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A HOLISTIC VIEW OF LANGUAGE: A HUMANISTIC VIEW OF PEOPLE

The signs of stress in today's youngsters due to social, psychological, personal and familial problems are quite evident. A report in the 1970's placed suicide as the second highest cause of death, after the drugs, among young people in the USA. Figures from Canada indicate four hundred per cent increase in suicidal acts in the past two decades for those between fifteen to nineteen years of age (Miller, 1976: 1).

However, education can help young people make sense of their lives and the world around them provided that this will be achieved through a more personal and human educational process. The climate of the school as a place to live in is not just a setting for a specialized learning process. Teachers and students live in it together for at least 1.100 hours a year (Torbe, Medway, 1981: 142). So a climate that is good to live in can also be a climate in which learning flourishes. What students do often though encounter is many hours in school, considered as a waste of time. Education thus, which is not responsive to the strains on youth and society is a great failure and anachronism.

All educational institutions all over the world, as Rogers points out (Read and Simon, eds, 1975: 40-41), have focused so intensely on the cognitive aspect of the learning process, that this narrowness has evidently resulted in serious social consequences. The most evident consequence of all being the complete exclusion of the element of excitement from education. Most teachers would agree, at this point, that anxiety and boredom are the great enemies in the learning process. Our educational institutions must foster thus the positive psychological growth of students, otherwise the growing problems in education and society will be worst with time.

Today we are sure that man's knowing is the essential part of the generation of knowledge. In this age of rapid change and increasing awareness of the need for continuing lifelong education, especially in the field of F.L, researchers and scientists are called to explore the role of the «affective» in making learning more «effective»¹. It is important therefore to make flourish the qualities of humans who although they are all superbly endowed, they are not aware of it. The key to unlocking these powers lies in

1. Humanistic Education, referred to as «affective» or «emotional», has drawn its principles from Humanistic Psychology. The stress is put not on «what is taught» but on «how it is taught». Therefore, ways are sought so as to «humanize the learner», the classroom, the materials used, in order to achieve «self growth», «self acceptance», and «acceptance by the others».

the activation of both brain hemispheres². The theory behind the above mentioned concepts is found in Humanistic Psychology, in which one of the distinguishing features is the idea of «personal growth» or continuous personal improvement.

In this context we will explore the role of Humanistic Psychology and Education and we will then try to attempt a comparative assessment of the traditional and the «holistic» approach. By examining furthermore samples from the European and Greek E.F.L. classroom we will point out the importance for adopting the humanistic techniques.

1. 1 Humanistic Psychology

Prior to the 1960's there were two main movements in Psychology: the psychoanalytic and the behavioristic. Both these two theoretical perspectives were greatly influenced by cultural factors. Psychoanalytic theory originated in the supposedly repressive society of Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century. Behaviorism commenced in turn-of-the century America and was consistent with the optimistic psychological climate in America at that time.

Around 1960 the so called «third force» in psychology came into existence, and this was HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY. Its theory was based not only on what the person is, but also on what the person has the potential to become. It appeared at a time when many people were questioning traditional values, as the striving for success and financial power. Furthermore, such issues as pollution of the environment, raised questions about the quality and richness of life. The emphasis given upon existential problems, gave rise to a more humanistic psychology, and a more humanistic view of people.

As we can see, the three major theoretical positions in Psychology appear to be closely linked with the social and cultural factors of their times. Today, fortunately, there is a shift in our society's focus from the academic achievement to self-actualization, since it has been proved that the vast majority of us achieve only a small portion of our potential.

It is accepted by science that man's brain is only partly used. We have accepted the convention that a few people will excel, a few will fail and the

2. Recent research has shown that most people use only a very small part of their full brain potential. Some psychologists put it as low as 1%. The key to unlocking these powers lies in the activation of the right hemisphere of the brain. It is this part of the brain where emotions, imagination, creativity and artistic sense are located. In order to help our learners to become successful, we have to bring these faculties into the learning process so as to reinforce the logical, verbal and analytical capacities of the left brain. We can help them to get in touch with their unused brain potential, so as to be able to grasp concepts «holistically» and to provide them with inspiration and affective involvement to study.

vast majority will cluster in the middle of the curve, between the two extremes.

However, a recent discovery by Nobel Laureate, Roger Sperry, of the California Institute of Technology, suggests that the normal curve may be a myth. Professor Sperry demonstrated that each hemisphere of the brain can independently process information to solve problems. This finding has inspired hundreds of follow up studies, which are mainly known as *right-left brain*. Most educators have heard of them and perhaps someday these views can be applied to instruction (Benson and Zaidel, 1985).

