of 'andragogy', 'the art and science of adult learning', based on assumptions about how adults learn. These principles may be summarized as adults learn best when learning is:

- Active
- Self-directed
- Based on problems
- Related to their experience
- Perceived as relevant to their needs
- Intrinsically motivated.

The principles that he advocates are:

Develop a learning contract with the learners.

- Establish an effective learning climate.
- Encourage learners to diagnose their 'learning' needs.
- Encourage learners to develop their own objectives.
- Involve learners in planning methods and content.
- Support learners in carrying out their learning plans.
- Encourage learners to reflect critically on their own learning.

5.2 Self-directed Learning

Self-directed learning has at least four meanings: personal autonomy, the ability to manage one's own learning, independent learning outside of formal institutions and lifelong learning (Candy, 1991). All of these are possible goals of learning rather than methods whereby students learn. The methods suggested for self-directed learning are projects, dissertations, group projects, case-based learning and problem-based learning. These methods are based on the assumption that students learn best when they are given some choice and responsibility for their own learning and when they are encouraged to think reflectively, critically and creatively. The role of the teacher is to create a learning environment in which these characteristics are promoted. This argument is supported indirectly by studies that show that perceived freedom to learn is associated with deep approaches to learning (Ramsden, 1992) and by reviews of problem-based learning that demonstrate that students become more active, independent and deeper learners than their counterparts who are learning in conventional courses.

Challenging students' identity: autonomy and social concern

As a humanist perspective on education we want to stress challenging of students' identities by developing their reflective and dialogical competencies. This challenging should help them in constructing their identity in which they combine social-psychological elements and social-political elements (Parker, 2003). The social-psychological elements are efficacy, self-regulation, trust, confidence, the feeling of agency, moral courage and to stand for their own personal worldview. More cognitive competencies like critical thinking, reflective action and dialogical thinking and acting should found these more affective social-psychological elements.

The social-political elements constitute how the individual relates to the other, to the community, to society. It articulates the relation between the person and the other. A humanist perspective on these social-political elements is on developing social concern, on caring, on building connectivity, on bridging, on empowerment, and on building a democratic way of life. Creating humanity for all is the leading goal. In contemporary research on moral development and citizenship, diversity is considered to be a moral value (Haste, 2004). Appreciating diversity is a linking of autonomy and social concern. It is a concern about the autonomy of others: that other people can live the life they want to live.

5.3 The Negotiation of Roles between the Teacher and the Learner

The content of negotiation between teacher and learners may concern what is studied, how it is studied, how the results are to be evaluated, and how the process affects the participants. The teacher tries to be alert to the appropriate balance between leading the learners and following them, between facilitating the learners' autonomy and using his or her own authority (Leeman, 2006).

None of these seven types of teacher intervention is more valid than any other in itself, and one type of intervention may turn into another as it works itself through. The important criterion is the *appropriateness of the intervention to the total context*, given the underlying value placed on helping learners to become autonomous.

5.4 The Self Image of Teachers

According to Atkinson (1989), from an educational point of view, the first obvious implication is the need to change teachers' professional self-image and professional identity from that of 'passive conduits' for messages of political establishments to that of agents of social transformation and 'active shapers' of educational messages – messages that educational theory and research has identified as promoting personal growth and social welfare.

The change in educators' self-image must also find its expression in pedagogic presence. I mean to say that in order for teachers to have an educative effect on their students, they must adopt unique modes of being, expression, and communication. Buber (1971, cited in Aloni, 2007) sheds light on three qualities, which render the teacher's presence educative: trust, idealism and personality. The first trait, *interpersonal trust*, is essential to any educational success: winning the students' trust, making them feel that the teachers are on their side, for them and truly concerned with their growth and well-being. Without trust, the teacher is perceived as a stranger, as an oppressive enemy who must be tolerated, but never listened to or truly learned from, and with time, should the opportunity present itself, even 'brought to account'. Conversely, when students trust the teacher, the result leads to true pedagogical dialogue and meaningful educational work. Such trust means authentic manifestations of basic humanity and pedagogic caring (Aloni, 2008)

6. Humanistic Techniques in Language Teaching

Humanistic, affective, or awareness exercises attempt to blend what students feel, think, and know with what they are learning in the target

language. Self-actualization and self-esteem are the ideals the exercises pursue (Moskowitz 1978:1, 2). Humanistic exercises are more than a linguistic technique; they are a means for student and teacher alike to grow and better fulfill their potential as human beings. It is this emphasis on personal growth and personhood, beyond language mastery, that distinguishes humanistic techniques from general communicative techniques. The emphasis on personal growth is not done at the expense of linguistic goals, rather, personal growth can enhance linguistic growth.

