



## **Introducing Humane Education to TESOL Curricula**

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# **Introducing Humane Education to TESOL Curricula**

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## **Abstract**

This paper calls for incorporating humane education into the professional preparation of ESL teachers. It defines humane education as a form of progressive education connecting the issues of social justice, environmental concerns, and animal protection. It traces the history of humane education in the American educational system and briefly discusses its ancient roots. It explains the benefits of incorporating humane education into ESL instruction and gives an example of a graduate TESOL course, which prepares teachers to use humane themes in language instruction. Specific lesson plans are showcased.

This paper aims at introducing the reader to humane education, its history and its theoretical underpinnings. Humane education is a form of progressive education connecting the issues of social justice, environmental concerns, and animal protection. This paper discusses general benefits that stem from this form of engaged pedagogy and particular benefits that result from applying it to both ESL instruction and ESL teacher preparation. The authors' experience of teaching a TESOL methods course centered on humane education serves as a basis for offering classroom-based ideas.

Some aspects of humane education have long been present in the American educational system. Yet, interweaving its three elements, human rights, environmental ethics, and animal protection traditionally viewed as separate causes, is a novel phenomenon. Equally new is its application to language learning, as no published reports of such efforts undertaken in a systematic way are available.

The graduate TESOL students enrolled in the experimental course centered on applying humane education to ESL instruction, at first cautious and unsure of what to expect, engaged wholeheartedly with the task of incorporating humane education themes and materials

into their lesson plans, as the course progressed, involving deeply all, students and instructors alike, into the realm of this cutting-edge aspect of progressive education.

### **The Ancient Roots of Humane Education**

Humane education, whether in its narrow scope, e.g. teaching kindness to animals, or in its broad-based version encompassing the concern for humans and the environment as well, finds support in human experiences often quite removed both geographically and historically from our reality. While an in-depth exploration of these occurrences would go beyond the purpose of this paper, a mentioning of selected experiences prevents drawing a conclusion that humane education is a uniquely modern idea. While all world religions contain in their scriptures and teachings ideas that support the outlook offered by humane education, these views are seldom preached from the pulpit (Regenstein, 1991). However, history provides us with the examples of religious figures who brought humane concerns to the mainstream. The interested reader is invited to explore the life of Saint Francis, whose concerns for the others, the environment and the animals, whom he called “little brethren”, are well known in the Catholic tradition. Although “some of these stories are doubtlessly exaggerated or apocryphal, but they do demonstrate Francis’ well-known concern for animals” (Regenstein, 1991, p. 66).

Apart from the western tradition, the history of Buddhism offers its own humane tale in the form of a story about King Asoka the Great (c. 274-232 B.C.E.), who established a nearly vegetarian society in the northern India and is credited with opening the first animal hospitals and with laws that required digging wells along all major roads so both humans and animals alike may quench their thirst, not a small feat in a tropical climate (Regenstein, 1991, p. 241).

The world-wide religions by no means hold a monopoly on reverence toward the other humans, animals, and the environment. Aboriginal religions from the Americas to Australia are characterized by the respect for nature and animals are conceptualized as equal, if not superior to humans. The native religions of North America often see animals as divine (Atwood, 1993; Jones 2005).

## **The Brief History of Humane Education in the American Educational System**

At its beginnings, humane education in the United States and Canada was concerned with both animal and child welfare. Its onset was directly linked to the rise of humane societies which took place in the second half of the nineteenth century (Antonicic, 2003; Selby, 2000; Unti & DeRosa, 2003). Connected with character building and teaching morality, within the next few decades it became a compulsory facet of curricula in twenty states (Unit & DeRosa, 2003). The first two decades of the twentieth century could be considered the “golden age” of humane education, but the shift in the political climate toward militaristic as opposed to peaceful solutions caused its decline in the forties and fifties (Oakley, 2007). Humane education at that time was conducted mostly by humane societies. It focused on animal-protection issues and on responsible pet ownership (Humes, 2008).

This seems to remain true of humane education today, which in practice narrows its scope to animal-related issues and makes little effort to meet its conceptual goals of connecting human, animal and environmental issues. Despite the many difficulties, the field of humane education has been steadily growing for the past few decades. The renewed interest is partially due to the broad spectrum of humane theory and practice with its added focus on teachers’ education. It is also attributed to the rise of the animal and social advocacy movements and to the connections made between different kinds of oppression (Humes, 2008).