Among the prominent spokesmen for Humanistic Psychology are Gordon Allport, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers. Humanistic thinking primarily has called attention to neglected areas of human motivation that are in need of research. The most central area of concern is the «self» and «self awareness», that is how individuals feel about and perceive themselves. In self actualization, it is most helpful the fact of full acceptance by the others and about the others. If we feel good about the others we also feel positively about ourselves, while negative opinions about others are related to negative self evaluation.

Maslow, furthermore, admits the existence of a multiplicity of need systems (Maslow, 1970). There is a prepotency of needs, with the *lower needs*, which are physiologically based, having the greater strength and the *higher needs*, which are psychologically based, being relatively weaker. Hence, the lower needs must be satisfied before the higher ones can seek fulfilment. The highest peak leads to self actualization and it is evident that it appears in midlife, whereas the infant has lower needs and as it grows up higher needs are developed. Though higher needs are less necessary for survival, they nevertheless contribute to survival and growth, and for this reason are called «growth needs»³.

1. 2 Humanistic Education

The term «humanism» has often been viewed as rather misleading, related with the intellectual movement in the Renaissance. In its most recent senses, however, it designates a wide range of modern tendencies

3. Maslow (1970) characterizes the lower needs as deficit D-values, since the attainment of their desired goal produces tension reduction and returns the organism to a state of equilibrium. Freud was exclusively concerned with D-values. On the other hand B-values are associated with growth, motivation, increased tension. Such B-values are: wholeness, perfection, beauty, justice, creativity, truth. Maslow points out that the need to create or to produce beauty brings tension, which is associated with positive rather than negative affects. Adjectives such as: happy or satisfied are less appropriate in describing the lives of these individuals. Maslow gives a list of characteristics for self-actualizing individuals, as: challenging, exciting, democratic character structure, with social interest etc.

and orientations towards self awareness, personal growth and understanding of the self and the others. It has come out as the result of the feelings of isolation, detachment, and depression, which accompany modern life.

Since though the word humanism is difficult to be explained it is better to describe its opposite meaning. A «non-humanistic» course is one which is taught, because tradition or some authority, out of the classroom, has decided on the way it will be taught or presented, and the students participating in it are asked to work mechanically in order to produce correct sentences without regarding the language into depth. Humanistic Education is definitely *NOT* a way to hold students' attention on difficult days, but it experiments a deeper level of exploration in the affective sphere.

In scientific research often topics are selected chiefly, because objective and convenient methods are available. Research projects though should be undertaken because they are significant to human issues and the important factors in people's lives must be studied. The humanists believe that research must be based on problems rather than on methods. They are deeply concerned with learners, their powers, their initiative and anxieties. The students are individuals with emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs, and as such they must be viewed. The fact is that humanists are more interested in the psychology of the learner, and are obviously distinguished from the behaviorists for whom language is verbal behavior produced by operant conditioning⁴.

What then does it mean to call myself a humanistic educator? The answer is that I constantly work against the notion that I have «a group» in front of me. I have in fact thirty or forty *individuals* in class, and as a teacher I respond to the unique ways in which learners perceive particular learning experiences. In this way both the learner and the teacher are given an opportunity to know the reason they are together in the class. Furthermore, classroom activities encourage *community experiences* and students and teachers are having opportunities to know one another.

4. Behaviorism was the psychological movement that for some 40 years has influenced researchers and scientists, especially in USA (1920s to 1960s). It was based on the theory of stimulus/response and its major axioms were:

- a) Human learning is explained through an empiricist position: What was observable was to be explained whereas what was unobservable could neither be explained nor could it form part of an explanation.
- b) Learning consists of acquiring habits.
- c) Good response receives good reward of some kind.
- d) The habit is reinforced by having the stimulus recur so often that the response becomes automatic.

It is obvious from the above that the psychological condition of the learner himself was not considered to be of greater importance than the goal of the learning process was. The aim of learning was the attainment of knowledge and this was achieved by mimicry, imitation and constant practice.

To produce satisfactory results in the class, however, always requires a certain degree of craftsmanship, which, in the case of humanistic approach, must be high and be maintained day after day (Stevick, 1980: 294-295). In a task oriented class, like the F.L, the student's place is at the center of a space created by the teacher, so as personal growth takes place. In this class the teacher must be eager to understand his/her students, and take risks for the hope of establishing a different kind of life for himself/herself and his/her students. The role of the teacher has been re-defined, and emphasis was given on the way he/she affects the learner's attitude⁵.

