

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Hall, Graham (2022) Values in the Language Classroom. In: Research Questions in Language Education and Applied Linguistics: A Reference Guide. Springer Texts in Education . Springer, Cham, Switzerland, pp. 729-734. ISBN 9783030791421, 9783030791438

Published by: Springer

URL: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79143-8_127 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79143-8_127>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link: <https://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/49809/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

Values in the language classroom

Graham Hall, Northumbria University, UK

Language teaching is a ‘profoundly value-laden activity’ (Johnston, 2003, p.1). Teachers make decisions based on values, and students and teachers often express particular values during lessons (Menard-Warwick et al., 2016). Beyond the classroom, values also permeate, for example, national language policies, curriculum design, language testing, and materials development (Hall, 2017).

Johnston (2003, p.6) defines *values* as ‘that set of a person’s beliefs that are evaluative in nature ... [and] which concern what is good and bad, what is right and wrong’; Johnston regards *morality* as essentially synonymous with *values*. Values are both ‘personal’ and ‘cultural’ (Buzzelli and Johnston, 2003, p.3), that is, individual and social; values are mediated by individuals who are subject to strong socio-cultural influences. Thus, values ‘are played out in social settings – when our inner beliefs are converted into actions which affect others’ (Johnston, 2003, p.6). As Hall (2017) notes, therefore, the language classroom is an inherently value-laden environment social setting, where teachers make decisions which they believe are right for individual learners, for the whole class, and, indeed, for themselves.

Menard-Warwick et al. (2016) differentiate between *values about* and *values within*, the former referring to the evaluation of topics during classroom discussions, the latter to beliefs enacted through classroom interaction, behaviours and policies. For example, a classroom discussion of the role of women in the workplace reveals values *about* gender, while interaction and turn-taking patterns which encourage or deny women the opportunity to speak out in class demonstrate values *within* the classroom (ibid.).

According to Menard-Warwick et al. (2016), talking *about* values during lessons can often motivate learners to speak more expansively than they would otherwise. Yet talking about values itself reflects a value-laden perspective associated with Communicative Language Teaching (ibid.). Meanwhile, both topic selection and the place of the teacher’s own opinions in such discussions remain complex. The appropriateness of talking about politics, sexuality, and religion, for example, varies according to context, learners’ age etc., and although teachers might aim for *committed impartiality* within the classroom (in which they state their own view, then allow competing perspectives to be freely aired and fairly heard (Kelly, 1986; Menard-Warwick et al., 2016)), their status and authority in class might potentially silence those students who fear to disagree (Miller-Lane et al., 2006).

Values are reflected *within* classroom practices in a number of ways. Johnston et al. (1998) highlight the explicit rules and regulations that maintain teacher and institutional discipline in class (e.g. concerning cheating, lateness etc.), while Hafernik et al. (2002) focus on the dilemmas posed by poor learner attendance and non-completion of homework, issues that potentially challenge teacher authority and may also reduce the learning opportunities of other students in class. Hansen (1993), meanwhile, focuses on the ways in which hand-raising in class not only establishes order and turn-taking, but also reinforces the values of learner patience and teacher authority. Values also underpin the ways in which classroom talk and interaction are managed. For example, how might teachers balance the widely-held principle of relatively equal learner turn-taking in class with an individual’s right to be silent if they choose, i.e., ‘voluntary silence’ versus ‘enforced speech’ (Johnston, 2003, p.35)?

Ultimately, although many language teachers would not consider that they explicitly teach values, values infuse teacher decision-making as, in our specific contexts, we try to ‘do the right thing’ for our students.

References

- Buzzelli, C. and Johnston, B. (2002). *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- Hansen, D. (1993). ‘From Role to Person: The Moral Layeredness of Classroom Teaching’. *American Educational Research Journal*, 30(4), 651–74.
- Hafernik, J., Messerschmitt, D. and Vandrick, S. (2002). *Ethical Issues for ESL Faculty*. Mahwah, NJ: Routledge.
- Hall, G. (2017). *Exploring English Language Teaching: Language in action*. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge.
- Johnston, B. (2003). *Values in English Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge.
- Johnston, B., Juhász, A., Marken, J. and Rolf Ruiz, B. (1998). ‘The ESL Teacher as Moral Agent’. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 32(2), 161–81.
- Kelly, T. (1986). ‘Discussing controversial issues: Four perspectives on the teacher’s role’ *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 14(2), 113-138.
- Menard-Warwick, J., Mori, M., Reznik, A. and Moglen, D. (2016). ‘Values in the ELT classroom’, in G. Hall (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge. 556-570.
- Miller-Lane, J., Denton, E. and May, A. (2006). ‘Social studies teachers’ views on committed impartiality and discussion’. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 1(1), 30-44.

