

# Enhancing Language Learning through Affective Approaches

*Gabriela N. Tavella*

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Here is my secret, a very simple secret:  
It is only with the heart that one can see rightly;  
What is essential is invisible to the eye.

*Antoine De Saint- Exupéry*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“Learning is finding out  
what you already know.*

*Doing is demonstrating  
that you know it.*

*Teaching is reminding  
others that they know it  
just as well as you.*

*You are all learners,  
doers, teachers.”*

(Richard Bach)

Affective/ humanistic approaches help develop a positive attitude towards language learning, and thus promote language development. I have found in these approaches the underlying principles behind most of my classroom practices, feeling that they backed my beliefs about teaching and learning.

This dissertation intends to share specific experiences on how these ideas could be used with young learners and adults; in ESP and EGP contexts. There

is no limit if we really want a change, if we believe that the foreign language classroom could be a territory for personal and professional growth.

I firmly sustain that there is no need to leave the cognitive aside when dealing with the affective but I can perfectly understand that we, teachers, might feel a little insecure as we have started to move on far less steady ground where we must handle the unpredictable, both affectively and cognitively. "It is unrealistic to suppose that methodology, curriculum design, and classroom management will be immune from the level of uncertainty avoidance prevalent in the wider society" (Grundy, 2001).

This paper starts by defining the terms "affect" and "approach", i.e. why it is that we talk about "approaches" and what "affect" is in a language learning environment. We then turn to consider how the affective side of the learner started to be included within broader educational contexts and within foreign and second language learning.

We will look at affectivity from two sides: first, the language learner as an individual and second, as an active participant in socio- cultural situations (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 8). Among the individual factors that may affect learning, self- esteem, motivation and learning styles will be considered; among the relational factors affecting learning we will concentrate on cooperative learning as a means to promote and enhance language learning.

Teachers may find a detailed analysis of the principles underlying the affective/humanistic approaches and some specific examples on possible activities or techniques they may wish to implement in their classes.

## 2. DEFINING “AFFECT” AND “APPROACH”

I will start by trying to define the word APPROACH, i.e. why we call these affective APPROACHES. Richards and Rodgers (1986, p.15) start by stating the differences between APPROACH, METHOD and TECHNIQUE. They go back to the American applied linguist Edward Anthony who in 1963 identified and defined these three terms. They quote Anthony by saying that "approach is the level at which assumptions and beliefs about language and language learning are specified; method is the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about the particular skills to be taught, the content to be taught, and the order in which the content will be presented; technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described".

*“Different theories about the nature of language and how languages are learned (the approach) imply different ways of teaching language (methods), and different methods make use of different kinds of classroom activity (the technique).”*

(Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992. **Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics**, Essex: Longman)

Therefore, when referring to an approach, we should think of the theoretical principles underlying a particular method. The approach does not specify activities or procedures, i.e. activities or teaching techniques. Consequently, a technique is the way of putting a method or approach into the actual classroom practice.



If an approach responds to a theory of language and language learning, we need to further develop these ideas.

When referring to theories of language, we can distinguish a structural view, a functional view or an interactional view. According to Richards and Rodgers (1986, pp. 16-19) a structural view sees language as a number of structurally related items. In a functional view, language is considered as a vehicle to express functional meaning and an interactional view “sees language as a vehicle for the realization of interpersonal relations and for the performance of social transactions between individuals”.

When considering language learning, we think of a learning theory. A learning theory responds, according to Richards and Rodgers, to two questions:

What are the psycholinguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning? (e.g. habit formation, inferencing, induction)

What conditions need to be met in order for these learning processes to be activated? (human and physical context in which language takes place)

Turning now to the word “affect”, Arnold and Brown (1999, 1) consider it “as aspects of emotion, feeling, mood or attitude which condition behaviour”. Affect has to do with “the heart”, with our inner self, with that part of ourselves which greatly influences and conditions our behaviour, and as such it also influences language learning processes.

Consequently, affective approaches are those theoretical principles which consider affectivity as a defining component. "Humanistic<sup>1</sup> approaches emphasise the importance of the inner world of the learner and place the individual's thoughts, feelings and emotions at the forefront of all human development" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 30).

Gardner (1999, p. 43) in his theory of Multiple Intelligences also addresses affective factors. He describes intrapersonal intelligence as the "capacity to understand the intentions, motivations, and desires of other people and, consequently, to work effectively with others", and stresses "its origins in a person's emotional life and its strong alliance with affective factors". He states that there are emotional components in each of the intelligences he describes, saying "I now consider emotional facets of each intelligence rather than restrict emotions to one or two personal intelligences". The idea that learning cannot be restricted only to content is also tackled by Gardner (1999, p. 206), when he says that "cognition has evolved so that we can make sense of human beings (self and others) who have and experience emotions. Emotions do accompany cognition, and they may well prove more salient under certain circumstances;..." .

Foreign language teachers need to be aware that the affective side should be included in the language curriculum. There is a necessity to really work on the affective domain while being aware that "to be concerned with the whole person is not to be only concerned with the emotional side but rather with all sides of

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<sup>1</sup> Affective and humanistic will be used indistinctly.

the learner”, and consequently “affective/ humanistic language teaching could be said to be a matter ... of attitude and awareness on the part of the teacher” (Arnold, 2001).

After having quoted several authors considering the role of affect in learning, and in language learning, we can conclude that affective approaches consider that feelings and emotions underlie any learning process. "The power and the pervasive role of emotional factors should not be underestimated" (Stevick, 1996, p. 7). If positive emotions about yourself as a learner are enhanced, then learning will be promoted. If the learning environment is associated to negative feelings about yourself as a learner, then learning will be blocked or hindered.

"Affect is the key to understanding and learning." "Affective appeal is therefore a pre-requisite for effective communication and for durable learning to take place" (Tomlinson, 2000).

### **3. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

We can trace the importance of affective factors to the writings of Dewey, Montessori and Vygotski in the first part of the twentieth century (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 5) and they gained further importance with Maslow and Rogers and the growth of humanistic psychology<sup>2</sup> in the 1960s.

Abraham Maslow described a pyramid of needs in which he suggested that if basic needs such as basic psychological requirements, security, interpersonal closeness, self- esteem were not fulfilled, then it would be very difficult to fulfil cognitive, aesthetic or self-actualisation needs (Williams & Burden, 1977, p. 33).

Carl Rogers states that "human beings have a natural potential for learning", suggesting that "significant learning will only take place when the subject matter is perceived to be of personal relevance to the learner and when it involves active participation by the learner, i.e. experiential learning. Learning which is self-initiated and which involves feelings as well as cognition is most likely to be lasting and pervasive" (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 35).

In the late 70s and 80s (Figure 1) foreign and second language teacher trainers and writers expressed similar concerns (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 5). There was a need to consider the affective side in foreign language contexts. The idea was

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<sup>2</sup> This is the reason why we also call them humanistic approaches.

not to change everything but to add affect to second language classrooms, a place "where information and formation can co-exist" (Arnold, 1998). Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, Silent Way and Community Language Learning started to consider the learner as a whole, comprising both "the *external* physical situation and the *internal* 'affective' how-we-feel situation" (Fletcher, 2000a, p. 61).

Nowadays, "researchers in the area of curriculum design have developed undeniable humanistic learner- centred models" (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 6). Nunan (1999, p. 5) adheres to the fact that "learners are at the centre of the learning process, stating that: "In experiential learning, the learner's immediate personal experiences are taken as the point of departure for deciding how to organize the learning process". Stevick (1996, p. 7) also talks about "the power and the pervasive role of emotional factors". He (1996, p.100) explicitly states that word meanings have both a lexical/ grammatical feature and an affective feature, i.e. information is stored with an affective coding, whereby "emotions or their by-products are stored in association with all other kinds of data".

In 1997, Williams and Burden (1997, p. 38), when referring to humanism in ELT, state a number of premises which could be important for the language teacher who wants to adhere to these approaches. They believe it is necessary to:

- ◆ Create a sense of belonging
- ◆ Make the subject matter relevant
- ◆ Involve the whole person

- ◆ Encourage a knowledge of self
- ◆ Develop personal identity
- ◆ Encourage self- esteem
- ◆ Minimise criticism
- ◆ Encourage creativity
- ◆ Develop a knowledge of the process of learning
- ◆ Encourage self- initiation
- ◆ Allow for choice
- ◆ Encourage self- evaluation

Rinvoluceri and Moskowitz also adhere to humanistic/ affective approaches. Rinvoluceri (1999, p. 199) considers that “the heart of the humanistic exercise is a personal experience and a group experience in the here and now, which is where the language flows from”; students express “something that has welled up from their emotions.” The use of “humanistic activities is not to the *neglect* of the target language, but to the *enhancement* of it” (Moskowitz, 1999, p. 178).

More recently, Tomlinson (2000), in the development of his multi- dimensional approach, mentions affective engagement, relevance and connections as three key factors for durable learning to take place. Relevance is connected to “paying attention” and thus “contributing to the deep processing”. By making connections, he means relating new experiences to previous ones. By affective engagement he means emotional involvement, positive attitudes towards the learning experience, and self- esteem.

As we have seen, a long time has passed since affective factors started to be considered in foreign language learning and in education in general. Let us now turn to some of the foreign language methods which started to consider the affective side, the learner as a whole.