Humanistic education must be built on a methodology that is affective and effective, which seeks for emotional freedom, but is based at the same time on logic.

2. 1 Traditional vs Holistic Approach

The concept of the traditional school has unintentionally hindered the achievement of excellence for most of our students by using almost exclusively the left brain only, that is the logical part of it. So the academically capable students are those who are able to adapt to left brain instruction. Humanists, on the other hand, follow a holistic approach, in which experiences are not broken down into single frames, but the entirety of life is considered. According to this approach wholesome and healthy individuals should be studied. People have a need to push forward in life, to develop their potentialities and this is the significant point.

The attempt made by the humanistic techniques is to open up the reserve powers of the learner and help him/her learn much more without struggle or strain. In traditional education almost everyone accepts a very low norm of struggle and fatigue. Through the humanistic approaches we try to «desuggest» this norm and replace it by one which will open up the learner's powers. We are also concerned with educating the «whole person», the intellectual and the emotional dimensions.

Humanistic techniques then, aim at increasing the warmth and closeness among people and developing the feeling of wish to know each other.

5. Humanistic Education according to Stevick (British Council, 1982: 7-10), is concentrating on three points that underlie the humanistic methods and techniques:

- a) Attention is given to the purposes of the learner, his interests and needs.
- b) The balance of power is very important in the classroom. The degree of independence, autonomy, responsibility and creativity of the learner is crucial.
- c) Humanistic teachers see language as something which must engage the whole person, not purely intellectual, but emotional and affective as well.

6. Dr. G. Lozanov has introduced the method of Suggestopedia, based on humanistic psychology. His Institute is in Sofia. Lozanov's research center is not only working on the application of the method for the students' benefit but on teacher's training as well.

Moskowitz (1978: 19-20) believes that they are good for the teacher as well as the students in expanding growth and self-awareness, getting in touch with feelings and increase the learner's potential and creativity.

Outstanding teachers, as Marva Collins in Chicago (1985: 77-82), have understood the importance of working with both brain hemispheres. Collins has demonstrated for example, that black children in the lower half of the normal curve can be inspired to read the classics with great relish, master abstract mathematics and express themselves eloquently in writing and speaking.

It is evident from the above that by combining brainswitching with research findings we may be ready to move a great majority of our children to the area of excellence. The problem though is excellence in what? The answer being that we need specific goals that are meaningful and important in the lives of our children.

F.L teachers, who know all the joys and benefits of F.L learning consider it unnecessary to explain the reasons for F.L learning to their students. A research in Greek highschoools (Papaconstantinou, 1988: 120) has shown that 51% of the students do not see any reasons for studying English as a F.L. This evidently results in lack of motivation for learning, and the teachers have to consider that it is not obvious to young people why they are supposed to learn a particular foreign language.

2. 2 The role of the teacher in the Greek F.L classroom

A kind of «control» is necessary for the success of any human act. As far as we can see control by the teacher is legitimate even in modern or humanistic approaches. The teacher is the central and most powerful figure in class (Stevick, 1980: 15). He/she is the person for setting the interpersonal atmosphere in the class and for conveying enthusiasm and conviction. He/she is there to provide the right amount of learning material. If there is too little of learning material the student will not be motivated and if there is too much he will feel abandoned.

The teacher uses the appropriate language in class, with the purpose to support the global orchestration of the learning environment. Used consciously it can become one of the most powerful and purposeful tools of the teacher and an invitation and model for the student. In the humanistic class the vocabulary used is the most important element for suggestion, creativity, and both the teacher and the learners must hear it and feel it too.

The evocative power of words greatly affects the teaching/learning process. The intention to create a relaxed environment in the classroom is expressed verbally. For this purpose let us have a look at the following two paragraphs and let us try to compare them. The following paragraphs are

taken from some notes on which I have worked during a workshop at the International House of Teaching (Hastings, 1986).

- A. Welcome! I am delighted to begin sharing with you a new approach to learning which is fun, relaxed, playful and effective. In this class you will naturally and easily begin tapping into the extra-ordinary reserve capacities we all have and find that positive learning is relaxed and pleasant.
- B. Good Morning. My name is Professor Schmid. I hope you will enjoy this class. You don't need to be nervous or anxious about learning in this course. Forget your tensions and don't worry about trying hard. In this class we will go beyond our old limitations and leave behind our negative attitudes toward learning.

By comparing the list of words that follows we can clearly see, that although the intention may have been the same in both statements, the effect of each one is obviously different.