Brown (2000) has dealt extensively with affective factors in language learning. His analysis of inhibition and self-esteem is relevant to the understanding of humanistic techniques since humanistic techniques involve developing the self-esteem of students.

According to Brown, one explanation for the difficulty of learning a second language as an adult involves the concept of the language ego, proposed by Alexander Guiora. The language ego accounts "for the identity a person develops in reference to the language he speaks" (p. 53).

For a monolingual speaker, one's self identity and language ego are virtually the same. To a child, whose ego is not so well established, learning a new language presents little threat to the ego. The changes at puberty seem to bring about the development of defensive mechanisms.

From that time on, the language ego will likely cling to the native language as a source of security and protection. Adults, with their own identities and inhibitions to protect them, need to develop enough ego strength to overcome these inhibitions in order to learn a second language. Self-esteem is closely related to ego strength and inhibition as can be seen from the following quote:

Some persons those with higher self-esteem and ego strength are more able to withstand threats to their existence and thus their defenses are lower. Those with weaker self-esteem maintain walls of inhibition to protect what is self-perceived to be a weak or fragile ego, or a lack of self confidence in a situation or a task (p. 105).

This has a lot to do with learning a foreign language because learning a foreign language involves making mistakes and mistakes can be perceived as a threat to one's ego (p. 106).

Research also supports the relation between self-esteem and language learning. Self-esteem can be divided into three levels: general, or global self-esteem, situational or specific self-esteem, and task self-esteem.

Brown notes, "A person derives his sense of self-esteem from the accumulation of experiences with himself and with others and from assessments of the external world around him" (p. 103). Self-esteem, then, is influenced to some extent by experiences one has with other people. Humanistic techniques focus on the experience of sharing oneself with others in a positive way. Humanistic exercises involve things like: "identifying our strengths and those of others, giving and receiving positive feedback, and learning to understand ourselves and others better" (Moskowitz, 1978). This focus leads to better self-acceptance and acceptance of others. This is a worthy goal in itself. When this building of positive self-esteem is done in the target language it leads to a much healthier climate and greater motivation for language learning to take place.

7. Criticisms of the Humanistic Education

7.1 Deviation from the Primary Goal of Language Acquisition

Gadd (1996) argues that language acquisition, which should be the primary goal of language education, is treated secondary in HLT. Gadd claims that HLT considers the role of English teachers as a monitor and nurturer of students' inner selves and their primary task is to encourage and facilitate the development of students' inner selves. Gadd demonstrates the cases of HLT in which the role of teachers became that of a kindly counselor or a therapist for students to improve their inner selves. From these cases, Gadd claims that in HLT the goal is not language mastery but nurturing the students' inner selves.

However, this criticism does not seem valid because HLT clearly states that its primary goal is language acquisition itself. Although HLT views a learner as a whole person who has physical, emotional and social features as well as cognitive features and deals with students' feelings and emotions in class, every HLT scholar states that its primary goal is not nurturing students' inner selves but language acquisition. Also Apple (1989) explicitly explains that the goal of education is "authentic language learning", though he emphasizes the importance of taking students' feelings and emotions into consideration in class. I could not find any definitions of HLT that claims that the goal of language education is anything other than language acquisition.

7.2 Lack of Language Variety

Gadd (1996) claims that in HLT classes the variety of language skills which students can learn

will be limited. Gadd (1996, p. 225) says that in HLT, "the greater part of work done in the language classroom should be devoted to the students' feelings, experiences, and ideas" because "it is the primary task of the English teacher to encourage and advance the development of the students' inner selves.

7.3 Absence of Learning Opportunities from the World Outside Inner Selves

Gadd (1996) also criticizes that in HLT, students cannot have opportunities to learn from the outside and this will inhibit students' cognitive and intellectual development. Gadd considers that in HLT classrooms students spend most of the time on their feelings, experiences, and ideas. Gadd (1996, p. 227) continues that "a focus on the inner self like the students' feelings, experiences, and ideas as a source of learning does not encourage or permit the students' intellectual and cognitive development."