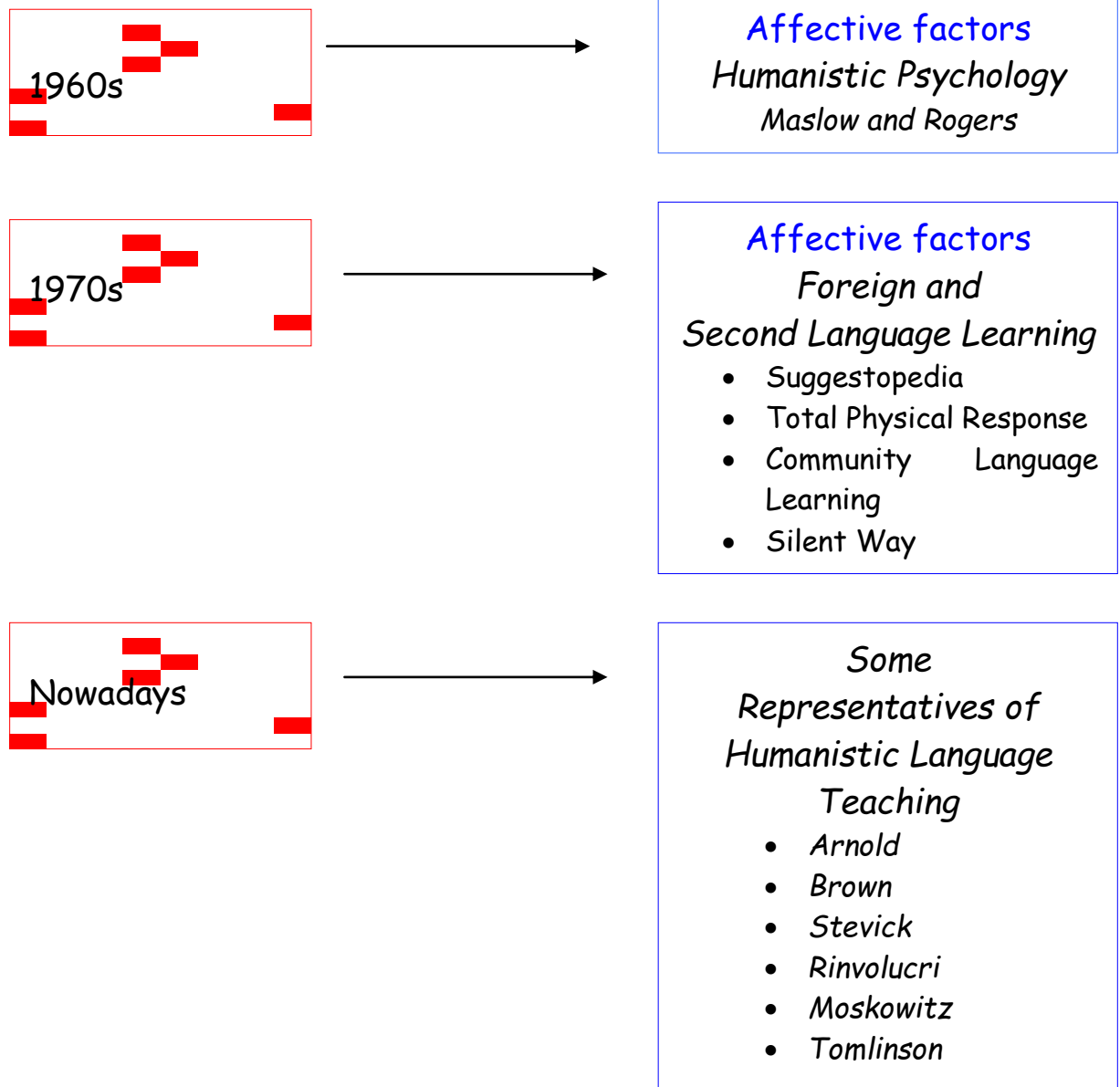


Figure 1



#### **4. AFFECT IN SOME FOREIGN LANGUAGE METHODS**

This chapter is aimed at vindicating some language methods in terms of the principles which underlie their practices. All these methods consider the affective side of the learner as well as the cognitive one. Affective factors such as anxiety, self- esteem, motivation may either inhibit or enhance language learning.

##### **4.1.SUGGESTOPEDIA**

Georgi Lozanov, a Bulgarian psychiatrist, started to contribute important ideas to the field of language learning. Lozanov attempts to eliminate psychological barriers to learning by trying to change the usual classroom environment. Students sit down in a semicircle facing each other. They are seated in comfortable chairs. Music is played and the teacher guides them into an imaginary trip. The main idea is to desuggest those psychological barriers which may interfere in some way with the process of learning.

I would develop those aspects of Suggestopedia which I believe could be considered in order to enhance language learning.

➤ Involving the whole person

Suggestopedia refers to whole learning, Fletcher (2000a, p. 57) says that Suggestopedia is "A method of instruction which fosters positive psychological growth in addition to imparting information. Learning is facilitated or inhibited by psychological or environmental factors".

Lozanov talks about desuggestion and suggestion: we need to desuggest "the memory banks" from "unwanted or blocking memories" and load "the memory banks with desired and facilitating memories" (Richards and Rodgers, 1986, p. 145) He places great importance on the idea of associating language learning to positive feelings so that these do not interfere with the process of learning.

➤ The environment

He believes that the learning environment, both internal and external, is fundamental to either promote or stop learning. Decoration, furniture, arrangement of the classroom and music are all part of the environment and as such they contribute to enhance learning. Students breathe a relaxed atmosphere and not a stressful and oppressive one.

➤ Cooperation

We can say that Suggestopedic classes use one of the principles underlying cooperative learning: face-to-face oral interaction. Students sit in a circle, considering that this favours participation.

➤ Classroom techniques

This method uses some classroom techniques which we can associate to humanistic teaching. Suggestopedia made good contributions to the use of music and drama in the language classroom (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, pp. 78-79). Students assume new identities as a means to foster security and fantasy, as a means to eliminate barriers to learning. Different kinds of music are used. The stage of the lesson and the psychological state of the student are considered in order to choose a suitable piece of music.

Visualizations, another very important technique which can promote affective engagement, are also used as "a vehicle for positive suggestions", as a means to relax students and activate creative processes (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, pp. 84- 85).

Mark Fletcher (2000b, pp. 11- 13), in his article "What is ... Suggestopedia?", wrote a check-list of some of the elements one might find in a suggestopedic classroom and, surprisingly, he mentions most of the things we can usually associate with a good language classroom: music before the class starts, attractive pictures on the walls, songs in class, on-going role-play, the use of colour for teaching, positive suggestions, supportive pair/ group work.

Bancroft and Stevick "identify and validate those techniques from Suggestopedia that appear effective and that harmonize with other successful techniques in the language-teaching inventory" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 152).

## 4.2. TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE

TPR was developed by James Asher, professor of psychology at San José State University, California. Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 87) state that “Asher shares with the school of psychology a concern for the role of affective (emotional) factors in language learning. A method that is undemanding in terms of linguistic production and that involves gamelike movements reduces learner stress ... and creates a positive mood in the learner, which facilitates learning”.

Students are asked to respond physically to the commands presented by the teacher. When presenting a new command, the teacher performs the action herself. Students’ speaking skills are delayed, listening comprehension skills being enhanced first.

### ➤ The environment

A positive internal environment is considered as a means to trigger learning. Asher talks of a stress-free environment similar to the one experienced by a child when learning his/her mother tongue. Lowering the emphasis on production at initial stages leads to lowering the stress and anxiety students may feel when learning a foreign language.

### ➤ Catering for different learning styles

Another important contribution made by TPR is associated to the idea of activating the two brain hemispheres. Entering through movement means activating the right hemisphere. After sufficient right-hemisphere learning, the

left hemisphere will be activated and the brain will be able to process more abstract language processes.

Stevick (1996, p.132) considers TPR "vindicating two of its most conspicuous characteristics:

- It encourages ...multisensory involvement and resulting multisensory images.
- It meets in an integrated way needs that are physical and social as well as cognitive".

➤ Classroom techniques

The introduction of movement in the classroom is very important to cater for all types of learners. Kinesthetic learners will be evidently the most favoured ones in a class where TPR activities are used. Movement of any kind helps to stir the class and to change mood.

### 4.3. COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING

Community Language Learning was developed by Charles A. Curran (Specialist in counselling and professor of psychology at Loyola University, Chicago). He takes its principles "from the more general Counseling-Learning approach" (Larsen- Freeman, 1986, p. 89) in which adult learners are helped to overcome fears when confronted with a new learning situation.

"CLL is sometimes cited as a 'humanistic approach'" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 113) and "CLL techniques also belong to a larger set of foreign language teaching practices sometimes described as *humanistic techniques*" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 114). It is humanistic in the sense that it tries to involve affect and cognition, considering students' feelings and promoting self-initiation and cooperation among class members.

Students sit in a circle, with a table and a tape recorder in the centre. The teacher acts as a language counsellor. Whenever a student wants to say something, he/ she raises his/ her hand, the teacher stands behind and gives the English translation of what the student wants to say. The whole conversation is recorded, and a written transcription of what has been said is produced later. The rest of the class is spent working on activities which arise from the transcript.

➤ Involving the whole person

"CLL advocates a holistic approach to language learning, since "true" human learning is both cognitive and affective. This is termed *whole-person learning*" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 117).

➤ The environment

"The teacher is responsible for providing a safe environment in which clients can learn and grow. Learners, feeling secure, are free to direct their energies to the tasks of communication and learning rather than to building and maintaining their defensive positions" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 122).

