



CENTERING LOVE IN THE ELT CLASSROOM

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WHAT DO WE WANT TO “CENTER” AND “DECENTER” ?



WHAT IS ON THE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST?



TWO CLASSES — TWO DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES

1 CORINTHIANS 13 — SORT OF

If I speak another language

With near-native pronunciation

With perfect grammar

And a rich idiomatic vocabulary,


But have not love . . .

If I have sophisticated discourse strategies

And intercultural competence,

But have not love . . .

—Smith & Carvill, (After 1st Corinthians 13)



**“LET US NOT LOVE IN WORD OR SPEECH, BUT IN ACTION
AND IN TRUTH” (1 JOHN 3:18, NIV)**

THE LITERATURE



WHAT LIES IN THE HEART OF A GREAT TEACHER? (ALRUBAIL, 2015)

You are kind

You are compassionate

You are empathetic

You are positive

You are a builder

You inspire

<https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/heart-teaching-what-it-means-be-great-teacher>

EMPATHY

“...rapport requires people to build sensitive, thoughtful, positive personal relations, for which empathy would be a key ingredient. In language classrooms, this rapport can be especially important, given the need for a safe and secure environment in which learners feel confident and comfortable to be willing to speak up and use the foreign language.” -- Mercer (2016)

EMPATHY

“Fundamentally to use a language or to learn one requires communication and interaction with others. It is through language that we are able to share our thoughts, feelings, hopes and desires with others. Language also helps us to create bonds and form meaningful relationships with other people.” – Mercer 2016

EMPATHY

“...empathy is not a fixed personality trait: it can rise and fall depending on the situation, and we can train ourselves to get better at it.” Krznaric (2014) quoted in Mercer (2016)

COMPASSION

Being a compassion-based language educator is an attitude and identity which leads to actions inspired by compassion.

-- Mercer (2024)

COMPASSION

Language teachers matter in profound ways to their learners and their futures.

The core characteristic that underlies this is human compassion.

Now is the time that we need to teach with compassion at the heart of all we do.

--Mercer 2024

COMPASSION

Compassion is about being emotionally moved by the plight of others and energized into action with the desire to alleviate suffering...not only does a compassionate person feel empathetic towards others but they feel empowered and able to take actions, no matter how small, to help others and contribute to positive change. (Mercer, 2024)

LOVE

Language and love are essential parts of being human and thus, fundamental aspects of any kind of teaching and learning.


(Barcelos & Coelho)

LOVE

“Love draws you out of your cocoon of self-absorption to attune to others. Love allows you to really see another person, holistically, with care, concern, and compassion.” (Frederickson, quoted in Barcelos & Coelho)

LOVE

Love in education means attending to the situation, to the students in the classes, finding ways to connect students, looking for the good in them, and seeing them in ways that assume and build upon the good they bring with them. (Liston, paraphrased in Barcelos & Coelho)



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ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES



THREE WAYS TO PRACTICE LOVE IN THE CLASSROOM

(BARCELOS & COELHO)

Learn to listen to students in a caring way, valuing their stories and encouraging them to see themselves with more positive and loving eyes.

Create a safe environment where everyone learns from each other and can grow.

Prioritize collaboration and constructive feedback.

“The key element is *compassionate listening* and acceptance of each other as perfect imperfect human beings.”

CREATE MOMENTS OF POSITIVE RESONANCE AND EMOTIONAL BELONGING (BARCELOS & COELHO)

Create opportunities for students to share interests, positive memories, hopes and dreams

Do physical activities together that encourage sharing

Share jokes, humor, and opportunities to laugh together

Maintain rituals that bond the class as a group

Watch films or videos and then talk about experiences of shared admiration and elevation

USING SONGS (PURGASON)

Choose songs that talk about different forms of love e.g. “Love One Another,” “Love Remains”

Develop practice activities for language

Develop level-appropriate questions for discussion

HAPPINESS HAIKUS (HELGESEN)

Whatever happens,
Don't be afraid. Keep going
We are living now.

Just breathe air slowly.
It will calm your angry mind,
And you can forgive.

GRATITUDE LIST

Give students a blank piece of paper.

Have them make an oval for each year of their life.

In each oval, they write one thing they are thankful for.

In groups they explain the most interesting items

(Helgesen, based on Pink 2006)

COMPLIMENTS

Write eight or so compliment phrases such as “That’s a great jacket” or “You’ve got a beautiful smile” on the board.

In groups of four or five, each learner gives one true compliment to each person.

At the end they try to remember all the compliments using reported speech.

HAPPINESS CHAINS

Give each student three strips of paper.

Arrange students in groups of four or five.

Each student writes sentences about good things in their lives right now.

Students take turns reading their strips.

Each new student connects their strip to the previous one using a glue stick or staple creating links in a happiness chain.

POSITIVE EMOTION SENTENCES

Joy. *I was really happy when...*

Gratitude. *I was thankful for...*

Serenity. *I felt peaceful when...*

Love. *I really knew I was loved when ...*

Students can write answers to the prompts, then choose one and write about it more deeply.

THREE GOOD THINGS (HELGESEN, BASED ON SELIGMAN, 2005)

For one week participants keep a daily log

They write down three good things that happened each day (and why it was good)

USING QUOTATIONS (PURGASON 2016, PP. 185-188)

“The greatest happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved—loved for ourselves, or rather, loved in spite of ourselves.” Victor Hugo

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud.” 1 Corinthians 13: 4

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:39

“Love has to be shown by deeds, not words.” Swahili proverb

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION



PUTTING LOVE INTO PRACTICE IN THE CLASSROOM (SCHOLL, GILL, & GUZMAN)

1. Can you share a specific moment when love or gratitude transformed a challenging situation in your classroom?
2. What are some intentional practices or rituals you use to cultivate love or gratitude in your teaching?
3. How do you model love and gratitude for your students and what impact have you observed?

ONE STEP AT A TIME

What is one small but important change you could make next week to infuse more love and gratitude into your teaching practice?

WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK YOURSELF THESE QUESTIONS (BARCELOS & COELHO)

What would love do now?

How can I bring more love into what I do?

How can I teach with more love?

How can I see my students with more loving eyes?

www.joemcveigh.org/resources

Thank you !



RESOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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