The development of the current, broad-based humane education encompassing human rights and environmental ethics as well as animal welfare can be most directly traced to the work of Jane Goodall, a world-renown British primatologist, whose research on the chimpanzees in Gombe, Tanzania, not only revolutionized field biology and our understanding of great apes, but also provided a new paradigm for conservation efforts. In short, Goodall understood that in order to save the chimpanzees of Gombe from extinction, their large habitat must be preserved. This, in turn, can be only accomplished in close co-operation with the local people, for whom saving chimpanzees must become more profitable than capturing or poaching them, often the only available source of income ensuring survival. The success of what became the Gombe National Park has been repeated with many other endangered species throughout Africa and its principles have inspired educators around the world, including those in the United States.

The following quote best describes the essence of the efforts that constitute the roots of today's humane education:

“The Jane Goodall Institute works to protect the famous chimpanzees of Gombe National Park in Tanzania, but recognizes this can't be accomplished without a holistic approach that addresses the real needs of local people. Our conservation efforts include sustainable development programs that engage communities as true partners. These programs began around Gombe but now spread across the continent. Likewise the Roots & Shoots youth action program Jane and a group of Tanzanian students started in 1990 now spreads to more than 100 countries.” (Jane Goodall Institute, 2010)

Since its inception, Roots and Shoots, which focuses on activities and service-learning projects benefiting local communities, their environments and animals, has seen a tremendous growth. This success is well exemplified by forty three current youth clubs in Michigan alone at locations varying from kindergartens to colleges to home schools (Roots & Shoots, n.d.).

Another ground-breaking development in the newest history of humane education in the United States came in 1996 with the establishment of the Institute for Humane Education, which features, among other programs, the first master's degree program in the field. As its founder Zoe Weil put it, it aims at “inspiring the 3 Rs of reverence, respect, and responsibility so the students will have both the passion for, and the commitment to, bringing about positive change” (Weil, 2006, p.645).

Both Roots and Shoots and the Institute for Humane Education emphasize bringing about social change. A natural venue for accomplishing this goal is service learning. Engaging English language learners in service learning can be seen as one form of task-based instruction, a well-established approach based on providing language learners with a natural context for language use (Larsen-Freeman, 2003).

Using service learning in language instruction also finds support in another school, the participatory approach, originated in the early sixties by Paulo Freire for the first language literacy education in Brazil, and discussed in second language literature in 1980's (Larsen-Freeman, 2003). The participatory approach is based on the assumption that the meaning of education is based on its power to transform the lives of the learners and their environment. Humane

education certainly fits the bill as a progressive and transformative pedagogy affecting humans, other species, and the environment.

### **The Benefits of Humane Education**

The benefits of humane education in the context of ESL instruction are two-fold: general and language-specific. As the history of humane education suggests, it has been considered an important part of character building. Such early modern philosophers as John Locke and Immanuel Kant claimed that there existed a connection between cruelty to animals and cruelty to humans (Oakley, 2007). This notion has been reinforced by modern psychology (Thompson & Gullone, 2003) and is widely accepted in society. The value of teaching kindness, respect, and empathy toward others can hardly be disputed, as pro-social behaviors support peaceful co-existence. Humane education seems to be an effective way of developing the desired behaviors. To this end, Nicoll, Trifone, and Ellery (2008) report that an in-class humane education program offered to eight classes of first-graders caused the students to change their attitudes toward animals in the positive direction. Some studies suggest that simply exposing students to animals in positive contexts that allow for bonding not only change students' attitudes toward animals in the positive direction, but also increase their interest in the sciences (Sorge, 2009).

Applying humane education to ESL instruction brings about its own language-specific benefits. Humane education issues tend to be involving and emotionally charged. Since most students tend to have strong opinions on such subjects and are experts on their own cultures, they are more likely to engage in classroom discourse. Large volumes of language production facilitate language learning. So does emotional involvement. In addition, humane education strategies include tips regarding cultivating open dialogue during discussing controversial topics. They can be most helpful in multi-ethnic classrooms where no cultural assumptions should be taken for granted.

Both the general and language-specific benefits discussed above constitute jointly a compelling reason to use humane education in ESL instruction. This can be done most effectively by enriching teacher preparation curricula with necessary content knowledge and strategies of the field. One such attempt, albeit limited, is described in the section below.