➤ Cooperation

"Learning is not viewed as an individual accomplishment but as something that is achieved collaboratively" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 120). Students attending a CLL course sit in a circle and say what *they wish to express* with the help of the teacher, and this helps to build affective ties to that particular group of which they intend to form a part. Strong bonds among the members of the group and with the teacher are gradually developed.

➤ Autonomy

Students gradually acquire independence from the teacher. At first, it is the teacher who provides the language they want to use, but students gradually gain autonomy as they develop security to express themselves in the foreign language. An important aspect to consider is the fact that it is the students who choose what they want to say; consequently, they feel responsible for their own learning.

➤ Classroom techniques

Some useful techniques we might adopt or adapt from CLL could be: tape recording our students' conversations, working in small groups. Designing activities which promote self- initiation could be extremely motivating for all students.

#### 4.4. THE SILENT WAY

The Silent Way was developed by Caleb Gattegno. It is a language teaching method in which teaching is subordinated to learning. It uses a sound- colour chart as a teaching tool. Vowel sounds and consonant sounds are shown, each colour representing a particular sound. The teacher points to a colour code and students produce the corresponding sound. Gestures and instructions in the mother tongue are sometimes used in order to help students achieve the correct sound. In this way, students start producing words. In the following stage, students start tapping the words on the sound- colour chart themselves.

A word- chart is also used. The letters in each word are coloured according to the sound- colour chart. Students start forming their own sentences by tapping the correct words.

Among the principles which I would like to point out are:

➤ Involving the whole person

The teacher is on the alert as how students are feeling. At the end of each lesson they are able to express how they felt. The teacher helps the students to “overcome negative feelings which might interfere with their learning” (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 64).

➤ Autonomy

The Silent Way facilitates "learning to learn", learners develop “inner criteria”. "Silence is a tool. It helps to foster autonomy" (Larsen-Freeman, 1986, p. 59)



and students' responsibility for their own learning process. "The teachers' silence encourages group cooperation" (Larsen- Freeman, 1986, p. 60). The Silent Way favours the idea of going back to our inner self. If we are in control of ourselves, we will be ready to learn, open to learning. "Students should be able to use the language for self-expression – to express their thoughts, perceptions and feelings" (Larsen- Freeman, 1986, p. 62).

➤ Cooperation

Students are supposed to cooperate with one another during the lesson. They help peers when they are in need.

➤ Classroom techniques

We could adopt and adapt self- correction gestures, the use of colour rods and some kind of sound-colour chart.

## CONCLUSION

I have tried to describe those aspects which could be in some way adapted to our present language classroom situation. Even though I may now assert that these are not methods to be used in their pure forms, following exactly what each proposes, there are ideas and techniques which could be vindicated.

Following *Suggestopedia*, we can reconsider the use of music in the classroom and carefully study the type of music we may want to use in each stage of our lessons. We can also think of drama as a means to foster fantasy and security,

as both music and drama can contribute to create a positive learning environment, external and internal. As regards *Total Physical Response*, we can include its activities in our classes as possible ways of dealing with our more kinesthetic learners but we must be aware that not all students learn in the same way. This is the reason why this method may not be adapted to all learners. Turning now to *Community Language Learning*, I believe that its most outstanding idea is how it deals with self-initiation, as a means to foster autonomy and intrinsic motivation. *The Silent Way* vindicates the visual channel as a means to activate learning – this is undoubtedly a very powerful tool when dealing with language learning, especially if it is aimed at reducing teacher-talk and at fostering “learning to learn” processes.

All these methods refer to individual or social factors that can interfere in foreign language acquisition, all of them started to consider the learner as a whole. This means that in order to guide our students in the difficult and intricate process of learning, we need to consider our learners’ cognitive and affective needs. Consequently, there is a need to place curriculum design within the “humanistic-affective currents of thought” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 6), “If we do not deal with the whole learner and work with the language at least to some extent in its whole, non-dissected, meaning-carrying form, we are going to create a large hole in our effectiveness that is very difficult indeed to fill” (Arnold, 1999).

## **5. AFFECT IN COURSEBOOKS**

The aim of this chapter is to analyze two units of two different coursebooks in terms of their affective engagement. There are some changes we can introduce so as to humanise some of the activities and “make the language learning process a more affective and relevant experience” (Tomlinson, 2001).

The idea of the analysis is to humanize with the coursebook, readapt certain activities and help students connect with the material in a more affective and effective way so as to promote long-lasting learning. As Tomlinson (2001) says, the idea is to reduce the non-humanistic elements and expand the sections that invite learners to think, feel and do in order to learn.

I chose a coursebook for children and a coursebook for adults as at the moment, I am working with these two ages in two different situations.

### **5.1.CHILDREN’S COURSEBOOK**

The children’s book is *Wonderful World 1* (Belenda et al., 2000) and the unit analysed is number 1, which is subdivided into five lessons.

#### **Unit 1: Children of the World**

##### *Lesson 1: Wishes and Dreams*

The lesson starts with a classification of outdoor and indoor occupations. Before starting with this activity and even before making students open their books, I would try to connect the topic to their own experiences. Students may be asked their parents' or family members' occupations. Examples could be written on the blackboard and students may classify the vocabulary accordingly. Only then can students open their books and see if there are some more activities to be added to the list they have already produced. By doing this, the activity becomes relevant as students "are helped to think of their own examples and connections" (Tomlinson, 2001).

Students now have their own vocabulary list; they may resort to it to deal with Activity 4 which asks for the following: "*Imagine that you could do or be anything you wanted to just for a day. Tell your partner about it.*" Students are given some examples with the structure "*I'd love to be ...*". I believe that this last activity could provide a real affective engagement as it would be directly connected to students' personal lives. Quoting Rinvoluceri (1999, p. 200), "Finding out interesting things about yourself and about others is a natural part of humanistic language work".

Then, I would carry out the whole-class game presented in activity 5, which is a guessing game using the unfinished sentence: "*When I grow up I want to be a ...*" Students write this information on a slip of paper, one student comes to the front, he/she draws a paper from a bag and reads it aloud for the class to guess who wrote it. "In the humanistic exercise there is acknowledgement that the

students bring bodies to class. During the activity they leave their chairs, they stand and move..." (Rinvoluceri, 1999, p. 200).

After having started with these three affectively engaging activities in which students try to recall their personal experiences and they try to connect the topic to their own lives; they can turn to the two reading comprehension exercises presented at the beginning of the lesson and to exercise number 3 which is a listening comprehension. These three activities are connected to someone else's life, but by now, students will find the topic utterly relevant.

Exercise 6 is a "Wordary", the aim of the activity being to help them recall the lexis already practised. Students may be guided towards the development of the appropriate learning strategies which might help them become aware of the tools they may use to remember vocabulary items.

The lesson ends with a "Do it yourself!" exercise in which students are asked to write to a secret friend. I believe that the way in which the activity is presented in the teacher's book is really humanistic. Each learner is assigned a partner through a slip of paper and they should write to that particular classmate. Students read their partner's letter and guess who wrote it.

### *Lesson 2: Daily Life*

The lesson starts with the picture of a Uruguayan family and a small map of Uruguay. Then a reading comprehension paragraph describing the daily life of

the family is presented. Students are asked to detect things in common with the girl in the family.

There is a listening exercise in which they have to fill in a chart with the times “Jack” does his daily activities. Only then are they asked to complete their own timetables and their partner’s.

I have thought of some changes to humanise this particular lesson of the book.

Some ideas could be:

- Ask children to think about the daily routine of their own families and bring a picture showing any of these specific routines. Only then can they compare their routines with those of the Uruguayan family.
- The teacher may tell the class about her own daily routine and then students can share their routine with a partner.
- Students may be given the comprehension questions from the coursebook and asked to write the text before reading it (Tomlinson, 2003) I would do this after having worked with their own routines so as to help them make connections and engage affectively (Tomlinson, 2000).

The lesson ends with a “Do it yourself” project which is making a personal poster with their daily routine and sticking a photo of themselves onto it. This is evidently an activity which touches on their personal lives and with which students may have an emotional engagement.

### *Lesson 3: Favourite Things*

I found that the activity presented at the beginning of the lesson under the heading *Explore* could be quite engaging for children in lower primary courses. Students are asked to brainstorm what their favourite belongings or things are. This could be a good starting point to later read about others.

Exercise 1 is a vocabulary exercise aimed at helping students recall vocabulary presented in the previous exercise. The second activity presents four short paragraphs describing the hobbies and favourite belongings of children from different parts of the world. To my mind, students might find this activity relevant due to the fact that they may want to read about these children and compare what they said to what they are going to read.

Exercise 3 and 4 are connected to the paragraphs presented in exercise 2. In number 3, students have to produce questions starting with “who” and in exercise 4 they have to test their partner’s memory producing questions with “whose”. We can implement a change by asking students to write questions with who or whose. They may then be asked to close their books and play a memory game with a partner. In this way we are more likely to keep students’ enthusiasm for writing questions by joining the two exercises into one.

Exercise 5 is a listening comprehension exercise in which students will listen to Lisa and Jack talking about different things. Some variation could be introduced in order to help students engage in some way with these characters and connect the exercise to the rest of the lesson. For example, they can predict

what they will say about each of the things mentioned in the exercise: goldfish, camera, trainers, jeans, rucksack and sandwiches. They can produce a kind of spider graph in groups and then share it with the class. The exercise could also be connected to the title of the lesson which is “Favourite Things”. We can make students predict Jack or Lisa’s favourite belonging/ s. Consequently, when listening to these two characters they will already have predicted some of the information they might hear, thereby creating a version of the text before listening to the text itself (Tomlinson, 2001).