Welcome!	Good Morning
delighted	Professor
sharing	hope
with you	enjoy
new	need
fun	nervous
relaxed	anxious
naturally	forget
effective	tensions
extraordinary capacities	worry/trying
we all have	we will go beyond
find	old
positive	limitations
relaxed	leave behind
pleasant	negative attitudes

In the first paragraph of the above presented, I am consciously using positive areas of represented experience, whereas in the second one the student is called to experience something new, through reminding him/her what s/he has to forget (which is negative) in order to experience the unknown to him/her positive effects of the new learning process.

From the above it is clear that in the created accepting atmosphere the learners may feel as free as possible to come to the learning experience just as they are without their defences. They are opening up the possibility for growth and learning awareness. If on the other hand they must defend themselves, there is a loss of wholeness in the process.

Under the need to observe how the Greek F.L class works and how the

F.L teacher uses the appropriate humanistic vocabulary, a questionnaire was created and completed under my guidance by fourth year university students who have attended class observations in different highschools in the area of Athens. Out of a total number of 69 EFL classes we found out that most of F.L teachers do not even say Hello to their students when entering the class. More precisely, to the question:

How did the teacher address the class when entering the classroom?

30 answered that there were no greetings at all.

From the 30 teachers who did not greet at all:

10 said: «Open your books».

10 said: «Be quiet». IN GREEK.

5 said: «Sit down».

3 said: «Right».

2 said: «Why don't you open the window?» IN GREEK.

39 teachers addressed the class in some way, but

24 in a rather impersonal way

9 with more personal greetings

6 only made students feel as members of the classroom reality, by using the appropriate language, as:

«Good Morning. We have a future teacher with us, who has come to watch our lesson, so we have to put on our best behavior to show him that we are the best class».

Furthermore what is said non-verbally is to be as decisive in the learning process as the use of language itself. So the teacher's manner (is he calm, confident or nervous, distracted or busy), the appearance, movement, tone and posture are significant aspects in the teacher-learner communicative process, and this non-verbal behavior is a largely neglected area in teacher preparation. This teacher awareness though is the first step in humanistic teaching.

From the same questionnaire mentioned above to the question:

Was the teacher's attitude towards the learners *friendly* or *authoritarian*?

60 answered that it was friendly, nevertheless there were

9 teachers who appeared as authoritarian.

To another question:

During the lesson the teacher was standing:

a) at his/her desk

b) near the learners

52 were standing near the students, but a great number of them

17 remained at their desks, without moving at all, during the lesson.

In the traditional classroom moreover, mistakes are pointed out either harshly or gently, immediately or after a while. The student in any of the

above cases feels that he has been evaluated negatively or positively. Most of the teachers agree that negative evaluation may be harmful, but just a few admit that exaggerated positive evaluation is as well dangerous. Anyway, it is the evaluative climate itself that does the damage. Nevertheless, this is not to say that people do not learn under the traditional evaluative system, but the question is: «How much do they learn?» At this point there seems to be a respectful interest in humanistic techniques, nowadays, which in some way may be considered as revolutionary.

Humanistic teachers care less for faulty expressions and believe it is better to be on one's feet using the new language with pleasure than seeking for perfect and meaningless structures. They trust to the power of peer/self-correction, in an atmosphere of experimentation. Moreover, they believe that it is not the teacher's praise, but the group's laugh that proves successful communication.

Conclusions

Humanistic education has come up with a number of innovative and fresh ideas about creating the appropriate learning environment that will encourage feelings of trust and warmth, by decorating the classroom with posters, with affective expressions, appealing to the senses of the students with special lighting and music for relaxation.

With relaxation and the use of music and other motivating techniques the students are called and encouraged to use their logic and emotions in a holistic way so as not to be scattered into pieces, but perceived as a whole and entity, where the body, the mind and the heart work all together.

The most important contribution of the right/left brain learning is the influencing of the learner's subconscious attitude towards the learning task. This is achieved by imaging and visualization. Relaxation helps to create some mental pictures, which will reinforce the achievement of the goal. Many people do listen to music while they work. It is relaxing and may be considered to raise energy levels and aid concentration.

It is generally agreed (O'Connell, 1982: 111) that most of the brain's capacity is unused, but few seem to notice it. The rare person who has access to *some* of this potential is classified as genius. All people though can gain access to some of the reserve powers if they can be liberated, even a little. Our belief is that if intelligence can be developed, then every man has the right to be intelligent.