## **A Humane-Education-Based TESOL Methods Course**

When an opportunity arose to work with graduate TESOL students on an optional one-credit-hour thematic course in TESOL instruction, humane education was selected as its focus. All the enrolled students had previously completed two or more methods courses, so the advanced stance was assumed. The syllabus description of the course called for exploring the ways in which humane education themes (human rights/social justice, animal welfare, and environmental protection) can be incorporated into adult ESL instruction. The emphasis was put on designing lesson plans in five skills (speaking, listening, reading, writing, and grammar) that utilized humane education materials. The course objectives were construed, as follows:

1. Evaluate humane education materials in terms of their usefulness for ESL instruction.
2. Apply humane education materials to teach specific language skills.
3. Design humane education-based ESL lesson plans.

In addition to participating in class discussions, the students were expected to prepare two elaborate adult ESL lesson plans based on humane education themes, each focused on a different skill and self-selected proficiency level. At least one lesson plan had to incorporate all three areas of concern (human rights/social justice, animal welfare, and environmental protection).

Since the students were quite familiar with both the principles of ESL instruction and with the required format for lesson plans, yet quite new to humane education, the instructors' input and class discussions focused on the latter. To this end, the students were introduced to the concept and principles of humane education (see Appendix A), its benefits, brief history, and theoretical underpinnings. Power point presentations, instructional videos, and discussions were used for that purpose. Factory farming was used as a classical example of a modern-day phenomenon which evokes the concerns from all three areas: human rights/social justice (health concerns, labor concerns regarding work conditions and employing undocumented workers), animal welfare (cruelty), and environmental protection (pollution). Having established the rationale and theoretical basis, the instructors modeled the application of teaching strategies developed for a general purpose of humane education (Weil, 2004) to specific contexts of ESL instruction (see Appendices B & C).

The first modeled strategy, *Behind the Scenes* (Weil, 2004), starts with choosing an object, possibly something from the students' immediate environment, such as a watch, T-shirt, hand bag, etc. Then, the students are asked four questions from that object:

1. *How did I come into existence?*
2. *Who has been involved in my production?*
3. *Who or what was harmed for me to get to you right now?*
4. *Who or what was helped for me to get to you right now?*

Next, the students brainstorm as many details as possible regarding all the stages of the production and transportation of the selected object. Then they do research to see how accurate their brainstorming predictions were. Finally, they are asked to suggest the ways in which the production and transportation of the object could be made more environment and worker-friendly. To apply the above strategy to ESL instruction we identified a list of specific language topics that can be suitably taught using *Behind the Scenes* across skills and proficiency levels. At the intermediate level, vocabulary items may relate to the production and transportation of various goods. For grammar, we suggest teaching simple past and passive voice, while the writing instruction may focus on process writing and chronological conjunctions. Finally, regarding pronunciation, we suggest practicing various ways of pronouncing the *-ed* ending, as the past tense and passive voice are taught. At the advanced level, one could teach legal vocabulary as it pertains to worker compensation, banning of products and the like. The strategy provides a great opportunity to teach persuasive writing with the use of past modals and unreal conditionals, as they can be naturally evoked by the fourth listed question.

The second modeled strategy, *Trash Investigators* (Weil, 2004), consists of investigating the contents of a trash can. Each student, using latex gloves, can choose one object from the can and attempt to answer the following questions:

1. *Could this item have been recycled instead of thrown in the trash?*
2. *Could this item have been composted instead of thrown in the trash?*
3. *Could it have been prevented from ever entering the waste stream?*
4. *Is this item a want or a need?*

### *5. Could the item have been reused in some creative way?*

Next, the students report on their items and compare the contents of the trash can before and after recycling. We suggest the use of this strategy with ESL students for the following purposes. At the beginning level, vocabulary items for common products and adjectives can be taught. Present tense questions, negations, and there is/there are structures can be introduced as well. At the intermediate level, present modals and unreal present conditionals can be taught in the context of descriptive writing. At the advanced level, the strategy is most conducive to teaching past modals and past conditionals in the context of descriptive writing.