Exercise 8 is a game connected to students’ personal lives, which aims at students guessing their classmates’ likes. This activity involves “learners recalling and recounting personal experiences, thinking about and articulating their own attitudes and views ...” (Tomlinson, 2001).

The “Do it together!” activity is an affectively engaging activity as it aims at developing students’ self-esteem. Students choose their favourite things individually, then share their choices with their group, and end by building a group product, “a time capsule” to keep the group’s favourite things in. By letting them choose significant personal belongings, we are helping them build their sense of identity, and by providing students with opportunities to work with others and develop group bonds, we are helping them establish a sense of belonging to that particular group. Consequently, we are contributing to our students’ positive view of themselves as learners.



#### *Lesson 4: The Neverland*

This lesson is organized around a text: "Peter Pan". As the title of the lesson is Neverland, I would start by asking students to shout adjectives which might describe "Neverland" or you can just follow the book's instruction under "Explore".

- *Imagine you can travel to a place where you can do everything you like.  
What would you like to do there?*

I would carry out any of these activities before letting students open their books.

As the extract from Peter Pan is recorded, I would play the tape and let students draw their own versions of this short part of the story (Tomlinson, 2001). After this, they can go on to exercise 1 and confront their version with the reading of the text itself. The idea is to make them experience literature (Tomlinson, 2001).

The aim of Exercise two is to make students infer the rest of the story through pictures and questions. I believe it could be quite involving as students will probably have already been captivated by the story itself.

Tomlinson (2001) makes some very specific suggestions having to do with the use of stories, or what he calls a text-driven approach to language learning. He holds that if the starting point is the text, teaching is more likely to be humanistic as texts have the potential for affective engagement

The rest of the story is recorded. We can either let them listen to the end of the story or make students work in groups and write the ending of the story. Learners may be asked to use drawings and captions in order to keep to the same genre in which the first part of the story was presented.

The “Do it together!” activity is again a very good example of a humanistic activity. Students have to imagine their own dream island. They are asked to draw a map of the place and write its description. Tomlinson (2001) quotes Berman saying that “we learn best when ... our imaginations are aroused, when we make natural associations between one idea and another, and when the information appeals to our senses”. We can help students imagine their dream island by implementing a previous step, a guided visualization accompanied by background music.

#### *Lesson 5: On the Air*

Exercise one focuses on students writing the times shown on five different clocks. I believe that this is not a good way to arouse students’ interest. As the focus of the unit is to make students talk about their daily routine, we can probably start by a reformulation of exercise two. It presents a radio interview produced by schoolchildren, in which the interviewer asks what children do on Saturdays. Students are asked to complete the interview with the times presented in the previous exercise.

Probably a better way to introduce the subject is taking this idea to their own lives i.e. students may be asked to produce their own radio programme.

Learners may be given the same opening line as the one presented in the book and then they can role- play the interview they have written. As a second step we can go to the book and make them read and complete the interview. Then, following the book's instruction, they can listen to the interview and check their guesses. And finally, they can compare their version with the one in the book. In this way they will start using the time in a much more relevant context.

There is a "Think about Speaking" exercise in which students are asked to underline ways of showing that you understand what another person is saying and then produce their own interview. As students have already produced their own interview they can be asked to go over them again and try to improve them by introducing these new phrases.

Both the "Think about Learning" exercise and the "Look back" one are good exercises for helping students reflect upon their own learning. In the first one they are asked to think upon what they like doing in English and are encouraged to do some of the things on their own. The second exercise is a self-assessment chart of the whole unit.

There is also a song which is connected to the topic of the whole unit, "Children of the World". Students are asked to provide the missing words by interpreting some icons and they will check their guesses by listening to the song.

## 5.2. ADULTS' COURSEBOOK

The adults' coursebook is *Activate your English Pre-Intermediate* (Sinclair, 1995). I have analysed Unit 1, which is called Link Up.

In exercise 1- "Getting to know you" – students are asked to relate to each other by asking their classmates their names, their occupation, their country. It is open for the teacher to decide on how to implement it, and could be done as a warm-up activity before asking the students to open their books. As Rinvoluceri (1999, p. 199) says "The heart of the humanistic exercise is a personal experience and a group experience in the here and now, which is where the language flows from". Moskowitz says that "humanistic techniques engage the whole person, including the emotions and feelings (the affective realm) as well as linguistic knowledge and behavioural skills" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 114).

Exercise 2 is an exercise aimed at developing learning strategies. Students are asked to make a list of new words connected to the subject previously introduced (countries, nationalities) and then they have to look for possible ways of grouping words and help recall. Learners are asked which words they want to remember. In this way they are helped to become aware that remembering vocabulary could be a voluntary decision in which there is a lot they can do by themselves as English learners. It is a clear and straightforward introduction to learner training.

Exercise three, a listening comprehension exercise, could be another example of what Tomlinson calls “humanising with the coursebook”, in which students are asked to make guesses about the text they will listen to. They are thereby directly involved before listening to the text itself.

In exercise 4, students are asked to discuss and show different ways of greeting, being this illustrated by two pictures. It is not explicitly stated whether this activity should be carried out individually, in pairs or in groups. It could be a good idea to make them work in groups so that more ideas arise. Adults in the group might have visited different countries or may know about greetings in different cultures, making the discussion a lot richer. As a follow-up, students may be asked to demonstrate what they have discussed.

The “It’s your choice” section is present in every book unit and is aimed at providing “some degree of practice in self-direction, which is an important step towards the development of the capacity for learner autonomy.” “Practice in self- direction can improve motivation to learn, as well as learning effectiveness; we learn better if we learn what we want to learn” (Sinclair, 1996, p. 11). A list of activities is presented and students are asked to choose what activity they want to do and how they want to do it (individually or in pairs). To my mind, this exercise clearly shows the aim of the author.

As regards the introduction to the “It’s your choice” exercise, I believe it could be rather too long and not altogether comprehensible for foreign language students. The teacher can complement it by giving a short explanation in the

students' mother tongue. Then, in the next units, students will be already trained for this type of exercise.

The "Feedback" exercise also appears throughout the book units, and in it students are asked to self-assess their language development. This helps them become aware of their own learning process. In this particular unit students are asked to evaluate the activity they have chosen in the "It's your choice" exercise by completing a chart saying how well they did in the particular activity they carried out.

There is also an "Activate your Grammar" section, which is a kind of summary of the grammar points tackled in the unit. This section refers the student to the Grammar Review at the end of the book, which extends what has already been presented very briefly. As the author says "This Grammar Review may be used in class or by the learners for self-study and reference" (Sinclair, 1996, p. 7).

The "Learning Tip" section gives students some suggestions as how they can enhance their learning by practising self-direction. In this particular unit learners are asked to start a diary. This is a very good suggestion but it is quite difficult to make adult students conscious of the importance of allotting some time for this kind of writing. I agree absolutely with the author regarding the fact that it helps the learning process and enhances language development.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude I want to quote Tomlinson (2001) “no coursebook can be completely humanistic for all its users because it can’t possibly relate directly to each user’s life.” When analysing these coursebooks I thought of my own teaching situation, and this is the reason why I have suggested some reformulations for some of the activities presented. Nevertheless, I believe that these two coursebooks are clear examples and attempts to try to make language learning a humanistic/ affective process.

## **6. INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL LEARNER**

We can now assure that humanistic approaches to learning have to do with the whole person, its cognitive and affective sides. Arnold and Brown (1999, 8) look at affectivity from two sides: first, the language learner is considered as an individual and second, the learner is seen as an active participant in socio-cultural situations.

This chapter will consider both the individual and the social learner. The first part will describe the internal factors which may favour or inhibit language learning and the second part will consider learners as social beings, students as active members of a social group which is the classroom itself.

### **6.1. INDIVIDUAL LEARNER**

There are a number of individual factors which directly affect language learning: self-esteem, motivation, anxiety, learning styles. I will try to describe my own experience connected to the systematic use of activities to enhance students' self-esteem and an action research project connected to motivation in an ESP context. A brief description of how considering students' learning styles might favour language learning is also included.



### 6.1.1. Self- Esteem

We will start by trying to define self- esteem. There are a wide number of definitions but I will adopt the following ones:

- Discrepancy between one's ideal self and one's perceived self. William James (1890)
- The disposition to experience oneself as competent to cope with the challenges of life and as deserving of success and happiness. Nathaniel Branden (1983)

Robert Reasoner ' s programme on building self- esteem in the classroom fosters five basic attitudes which influence the level of self- esteem: the sense of security, the sense of identity, the sense of belonging, the sense of purpose and the sense of competence. I decided to systematically try some of the activities he describes with my own groups of students: *young learners and adults*.

#### A. Young Learners (from 5 to 10 years old)

##### A.1. *Our Protagonist*

This activity has been adapted from Murray White's "Special Child for the day". I have carried out this experience for two years.

➤ *First year experience*

During the first year, a student was chosen to be the protagonist during a whole “English” week, this meant four days a week. Protagonists had to carry out specific activities during each day. Parents received a note in which they were told about the activity and they were asked to help the children prepare what they had to bring or what they could say.

1<sup>st</sup> day: The protagonist talked about his/ her family. He/ she brought pictures and personal belongings to show his/her classmates.