I remember the words of a humanistic teacher (Journal of the Society for Effective Affective Learning, 1987) and I repeat them, because they are coming out from the depths of my own feelings and thoughts:

«I was happy to dabble with the traditional methods. Happy to run my own little events in the EFL classroom. But now I've been shaken out

of my happy state. I've been told it can be done and charged to make it happen. I believe now that evolutionary development is not only a biological event, but that it can happen in leaps and can be effected by man. The only thing that we have to do is to believe it, work and live for it».

It will no doubt be a great success if someday we will hear our own students say what a young lady in Sofia⁶, exclaimed about the E.F.L. class, at the end of a five weeks course, in Lozanov's Institute: «Oh, that there could be an eternal and never-ending English course!». We can be sure then that our efforts in trying to make F.L learning more affective and effective have come to a successful end, in accordance to our aims and perspectives, under the scope of Humanistic Education.

APPENDIX
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. a. How many children are there in the class? ____
b. How are they sitted?
Boys with boys? ____
Girls with girls? ____
Boys with girls? ____
2. How did the teacher address the class when entering the classroom? (in Greek or English, exactly as he/she uttered it)
3. Where does the teacher stand during the lesson?
 - a. at his/her desk
 - b. near the students
4. The teacher's attitude towards the pupils is:
 - a. friendly
 - b. authoritarian
5. a. Was the mother tongue (L1-Greek) used in the class?
Yes ____ No ____
b. How often was L1 used in the class?
very often ____ quite often ____ rarely ____
c. L1 was mostly used by:
the teacher ____
the pupils ____
the teacher and the pupils ____
6. Has the teacher used L1 (Greek) or F.L (English) to bring order in the class?
7. The F.L used in class did it follow strictly the book-curriculum or did it go beyond it, according to the pupil's personal needs for expression and their personal interests?
8. How many pupils have actively participated in the F.L class?
in the total ____
boys ____
girls ____
9. In one didactic hour:
 - a. How much time did the teacher speak? ____
 - b. How much time did the pupils speak? ____
10. Describe ONE interesting moment/event in the class you have observed.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Anastasia Papaconstantinou, A Hollistic View of Lanquaqe: a Humanistic View of People

Σήμερα, η εποχή μας μπορεί να χαρακτηριστεί ως η εποχή της γνώσης. Ο άνθρωπος, ωστόσο παρά το πλήθος των ικανοτήτων και χαρισμάτων που διαθέτει, παραμένει πολλές φορές ανίσχυρος μπροστά στις εξελίξεις που συμβαίνουν στον κόσμο γύρω του. Πρόσφατες έρευνες απέδειξαν ότι οι περισσότεροι άνθρωποι χρησιμοποιούν ένα μικρό μόνο μέρος του εγκεφάλου τους, που πολλοί ψυχολόγοι περιορίζουν στο 1%. Η λύση στο πρόβλημα της περιορισμένης αυτής χρήσης των ανθρώπινων δυνατοτήτων τοποθετείται στην ενεργοποίηση τού δεξιού ημισφαιρίου του εγκεφάλου. Εκεί βρίσκονται τα συναισθήματα, η φαντασία, η δημιουργικότητα και η καλλιτεχνική αίσθηση. Για να βοηθήσουμε, ως εκπαιδευτικοί, τους μαθητές μας να αναπτύξουν τις λογικές, γλωσσικές και αναλυτικές δυνατότητες του αριστερού ημισφαιρίου τού εγκεφάλου τους, πρέπει να ενισχύσουμε πρώτα τις δραστηριότητες που ξεκινούν από το δεξιό ημισφαίριο, όπως προαναφέραμε. Μπορούμε να τους βοηθήσουμε να συνειδητοποιήσουν τις αχρησιμοποίητες δυνατότητές τους, ώστε να μπορέσουν να προσεγγίσουν τη γνώση ολικά, και να αποκτήσουν την κατάλληλη διάθεση και ενδιαφέρον για μάθηση.

Στην εποχή της ταχείας αλλαγής και της αυξανόμενης συνειδητοποίησης για συνεχή εκπαίδευση και επιμόρφωση, στο χώρο της Ξ. Γ., οι επιστήμονες και ερευνητές καλούνται να ερευνήσουν το ρόλο της συναισθηματικής επίδρασης για αποτελεσματικότερη μάθηση. Η θεωρία που στηρίζει την άποψη αυτή βρίσκεται στην Ανθρωπιστική ψυχολογία, της οποίας βασική αντίληψη είναι η ιδέα της «προσωπικής ανάπτυξης».