As the course progressed, our MATESOL students became more cognitively and emotionally involved in its content, as they were researching a wide spectrum of topics for their lesson plans, from recycling to modern-day slavery. More importantly, they were discovering connections between seemingly unrelated humane concerns. Although they were finding the task of incorporating all three areas (human, animal, and environmental) in one lesson plan quite challenging, the fruit of their efforts exceeded the instructors' expectations (see Appendices B & C for selected student work, permission to share on file). The students' lesson plans attest clearly to their high level of ability to incorporate humane education principles into their instruction. While one hopes that the excitement generated among the students in the course and the knowledge and skills they gained will carry over to their own ESL classrooms for the benefit of English language learners, it remains to be seen whether it is actually the case. This question calls for research studies exploring the effectiveness of humane education training, as evidenced by incorporating them in instruction subsequent to exposure. In addition, equally important is investigating the pedagogical benefits of using humane education in language teaching.

As it is true of any emerging field, much remains to be accomplished in terms of conceptual development and research exploration. Yet, since the field of TESOL, from its very inception, has been the forerunner of progressive pedagogical ideas, humane education holds a potential to align well with our goals as we engage in teaching for a change.

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## Appendix A

### *Four Elements of Humane Education (Weil, 2004, 19-20)*

- Providing accurate information
- Fostering the 3 Cs: Curiosity, Creativity, and Critical thinking
- Instilling the 3Rs: Reverence, Respect, Responsibility
- Offering positive choices that benefit oneself, other people, the Earth, and animals.

## Appendix B – Student Example

Jackson's Lesson Plan  
Madonna University

TSL 5400: Humane Education-Based  
ESL Instruction: Spring, 2009

### The Courtroom of the World

#### Objectives:

- Linguistic objective-students will be able to identify and create cause-and-effect relationships using connectors and sentences.
- Nonlinguistic objective-students will be able to process and produce contradictory opinions concerning critical issues on human, animal and environmental rights, and conveyed potential solutions based upon gathered information.

**Target Population:** adult students with high intermediate to low-advanced English language proficiency.

**Michigan Standards:** Writing 6.4.1; Reading 6.3.2; 6.3.6; Speaking 6.2.6 & 6.2.7; Listening 6.1.3

**Materials/Technology:** Law and Order clip, connectors chart, cause-and-effect matching worksheet, Cause-And-Effect Pictures, Humane Education clip, newspaper headline clippings, case study.

**Technology:** Computers/Internet (video viewing website), Overhead Projector/Transparencies, PowerPoint

#### Anticipatory Set: (10 minutes)

- Instructor will begin by posting a *Questions to Think About* on a chalk/white board. Questions included: 1. Who is asking the questions? 2. What is the crime? 3. Why is the man arrested? 4. Do you believe he did it?
- Students will watch *Law and Order Clip* while using these four questions as the focus.
- Instructor will pull the class on their answers to the questions, and introduce the idea of contradictory opinions and cause-and-effect.

## Lesson Preparation

### Input/Modeling: (25 minutes)

- The instructor will discuss the relationship between cause and effect, using relevant examples to model sentences.
- The instructor asks the class if they notice any similarities between the sentences, and displays the *Connectors Chart* to draw attention to the grammatical structure.
- The instructor will display of the *Cause and Effect Pictures* on PowerPoint and model the cause-and-effect relationship using connectors.

### Comprehension Check: (10 minutes)

- Students will complete the cause-and-effect matching worksheet individually, and create an example sentence for each.
- The instructor will circulate the classroom, give examples, answer questions, and review possible solutions as a class.

### Guided Practice: (30 minutes)

- The instructor will display a *Newspaper Headline Clipping* and *Case Study* and read the case study regarding the human, animal, or environmental rights issue. The case study will give information on both sides of the issue.
- The instructor will divide the board into two parts, and pull the class understands on the issue. Students will identify the reasons they believe a particular party is at fault and draw direct cause-and-effect relations. The instructor will help them form sentences to write on the board defending their stance using connectors.
- The instructor will divide the class into small groups and distribute a *Newspaper Headline Clipping* and *Case Study* to each group. There will be two groups for each particular headline, taking opposing sides.
- Each group will read the *Case Study* popcorn style and find support for their stance. Together the group will create 10 cause-and-effect statements defending their opinion and opposing the other group.
- Groups will take turns presenting responses to the class for each clipping. Students not defending a stance for a particular

clipping will pose as the Jury and take a written vote on their position at the conclusion of each case.