2<sup>nd</sup> day: The protagonist talked about the food he/ she liked and the activities he/ she liked doing.

3<sup>rd</sup> day: The protagonist talked about his/ her routines.

4<sup>th</sup> day: The protagonist was asked to leave the class and each student thought of a good quality to tell his/ her classmate. The teacher wrote all the adjectives on a paper which was to be displayed on a notice board (See Appendix 1). Students were asked to be solemn when addressing the class protagonist, a ceremonial atmosphere was created.

These were some of the positive things that were analysed after implementing the activity:

- Students felt more accepted by their classmates as some of their good qualities and individual strengths were openly revealed.

*"It is important for students not only to realize their own uniqueness but also feel accepted by their peers" (Reasoner, 1992, p. 46).*

- Some more introverted, less vocal students were integrated to the group because their classmates had been able to detect their personal qualities and strengths.

*"Some children may be naturally shy and introverted, yet have high self-esteem... But the child with low self-esteem is apt to exhibit high degrees of anxiety, be fearful of taking risks, and not relate positively with other children" (Reasoner, 1992, p. 4).*

- Students were able to detect common likes; this helped to further develop group bonds.

*"In order for children to feel good about themselves, they need to feel accepted by others" (Reasoner, 1992, p. 43).*

- Some parents got really involved with the activity, they sent letters to be read during the class, they shared with their children this very important moment of preparing themselves to be "the class protagonist". It was really a very special moment for each of the students.

*"Studies indicate that children who lack attention or feedback are apt to have poorer self-concepts than those who receive either positive or negative feedback on a regular basis" (Reasoner, 1992, pp. 4-5).*

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### *Action Steps planned*

For the second year some reformulations were planned

- The activity was to last two days instead of four as it resulted to be rather long and students sometimes felt the need to repeat information already shared.

➤ *Second year Experience*

Parents were informed. Students took home a kind of profile (Figure 2) which they had to fill in at home with the help of their parents, if possible.

My name is .....
I was born on
.....
in
.....
..
I am ..... years old.
I live in
.....
My telephone number is
.....
MY FAMILY
WHAT I LIKE
WHAT I CAN DO

Figure 2

On the 1<sup>st</sup> day, the protagonist talked about the profile with the help of the teacher.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, the protagonist was asked questions that the whole class had previously prepared. After this, the protagonist left the class and “the ceremony”

was organized: special music marked the entrance of the protagonist, sometimes connected to the learner's preference, and good qualities were expressed by each student in the class

These are some of the adjectives students used to describe the protagonist: "positive, quick, friendly, unique, good- humoured, sweet, intelligent, peaceful, kind, enthusiastic, funny, witty, brave, calm, responsible, polite, angelic" (See Appendix 2).

This moment resulted to be a very special one. Some five- year olds were able to express how moved they felt and they could thank their friends for what they have shared.

This activity helped to honour their uniqueness, it focused on their good qualities contributing to develop a positive self- image.

➤ *Use of the Target Language*

I could say that the gradual incorporation of the target language was openly manifested. It is worth mentioning the fact that all of them were first year students when this activity started.

During the first year the activity was mostly carried out in the students' mother tongue with the teacher translating to the L2 so that, at least, they could listen to the foreign language. They could only use the target language to refer to the

protagonist's good qualities. Through this activity they started to organize a word bank connected to this specific vocabulary area.

The use of the foreign language during this second year noticeably increased both receptively and productively. Some of them naturally use the L2 to talk about their profiles; others, responded to the teacher's questions in Spanish, and the teacher translated most of the responses; and some others, tried to use the target language to answer.

As regards the questions they had to write in order to know more about the protagonist's life: *the five year- old students* asked spontaneous questions in English using the following patterns: "Do you like ...? Have you got ...?" and *the seven to ten year- old students* produced the questions beforehand. Questions were understood by all students, some learners answered them in Spanish and some others in English.

An evident increase in the use of the foreign language as a means to communicate personal matters was shown in most of the students of both groups.

"It should be remembered that from a humanistic point of view self- esteem is not increased by empty praise but by ensuring learner achievement in the language" (Arnold, 2001), "as the level of self- esteem increases, so do achievement scores; and as self- esteem decreases, so does achievement" (Reasoner, 1992, p. 8).

## A.2. Literature

Following de Andrés' ideas, I decided to use literature both as a means to enhance language and as a means to enhance their self-esteem. Each of the stories was the springboard to talk about "children's most common difficulties: anger, isolation, lies and rejection" (1999, p. 92). To choose the stories, I tried to use texts which were "linguistically simple but cognitively and emotionally complex" (Tomlinson, 2003).

We worked on topics such as:

*Shyness, Isolation and friendship* in Tiny Tiger by Barbara deRubertis

*Perseverance* in Lucky Duck by Barbara deRubertis

*Feelings and emotions* in L is for Loving- An ABC for the Way You Feel by Ken Wilson- Max and The Way I Feel by Janan Cain

*Isolation and friendship- A colour of its Own* by Leo Lionni

*Change- I'm a Caterpillar* by Jean Marzollo

*Limits- Saying No* by Joy Berry

*Autonomy and doing unwanted tasks- Being Helpful* by Joy Berry

The use of literature was the starting point to talk about personal matters but in the context set by the book itself. Students analysed the characters' conflicts and then they were able to take them to their own personal lives.

### ➤ *Use of the Target Language*

Language was first used receptively, students had to understand the story the teacher was telling them. They responded to the text through their senses. After

this first contact, students were asked to produce role- plays or carry out some kind of follow- up exercises in which they had to use the language more productively. “If the initial focus is on a potentially engaging text it’s much more likely that the writer will keep the learners in mind than if the initial focus is on a language item or skill” (Tomlinson, 2003).

### *A.3. Circle Time*

This could be a reformulated version of the Magic Circles described by Murray White. This activity was generally carried out at the beginning of each class.

Five to 6 year- old students sat in a circle and it was the moment for them to express their feelings of happiness, sadness or anger. All the children in the circle clapped their hands and sang: “Are you happy, are you happy... (name of the child)? Yes or no and why?” Only one student was addressed and the rest of the students in the circle had to listen carefully. Students were asked to speak only when it was their turn.

This activity was part of the classroom routine; students knew that it marked the class beginning. Children were aware of what was expected from them. This activity reduced anxiety and helped foster a feeling of security in each of the members of the group.

### *Variations*

To introduce a bit of variation in turn taking, music was sometimes used. Students passed a ball and when music stopped, the student who had the ball



had to say “I am sad/ angry/ happy because ...”, “I feel angelic/ brave/ jealous when ...” or had to answer questions such as “What makes you happy/ sad/ jealous ...?” These feelings had been first presented through the books *L is for Loving* and *The Way I Feel* – quoted above.

Another activity carried out during circle time was the following: children chose a feeling and an action to mime it, this helped them recall the words. These same feelings were the ones actively used to characterize the protagonist.

➤ *Use of the Target Language*

Students were allowed to express themselves in their mother tongue as the main aim of the activity was to aid them be aware of their uniqueness and of our real interest in their feelings and worries. The teacher tried to reinforce what they said by using the foreign language. After having used this activity for two years, we can now say that they have started to use the target language almost naturally.

*Conclusion: Self- Esteem in Young Learners*

I can say that these activities have been of utmost important to help each student feel unique in front of his/her classmates and to develop group bonds. Students were able to understand what the other was feeling. Quoting White (1997), “For a short time the academic curriculum is set aside and affective education, i.e. education of the emotions, is dealt with in a structured way.” “When harmony reigns, learning flourishes”.

### B. Adults

Implementing humanistic exercises helped to change the atmosphere of my ESP classes. I am referring to an experience which I carried out with two different groups of university students who were studying to become tourist guides.

These students had generally had negative experiences in their previous contacts with the language. Most of them had generated terrible affective barriers towards learning the foreign language. Thus, my challenge as a foreign language teacher was even greater. I had, on the one hand, in Lozanov's terms, to desuggest those negative experiences which blocked their learning and on the other hand, to provide them with alternative paths to confront their foreign language learning.

I started with the hypothesis that humanistic activities, those that "deal with enhancing self-esteem, becoming aware of one's strengths, seeing the good in others, gaining insight into oneself, developing closer and more satisfying relationships, becoming conscious of one's feelings and values and having a positive outlook on life" (Moskowitz, 1999, p. 178), could help reach my objective. Their systematic use was "not to the *neglect* of the target language, but to the *enhancement* of it" (Moskowitz, 1999, p. 178).

Consequently, I decided to implement a variation of Circle Time with my adult students with the idea that these activities could have an affective and cognitive impact in my ESP students. The affective aim was to know each other better, to

develop deeper group bonds so that every single member of the class could feel safe to use the target language in that particular environment. The cognitive aim was to further develop students' oral skills. I thought that students would find it motivating to talk about themselves but this could only be done if the appropriate atmosphere was created. "So communication which satisfies these deep, innate needs develops from sharing about ourselves while others actively listen to us, showing understanding and accepting us as we are" (Moskowitz, 1999, p. 178).

Every day before getting into the proper content of the lesson, I selected one "humanistic activity". Some of the activities I used were:

a. Completing unfinished sentences such as ...

I ...

We ...

I never ...

I usually ...

I always ...

On Saturdays/ Sundays , I ...

Tomorrow, I'm going to ...

I like people who ...

My weekend was ... because ...

b. Completing unfinished sentences and writing them on a piece of paper.