Referring to Luria (1976), Gadd maintains that in order to develop these abilities, we have to draw our students into the world of the unfamiliar and expose them to the new and challenging. In HLT, students cannot explore the world outside and develop their cognitive and intellectual abilities because the source of learning is limited to only students' inner selves.

7.4 Abdication of the Leadership by Teachers

The final criticism by Gadd (1996) is that teachers in HLT abandon their duties designing classes properly and leading students to effective learning. Because expressions derived from the students' inner self are considered to be more genuine and important than others, these are used as a source and materials of learning and the classes are student centered.

8. Discussing the Legitimacy of the Criticisms

Regarding the criticisms of 'lack of language variety' and 'absence of learning opportunities from the world outside the inner selves', there have been no documents that define HLT as exclusively using only students' inner selves as the source of language learning and limiting classroom language activities within the topics of students' inner selves. Considering students as a whole person and dealing with students' feelings and emotions in language education do not automatically necessitate focusing only on students' inner selves as a learning source. Such criticisms seem to be caused by the misinterpretation of HLT's emphasis on learners' emotional features in language education.

Lastly, Gadd (1996) claims that teachers in HLT abdicate their responsibility to take leadership

in classes. HLT clearly defines the teacher's role as that of a leader and facilitator for learners' development as a whole person. HLT teachers also excerpt their leadership in providing learners with a meaningful classroom learning process through which they can grow up to be a 'fully functioning person'.

For another example, Nunan (1991, p. 235) clearly defines the learner-centered class as follows:

Stevick points out that learner-centeredness does not imply that teachers should abandon the classroom to the learners, that there are a number of legitimate teacher function in learner-as well as teacher-centered classrooms. While learners may be able to learn languages independently, given the right conditions and environment, these conditions and environment are extremely rare (Nunan, 1991, p. 235). In the above definition, Nunan (1991) states clearly that teachers assure the initiative of the class even in a learner-centered class.

Brown (2000) also makes an explicit description of the teachers' role in HLT as a facilitator of learning: We (teachers) need to see to it that learners understand themselves and communicate this self to others freely and nondefensively. Teachers as facilitators must therefore provide the nurturing context for learners to construct their meaning in interaction with others. (Brown, 2000, pp. 90-91)

9. Conclusion

Underhill (1989) believes that we don't have to use Silent Way or Suggestopedia or Community Language Learning, or any other method or approach, 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. There are teachers whose practice effectively embraces humanistic values without their necessarily being aware of it. There are also teachers whose claim that they maintain humanistic values is not supported by their practice. Programs and modules that contain no student-centered learning are as bad as programs and modules that contain only student-centered learning.

Humanistic education will lead us to the following implication for foreign language teachers:

Teach learners to be authentic
Teach learners to become world citizens
Help learners to discover their vocation in life
Teach learners that life is precious, there is joy in life
We must accept the learners and help them find their inner self
We must see that basic needs are satisfied

We should refreshen consciousness
Teach learners that controls are good, complete abandon is bad
Teach learners to transcend the trifling problems and tackle the serious problems of life
Teach learners to make good choices

Safety Needs Implications:

Well planned, structured lessons
Clearly defined processes, procedures, rules and practices
Fair discipline
Consistent expectations
Students feel free to take risks
Attitude of teacher (accepting, non-judgmental, pleasant, non-threatening)
Provide praise for correct responses instead of punishment

Belonging Needs:

Use one to one instruction
Use teacher conferencing
Get to know students (likes, dislikes, concerns)
Be available for students in need
Be supportive
Listen to students
Class discussions
Provide situations requiring mutual trust
Show and tell, sharing
Provide positive comments and feedback rather than negative
Teacher personality; empathetic, considerate, patient, fair, positive attitude

Esteem Needs:

Develop new knowledge based on background knowledge so as to help ensure success (scaffolding)
Pace instruction to fit individual need
Focus on strengths and assets
Take individual needs and abilities into account
Be alert to student difficulties
Be available and approachable
Involve all students in class participation and responsibilities
When disciplining, do as privately as possible

Self-actualization Needs:

Expect students to do their best
Give students freedom to explore and discover on their own
Make learning meaningful - connections to "real" life
Plan lessons involving meta-cognitive activities
Get students involved in self-expressive projects
Allow students to be involved in creative activities and projects

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