**Independent Practice and Assessment (10 minutes)**

- The instructor will model different compromises for each human, animal, or environmental problem.
- Individually the students create a potential solution to each of the problems, and generate one cause-and-effect sentence using connectors to display the benefits of the idea.
- Assessment: students will give their statements to the instructor for review and will receive detailed feedback in the next class.

**Closure: (5 minutes)**

- Instructor will show a brief video about the impact of being vocal about social and environmental issues.

*Cause–Effect Connectors Chart*

COORDINATING	CORRELATIVE	SUBORDINATING	TRANSITION
These occur mid-sentence and join two independent clauses. A comma is placed before the conjunction.	These occur paired and are used to join equivalent sentence elements such as one noun or noun phrase with another noun or noun phrase.	These occur at the beginning of sentences (with a comma separating the clause mid-sentence) or they occur mid-sentence with no comma.	These can be used at the beginning of sentences. They transition the reader from the thought of one sentence or paragraph to the thought in the next.
He saw starving children, so he decided to help.	He raised so much money that they were able to create a food bank.	The children grew because they had food.	People helped. As a consequence, the children survived.
He decided to help, for he knew they could be saved.	He raised such a large amount of money that they were able to create a food bank.	Because they had food, the children grew.	People helped; as a consequence, the children survived.
Cause *for (reason or cause)	so that (emphasis on cause) such that (emphasis on cause)	The children grew because of the food.	For this reason, For all these reasons
Effect so (result)		because, since, now that, as, as long as, inasmuch, because of, due to, owing to so that (purpose-result) in order that (purpose-result)	Therefore, Consequently, As a consequence, As a result, Thus, Hence

## Appendix C - Student Example

Christopher Sas' Lesson Plan    TSL 5400: Humane Education-Based  
Madonna University                ESL Instruction: Spring, 2009

### **“The True Cost”**

#### ***Objectives:***

Linguistic: Students will be able to write a critical thinking essay about becoming more environmentally aware / humane in their daily lives.

Non-Linguistic: Students will become familiar with environmental issues, will learn to make better and more humane choices, and will learn the effects of our choices on animals, humans, and the environment.

#### ***Standards:***

Advanced ESL Learners: Listening [6.1.1, 6.1.2, 6.1.4]; Speaking [6.2.1, 6.2.2, 6.2.4, 6.2.6, 6.2.7]; Reading [6.3.3, 6.3.4, 6.3.5, 6.3.6]; Writing [6.4.1, 6.4.2, 6.4.3, 6.4.5, 6.4.6]

#### ***Materials:***

“15 Tips for Cultivating a More Humane Life” article; Photos of: an egg, a cotton shirt, and a household cleaner; Power Point presentation; and “Inconvenient Truth” movie.

#### ***Technology:***

Computer and Television with DVD player

#### ***Timing:***

Anticipatory Set: 15 min; Teaching: 35 min; Guided Practice: 35 min; Closure: 5 min; TOTAL TIME: 90 min.

#### ***Anticipatory Set:***

Discuss with students where everyday items such as food, clothing, and house-hold cleaning products come from. Then draw the student’s attention to the sordid past of some of these items and the steps that are taken to make them available to the public.

***Teaching:***

Students will be shown the pictures of the egg, cotton shirt, and plastic bottle. They will then be told about factory farming, modern slavery, and landfills. Students will then discuss the impact of these on the environment and will think of ways in which we can change these issues. As a class we will read the article “15 Tips for Cultivating a More Humane Life”. Students will also view excerpts from the film “Inconvenient Truth”.

***Guided Practice:***

Students will begin to brainstorm about their critical thinking essay on how to become more humane. They will be broken up into small groups to discuss the different methods of becoming a more humane society and will discuss some ways of implementing them into their daily lives. Students will also begin an outline for their essay. Essay topic is: How can I become more humane?

***Closure:***

Teacher will review the topics of the class and the necessity to become a more humane society. Teacher will review the steps of a critical thinking essay.

***Independent Practice:***

Students will be asked to investigate the origins of some of the items that they may have in their home, where did they come from? Could they be the products of factory farming, modern slavery, or are any of these items recycled? This activity is designed to help students in their critical thinking essay.

*\*\*\* This is only one segment of a series of segments and discussions about becoming a more humane society. The essay is designed to be discussed over a period of two to three class sessions. \*\*\**