Students draw one paper from a bag and guess who wrote that particular sentence.

I could not live without ...

I'd like to ...

Yesterday, I ...

Next week, I ...

c. Every student writes an interesting question that they would like to ask to someone in the class. Then, a question round is carried out.

Variation: Students are asked to write one question in the present, another one in the past and another one in the future. These questions are then asked among the members of the class.

d. Another activity, which I did for the first time in one of Philip Prowse's workshops, is finishing incomplete sentences about a partner. It is a pair work activity.

I have been implementing several variations of this same exercise for many years considering my students' language level. I can now say that it has always had a very deep affective impact in my students.

Students finish sentences such as:

I love ...

I hate ...

My favourite ... is ...

- e. Each student in the class writes one True and one False sentence about themselves. Music is played, learners stand up and mingle. When music stops, they look for a partner and he/she guesses which sentence is the true one and which is the false one.

Optional: students may share the information they have just known with the rest of the class.

- f. The teacher draws her/ his lifeline on the blackboard she/ he tells about the most important events in her/ his life. Students are allowed to ask questions. Then, students themselves draw their own lifelines and they share it with a partner.

- g. This is an idea taken from Sion's book (2001, p. 60): students have to share with the class something revealing about their home, their town, their province and their country.

When carrying out these activities, I was careful not to press students to write about something very personal from the start. I was conscious that some of my students were not going to be willing to expose themselves in front of a group to which they had not yet developed strong ties. Even though I could say that as they got used to these activities, more personal things were revealed and it resulted in a really anxiety-free atmosphere which openly favoured language use.

Some activities were directly connected to a particular linguistic content that they were to develop or that they were developing. For example when I introduced my own lifeline, students were about to start reading biographies of first settlers in town. When choosing unfinished sentences, I sometimes wanted to revise a particular structure or verb tense. Writing questions also had a linguistic aim in mind as students might need to use questions as ice- breakers before starting a guided tour.

### Conclusion: Self- Esteem in Adults

In order to know the impact that these changes had had in my students, I carried out a questionnaire to two different groups of students that had worked systematically on this type of approach. A total of 20 students answered the questions the first year, and 20 students answered the questionnaire the second year. The questions asked were the following:

- a) Have you experienced any changes in your language classes compared to your previous language learning experience?
- b) Were they positive or negative?
- c) Which were the most positive aspects of the changes?
- d) Why?

The questionnaire was a mixture of open and closed questions but the answers I wanted to collate and interpret were those which arose from the open questions.

What I intended to do was to quantify the qualitative data in some way (Nunan, 1992, p. 145) I tried “to conduct a key word analysis, generating categories from the statements made by respondents” (Nunan, 1992, p.146) so I grouped the responses to questions c) and d) under the following categories:

- I. Classroom dynamics
- II. Classroom atmosphere
- III. Group Bonds
- IV. Language use and development
- V. Personal development
- VI. Confidence to speak in front of the class

	<b>Classroom dynamics</b>	<b>Classroom atmosphere</b>	<b>Group bonds</b>	<b>Language use and development</b>	<b>Personal development</b>	<b>Confidence to speak in front of the class</b>
<b>1st year</b>	5	1	4	19	2	4
<b>2nd year</b>	12	2	4	13	1	9
<b>Total</b>	17	3	8	32	3	13
<b>%</b>	42,5	7,5	20	80	7,5	32,5

32,5% of the questioned students mentioned the fact that they felt more confident to speak in front of the whole class. I would have connected this to classroom atmosphere but only a 7,5 % of the students explicitly mentioned this aspect as a positive point of the course. They mentioned instead classroom dynamics as an asset, 42,5% of students explicitly stated this item. We may infer that learners might be using “dynamics” and “atmosphere” indistinctly. 80%

of the class considered that they had improved their language use. This means that most of the students were aware of their linguistic improvement. We can conclude that the changes implemented connected to classroom atmosphere and classroom dynamics had a direct effect on language development. Not all students could realize that their academic achievements were connected to the classroom environment; though a 42,5% mentioned this aspect as a benefit.

Following Nunan (1992, p. 147), I decided to further group the answers “according to whether they referred to language/ learning, the learner, or the climate/ environment of learning.”

Classroom dynamics, classroom atmosphere and group bonds were considered under the heading *the climate/ environment of learning*; language use and development under *language/ learning*; and personal development and confidence to speak in front of the class under *the learner*.

	<b>Language / Learning</b>	<b>The Learner</b>	<b>The Climate / Environment of Learning</b>
<b>1st year</b>	19	7	10
<b>2nd year</b>	13	15	15
<b>Total</b>	32	22	25
<b>%</b>	80	55	62,5

80% of students, i.e. 32 out of 40, mentioned language/ learning as a positive aspect of the course; 55%, i.e. 22 out of 40, considered aspects connected to



them as learners: motivation, active involvement, confidence, relevance of the content; 62,5%, i.e. 25 out of 40, considered the classroom environment as a means which favoured communication in the foreign language.

It could be said that the environment is seen as an important means to favour foreign language development but language is always at the forefront. This backs the idea that humanistic language teaching does not “mean ignoring the main task of learning the language but rather integrating activities which support language by favourably predisposing the learner. It means developing an atmosphere conducive to the learning process and making the learning relevant to the learner” (Arnold, 2001).

### **6.1.2. Motivation**

"Motivation involves the learner's reasons for attempting to acquire the second language, but precisely what creates motivation is the crux of the matter" (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 13).

Motivation is another very important individual factor which deeply affects the learning process. It is considered an important affective variable within second language acquisition contexts.

I will describe an action research project carried out at at Asentamiento Universitario San Martín de los Andes (Provincia del Neuquén, Argentina) with students studying to become Forest Technicians. They work towards the

development of reading skills as they need the language to understand specific bibliography and access up- to- date data.

➤ *Objectives*

The focus of interest of the project was to raise students' intrinsic motivation to read specific bibliography in the foreign language. Motivation will be considered to be intrinsic “when the experience of doing something generates interest and enjoyment, and the reason for performing the activity lies within the activity itself” (Williams & Burden, 1997, p. 123). My initial hypothesis was that if students were able to choose their own texts, they would be intrinsically motivated to read in the foreign language.

Students need to feel the importance of learning English as an L2, and they also need to further enhance their motivation to read in the foreign language. These aspects could be developed by letting them experience the necessity to improve their academic performance in other subjects through reading texts in English.

Arnold and Brown (1999, p.15) quoting H.D. Brown state five suggestions to stimulate intrinsic motivation. I particularly believe that they are closely reflected and followed in the aims of this study:

1. Help learners develop autonomy by learning to set personal goals and to use learning strategies.
2. Encourage learners to find self- satisfaction in a task well- done.

3. Facilitate learner participation in determining some aspects of the programme and give opportunities for cooperative learning.
4. Involve students in content- based activities related to their interests which focus their attention on meanings and purposes rather than on verbs and prepositions.
5. Design tests which allow for some student input and which are face-valid in the eyes of students.

➤ *Description of the project*

This study is considered to be an action research project due to the fact that it follows the three characteristics stated by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) as the defining ones in action research. It was carried out by the practitioner herself, it was collaborative in the sense that it was backed by the institution and it was aimed at changing things, changing classroom practices.

The project was carried out during two academic years with two different groups of students (Group 1 and Group 2).

Group 1: Firstly, students chose reading texts from two different topics given by the teacher: description of Logging Machinery and description of Forest Diseases.

Secondly, they chose their own reading material connected to three subjects in the course of studies: Forest Operations, Silviculture and Forest Zoology.

Group 2: Some changes were implemented considering the experience of the first year. Students were grouped according to the

subject they chose to read about and specific subject teachers provided the texts.

### *Research Methods*

Three research methods were used in order to gather data and analyse how the aim of the project was being fulfilled: diaries, questionnaires and interviews.

Diaries were written by the teacher as a kind of self- observation instrument, they were intended to record students' reading skills development and to register students' comments on their own reading experience.

Questionnaires and interviews were carried out in order to evaluate students' thoughts on the idea of choosing their own texts to increase motivation. These were some of the most revealing comments:

*"It is better to work on a topic of interest."*

*"It is easier to grasp the aim of the course by having the possibility of choosing a topic connected to our own academic needs."*

*"We feel more comfortable and with much more freedom by choosing a subject of interest."*

The answers were analysed considering the five suggestions stated by Arnold and Brown to stimulate intrinsic motivation. All students' comments referred to content- based learning and to learner participation as two elements which contributed to increase their motivation towards reading in the L2. I believe that learners' autonomy was a natural outcome of the process followed, students

needed to apply personal learning strategies in order to confront the texts they had chosen.

#### *Classroom management/ Teacher's role*

Some students showed preference to work individually, others worked in cooperative groups and some others started working in groups and ended by working individually.

The teacher's role was very active as she was permanently monitoring students' work. The fact that each student was reading about a topic of their choice made teacher's role a lot more demanding as she was permanently changing subject, text type or text difficulty. It was shown that students had the specific knowledge, being this a great source of motivation, but they lacked language skills to easily read the texts. Consequently, the role of the teacher was that of a language facilitator (Tavella, 2003, p.140).

The teacher registered the development of students' individual reading skills and students' comments on their own reading experience. Some of the impressions written in the diaries were really revealing of the attitude students adopted towards the reading process. For example, one of the students stated that he considered motivating this new way of dealing with the subject. He also made a point about the quantity of reading material that he had been able to read during the course. Another student with no previous English level at all had great difficulties to cope with the guided reading texts so it was of fundamental importance to work individually upon his own difficulties. Some of the teacher's

thoughts nearly at the end of the course were: *"he can infer meaning by the use of prefixes and suffixes"*, *"he can identify main ideas in a paragraph"*.

#### *Students' evaluation*

Another important consideration is how evaluation was handled. Students chose the topic of their final test and the teacher selected the text which was connected to the topic chosen. Then, tests were "face- valid in the eyes of students" (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p.15).

#### Conclusion

"Students' motivation for reading in the foreign language was extremely enhanced. I particularly believe that this was mainly because students felt really involved in the process of learning by choosing their own texts, by being in a relaxed classroom atmosphere which favoured opportunities for cooperative learning, by experimenting assessment tools closely connected to their learning process and, last but not least, by developing autonomy in the acquisition of the foreign language" (Tavella, 2003, p. 140).

#### **6.1.3. Learning Styles**

Self- esteem has been considered as an important affective factor which contributes to our students' academic achievements and thus, it enhances language learning. Developing our students' self- esteem means considering their uniqueness, their own identity as human beings, consequently, as learners.

Learners are unique in how they process and get hold of information. People differ in the way they access data. Therefore, "a person's learning style is to do with how they innately learn best" (Norman, 2003, p. 33).

If we consider that not everybody learns in the same way, and that "education works most effectively if these differences are taken into account rather than denied or ignored" (Gardner, 1999, p. 91), language teaching should bear this idea in mind. "The VAK (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic) model from NLP ... indicates a person's sensory preferences for taking in information, processing information and recalling information" (Norman, 2003, p. 33). Even though Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences was not developed as an educational theory has important implications in the field of education and it certainly has in the field of language learning.

Students should be guided towards discovering their own way of learning. We can provide different "entry points" (Gardner, 1999, p. 169) to the same topic or linguistic corpus in order to facilitate and guarantee successful learning. The idea is to open many doors and help students enter through the one they feel more comfortable.

"Now that we know the enormous differences in how people acquire and represent knowledge, can we make these differences central to teaching and learning? Or will we instead continue to treat everyone in a uniform way? If we ignore these differences, we are destined to perpetuate a system that caters to an elite- typically those who learn best in a certain, usually linguistic or logical-

mathematical manner. On the other hand, if take these differences seriously each person may be able to develop his or her intellectual and social potential much more fully" (Gardner, 1999, p. 92).

In this changing world we need to provide opportunities to a wide spectrum of learners with varied strengths and styles. As Gardner (1999, p. 151) says the alternative is "individually configured education- an education that takes individual differences seriously".

Language teachers can design a myriad of activities especially designed to cater for all different learners, for students with different learning styles. They should use different teaching methods because some may be effective for some students but may be ineffective for others. This would mean that we are really considering the learner at the centre of the learning process. "As teachers we need to work to the varied strengths of our students, rather than get stuck in our own preferred style and impose this on others. The aim is ... to teach multi-modally and reach everyone in the group" (Berman, 1998, p. 1).

We will come back to the idea of considering learning differences when describing an actual experience at the end of this chapter (6.3).

## 6.2. SOCIAL LEARNER

Learners permanently participate in a socio- cultural situation which is the classroom itself. "In this special society established within the classroom, the



affective dimension of the relationships among the learner, the teacher and the other learners can greatly influence the direction and outcome of the experience” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 19) .

Heron (1989) describes three facilitation modes: the *hierarchical mode*, in which the teacher is in charge of most of the decisions, the *cooperative mode*, the one in which “you share some power and decision- making with the group and guide them towards becoming more self- directing” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, p. 20); and the *autonomous mode* in which there is not much teacher intervention. We will concentrate on the cooperative mode.

#### **6.2.1. Cooperative Learning**

Cooperative learning will be considered as a means to improve academic/ linguistic performance as it helps create a more positive atmosphere in the classroom. “Cooperative learning groups or teams can strive to improve...” students’ “performance or strive to achieve an established goal” (Reasoner, 1992, p. 46).

Students can not be asked to directly work in cooperative groups; they should be guided in the process of really working cooperatively. This is especially relevant when working with children, young learners need to develop the necessary social skills in order to work cooperatively.

Following Johnson & Johnson, the basic principles underlying cooperative learning will be described.

*Positive interdependence:* each student contributes his/her strengths to the group and consequently, they learn how to counterbalance the weaknesses each member might have by exploiting their most positive sides. Face- to- face oral interaction will be fostered.

*Individual accountability:* each member of the group is responsible for the others in the sense that the whole group must handle the material, the activity allotted and the group's findings.

*Social skills need to be taught and pursued:* cooperative groups pursue both academic and social goals. Social skills to be developed need to be explicitly stated at the very beginning of the group work, during the learning process, and at the time of evaluation.

*Teachers monitor students' behaviour.* Teachers have a very active role, they are permanently monitoring the group's development so as to have objective data in which to sustain their observations.

*Feedback and discussion of students' behaviour.* Students need to have feedback on both the academic and social aspects of cooperative group work. This needs to be as objective as possible so that students can clearly analyze their behaviour and can see themselves reflected upon the teacher's feedback.

(Artusi & Tavella, 2003, pp. 226- 227)

➤ *Description of the project*

I tried to implement cooperative groups with my University students studying to become tourist guides. The same groups with which I had worked with the self-esteem activities described above.

Groups were formed at the beginning of the term and they remained the same until the end of the course. The idea was to strengthen group bonds in order to enhance language learning.

Considering the principles of cooperative learning, academic and social aims were stated from the start. The academic aims were:

1. Encourage learners' use of the oral language.
2. Enhance students' oral production.

The social aims were:

1. Encourage learners' participation: every member of the group contributed to the group in some way (e.g. some students were able to help with their writing skills and some others with their oral skills).

Students were asked to work in groups to develop their oral assignments. Drafts were produced and the teachers gradually checked their written productions. The only aim of the written text was to help them prepare their oral presentations. Some examples of the oral assignments they had to prepare were: talking about the biography of a well-known person in the area, presenting a famous legend of the region and guiding an imaginary group of tourists *in situ*.

After having implemented cooperative group work for two years and with different groups of students, I would like to state some of the general affective and linguistic/ academic benefits which I noticed.

#### *Affective Benefits*

- It reduces anxiety. Students use the language within their groups without directly being “exposed” to the large class.
- It enhances self- esteem. Students develop strong bonds among the group members. They start to feel identify to that particular group and they gradually feel more secure and self-confident. Once this sense of belonging has been developed, individual members of the group are ready to confront the rest of the class.
- Individual differences are valued and respected as the group needs of the individual contributions each learner can make.

#### *Linguistic / academic benefits*

- It encourages learners’ participation and use of the foreign language. Some very shy students who lack confidence to express themselves in the L2 in front of the class can do it within the cooperative group.
- More language is produced and listened. There are more opportunities to use the language. Consequently, fluency and accuracy are enhanced.

## Conclusion

To seriously consider the possibility of implementing cooperative learning within our language classroom settings can help us, teachers, to greatly enhance our students' cognitive development without leaving aside their affective needs.

### 6.3. AN INTEGRAL VIEW OF THE LEARNER: *description of an experience*

The year 2002 marked the beginning of a small- scale project connected to language learning, English language learning, but within the framework of learners' integral development. Both their language enhancement and their personal development were pursued.

Teachers, students and parents were considered when designing the project. Two teachers were involved in its design, an English teacher and a Spanish teacher. We knew that teamwork was needed for the project to grow, we were conscious that people with different skills and abilities would be necessary at some point. A music teacher was recruited from the start and a primary teacher also joined as an assistant, as someone who could help us prepare material and suggest ideas connected to craft work.

The project was directed to 5 to 10 year-old students who had no previous contact with the language and who had no English in their formal education. We decided to address, first, parents who -we knew- would share with us the idea

of whole development in education. After having met a group of parents, two groups of 10 students were formed: one group included students between 5 and 6 years- old and the other group was formed by students between 7 and 10 years- old.

Considering the roles of learners and the role of teachers, we may say that learners were placed at the centre of the learning process. Respecting learners' differences was one of our most important proposals.

“key decisions about what will be taught, how it will be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed will be made in reference to the learner.”

(Nunan, 1999, p. 11)

Teachers were conceived under Underhill's idea (1999, p. 126) of facilitator. “By Facilitator I mean a teacher in any educational setting who understands the topic, is skilled in the use of current teaching methods and techniques, and who actively studies and pays attention to the psychological learning atmosphere and the inner processes of learning on a moment by moment basis, with the aim of enabling learners to take as much responsibility for their learning as they can”.

*Which were the things we considered when designing the project?*

The physical environment was considered of utmost importance. We chose *moveable furniture* so that seating arrangement could be permanently changed. Students could start the class sitting in a circle either on the floor or on their chairs or they could start by some kind of TPR activity; thus, no chairs were needed. After this, they could put their tables and start with some craft, an exercise on their copybook or whatever might imply working with their hands.

*Wall displays* were also of great importance. Students' work was shown, as a means to discover students' special abilities or talents. Everybody was able to appreciate the work of others. *Music* was also considered, relaxing or lively music was used to cater for different moods or different classroom activities. Students felt the need of music when there was no. The use of *colours* and varied *materials* was favoured. We wanted our students to enjoy what they were doing by letting them experiment and discover.

As regards the emotional environment, building our students' self-esteem was one of the specific aims of the project. We had in mind the five pillars stated by Reasoner (1992). We tried to cater for our students' security by defining routines, we tried to cater for our students' identity by helping them see their strengths and weaknesses in a realistic way and by celebrating and respecting their differences, we also took into account the sense of belonging by creating an accepting environment and by promoting bonding through cooperative group work, we worked towards helping them develop a sense of purpose and competence by helping them set personal goals and by encouraging them to reach those objectives through different means and alternatives.

#### *How was language incorporated to the project?*

Topics of interest were selected and activities were designed accordingly. We considered the VAK model from NLP and the theory of Multiple Intelligences so as to be sure that our teaching was going to be multi-modal. Following this pattern, we had more chances of reaching most of our students. The idea was to include all learners, even those who did not approach learning in a traditional

way and who were generally left aside by traditional methods of language education.

We could say that we took ideas from some of the foreign language methods described in Chapter 4 and we started to build our own eclectic method. The use of drama and music was taken from Suggestopedia; movement from Total Physical Response; collaborative work and self- initiation from Community Language Learning; colour and silence as tools to foster “learning to learn” processes were incorporated from the ideas developed by The Silent Way.

Critical reflection was adopted as a means to help the project grow. Asking ourselves questions about our teaching, about our attitudes, about our students was our constant position. We intended to be self- critical in order to reformulate and adopt changes when needed. We encouraged this same reflective process in our students by systematically working on self- assessment both of their attitudes and of their learning. Parents’ opinions were also part of the assessment process.

After a two –year experience, we noticed that students sustained their level of motivation by remaining interested and curious about learning the language and by openly manifesting their enjoyment. Important progresses in their use of the language, both in their receptive and productive aspects, were observed.



## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

In Chapter 2, we have defined and tried to describe what lies behind the words “affect” and “approach”. As Fletcher (2000a, p.55) says one of the aims of “affective approaches is to counterbalance the emphasis placed on exclusively intellectual learning”. Affect should not be considered as a discrete item but as an integral part of our cognitive development.

Chapter 3 is an attempt to trace the origins of affective/ humanistic approaches. This chapter is expanded in chapter 4 which gives a detailed description of how some foreign language methods started to consider affective factors within their proposals.

Chapter 5 tries to exemplify what we can do in order to humanise existing coursebooks, “by reducing the non- humanistic elements of the book and by expanding and adding to those sections which invite the learner to think, feel and do in order to learn” (Tomlinson, 2003).

Finally, chapter 6 starts giving actual examples of how these ideas could be taken to the language classroom. The learner is considered as a whole, specific experiences are described which were designed to cater for individual and social factors that may affect learning. Among the individual factors self-esteem, motivation and learning styles were considered and cooperative

learning was analysed in terms of the linguistic and affective benefits it might bring about to our students as social beings.

After having developed all these ideas in the previous chapters, there are still some questions which could be raised. "Why is it, for example, that maths or science teachers rarely feel that they have a duty to undertake any kind of operation on their students' feelings, or to improve their souls, in the way that many English teachers do?" (Gadd, 1998a, p.223) Let me say that we cannot forget that we are above all educators. Students are desperately seeking tools to be able to cope with the challenges of life. We are teaching a language and as such, we can work with both the content area and with the learner himself/herself. "We should be considered fortunate in having at our disposal a broad range of possibilities for teaching our subject" (Arnold, 1998, p. 235).

Another point raised against humanistic/ affective approaches is that teachers who follow these ideas leave everything to students. I believe that students are an active part of the learning process itself but this does not mean "no teaching". A lot more is placed in the hands of the language teacher: they have to perfectly interpret students feelings, emotions, motivations, attitudes in order to be able to promote life learning. Adhering to affective approaches does not mean "to drag everything back into the personal sphere" (Gadd, 1998a, p. 229), it is not that "the primary task of the English teacher" is "to encourage and advance the development of students' inner selves"(Gadd, 1998a, p. 225), it is part of the role. The affective side has been added to the subject- specific contents that the language teacher had already had to handle, the affective was added to the cognitive. And this is probably a greater challenge.

As Arnold (2001) says, humanistic language teaching emphasizes “including the affective side, not to exclude cognition but... to be added to the already existing cognitive focus in order to optimize language learning”. This is not at all a minor task. Including the affective means working systematically and consistently on this aspect in our language classes. If we decide to humanise our teaching by introducing humanistic activities, we need to think and include this when designing and preparing our daily classes.

We cannot say that humanistic teaching is connected to certain types of language courses as Gadd (1998a, p. 226) affirms in his article. I have been working with ESP courses for fifteen years and most of my systematic experiences in implementing these approaches is connected to this very specific area of language teaching. As I have shown in the description of my experience- Chapter 6-, I can now say that incorporating elements of humanistic teaching into my classes has greatly enhanced my students’ language production. They said things such as:

*“I have found the usefulness of the language, I am eager to keep on learning.”*

*“The methodology used helped me participate more actively in class”*

*“The atmosphere helped me interact with the language and with the group”*

*“I now dare speak in English in front of my classmates”*

*“I had previously had very negative experiences when learning the language, the relaxed classroom atmosphere encouraged me to use the language in class”*

*“It was very useful to be able to participate on the selection of topics, this makes us feel more responsible for our learning.”*

The ideas reflected on these answers do not exclusively tackle “the affective”. The cognitive is promoted, activated, initiated through the affective being awakened.

When asking teachers about “affective approaches”, after having reflected upon the principles underlying these approaches and how they can be taken to the language classroom, they mentioned things such as: “a way to help students”, “through affective approaches you open more doors to learning”, “they help the learner commit himself/ herself in the learning process”, “associating learning experiences to feelings and emotions aids durable learning”, “the affective domain opens the door for the academic ‘to do its thing’”. As we can see in their answers both sides are mentioned. Of course, there may be some teachers who may misinterpret the principles and fall into the trap of considering only the affective. But this is another issue: what can we do to integrate the affective and the cognitive into professional development courses?

The role of the teacher as a facilitator should be seriously analysed and consequently, professional development courses should include the content area, the methodological area and the psychological area. There is a need for professional and personal development courses in order to take the benefits to actual classroom settings.

Arguments for and against humanistic/ affective approaches started long ago but there is still controversy as where we should try to strike a balance, affect or cognition. We can conclude that if “affect” conditions behaviour and thus has a

direct influence on learning processes, and if some foreign language methods in the 70s already felt the need to consider the learner as a whole, then, we can no longer think of a foreign language curriculum without explicitly considering *the affective side of the learner* as an active part in the language learning process.

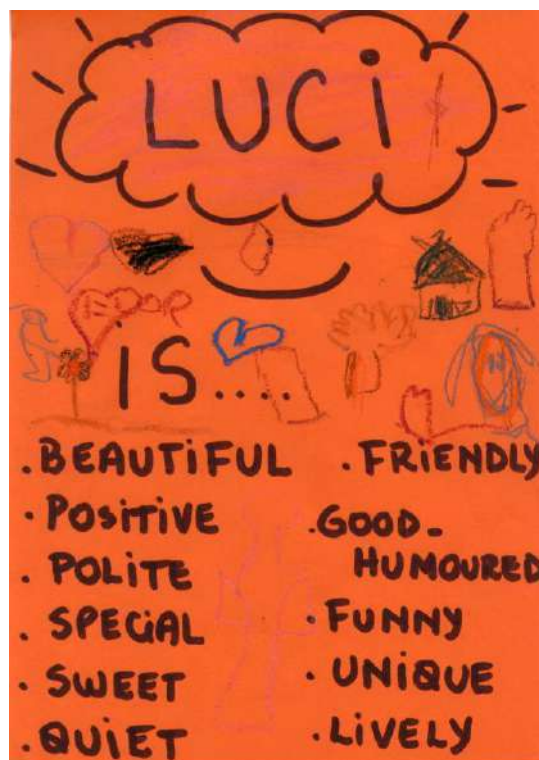
“If we respect the learners as individuals, and seek to engage them personally in the learning activities we provide, we have a good chance of helping them to develop and to learn” (Tomlinson, 2003).

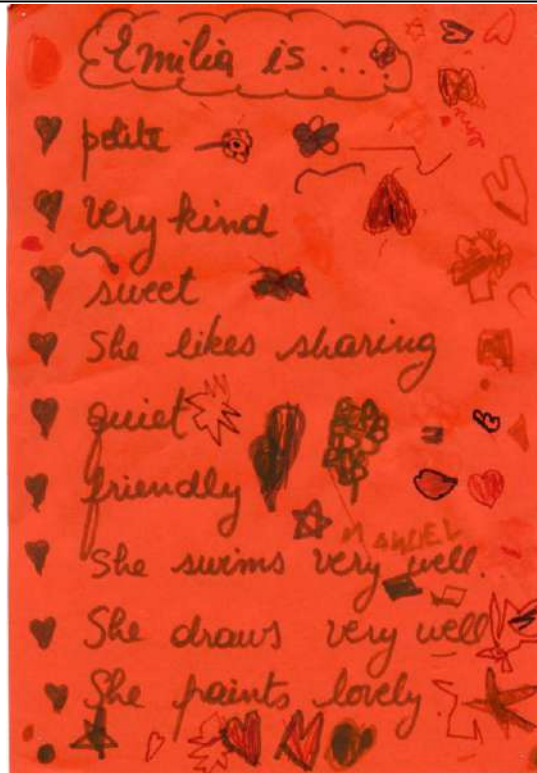
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APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2







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