The Research Questions

Focusing on a particular language classroom or classrooms:

1. What rules and regulations operate in a/the language classroom (for example, about learner lateness, cheating, chatting, and even school uniform)? What values are conveyed by these rules?
2. To what extent, and how, do the teachers teach values explicitly in the classroom? What values are taught?
3. To what extent, and how, are particular values conveyed to learners implicitly in the classroom? What values are conveyed?
4. To what extent are the values that ‘learners should participate relatively equally in class’ and ‘learners have the right not to speak (‘the right to silence’)’ evident in the classroom? How is this tension resolved, if at all, and why does the teacher (and/or learners) take this approach?
5. To what extent, and how, do teachers express their own views during values-based class discussions, for example, about aspects of politics or gender? Why, according to the teachers, do they take this approach?
6. In what ways do values play out in a language classroom of younger learners compared to a classroom of adult learners? How does the age of the learners affect value-based issues in the classrooms?
7. To what extent do teachers (and/or learners) report holding values which are contradictory (e.g., ‘honesty’ and ‘tact’ and ‘diplomacy’), and how are such contradictions managed in practice in the classroom?

8. Identify a 'critical incident' in a classroom in which a conflict between learners has emerged, for example, a disagreement during a value-based discussion (i.e., 'values about'), or learners not working well together (e.g., interrupting, not listening, or not wishing to work together; i.e., 'values within'). To what extent, and how, is the conflict dealt with in a way which attends both to the values of the learners involved and to the values and norms of the class more generally?
9. How far do teachers believe they should attend to the needs or wishes of an individual learner if they run counter a) to the teacher's own beliefs about what is right or appropriate in class, and b) the teachers' perceptions of the needs of the whole class? How are any differences resolved in practice in the classroom?
10. To what extent do the reported values of the teacher, learners and the school/institution coincide or differ? How are any differences resolved in practice in the classroom?

Research methodologies might include classroom observation, fieldnotes and/or audio- and video-recording; interviews and focus groups with teachers, learners and school/institutional managers; questionnaires and surveys; and the collation of relevant documentary evidence. Differing data sources might be triangulated to compare and contrast perspectives, and to build a more complete picture of values in the language classroom.

Suggested Resources

Buzzelli, C. and Johnston, B. (2002). *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

This accessible book focuses on what the authors term 'the moral dimensions of classroom interaction' (co-author Bill Johnston (2003) subsequently equates with 'morality' with 'values'; see 'Overview' and reference below). It analyses classroom interaction transcripts to reveal 'moral meaning' in incidents and episodes where values are not, at least at first glance, obvious. The book focuses on three main issues: teachers' (and learners') use of language, and how this supports or hinders learners' participation in class; how power relationships are mediated in teaching, particularly with regard to testing and assessment, the physical organisation of teaching, and the notion of learners' 'voice'; and the ways in which differing cultural values might come together in classrooms. The volume conveys a sense of the value-based complexities and ambiguities which are part of teaching and highlights the importance of context and the importance of teachers' knowledge of their own classrooms.

Crookes, G. (2013). *Critical ELT in Action*. New York: Routledge.

Bringing together theory and practice, this volume aims to introduce teachers to second language critical pedagogy, that is, a perspective on language teaching, learning and curricula that critiques the status quo, creates alternative forms of practice, and seeks social justice for all. The book is an exploration of key issues, offering prompts to teachers who wish to develop the possibility of critical ELT in their own professional context. It consequently examines the ways in which values might underpin curricula and materials, classroom discourse, the ways in which we understand language and learning, and the institutional and administrative concerns which surround ELT programmes. Central to the discussion is the relationship between theory and values-in-theory on

the one hand, and what happens in classrooms in practice on the other. In some ways, therefore, the book (deliberately!) asks as many questions of teachers as it answers.

Hall, G. (2016). *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

A substantial number of chapters in this handbook explore value-related issues in English Language Teaching. The opening five chapters examine the global context of ELT. They discuss how the emergence and recognition of varieties of English around the world, and of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), poses value-based questions about what English should be taught and tested; how differing values might ‘flow’ and ‘compete’ within the politics and power relationships of global ELT; the ways in which English carries discourses, identities, memories, cultures and values at a global and local scale; changing perspectives, challenges and values around the ‘traditional’ distinction between so-called ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers; and the implications of differing educational traditions – indigenous, progressive and critical - on ELT. Elsewhere, the volume examines how ELT materials represent both language for pedagogical purposes (and the simplifications and distortions this might entail) and the world and its inhabitants (and the failure to recognise some stigmatised social groups). Meanwhile, chapters focusing on English for academic purposes (EAP), English for specific purposes (ESP), language education and migration, bilingual education in a multilingual world, appropriate methodology, and the use of the learners’ own language(s) in class all reflect upon the ways in which *what* and *how* we teach draws on and reflects particular perspectives on the world around us, viewpoints which are infused with values. Each chapter concludes with *Discussion questions* to prompt further reader reflection, and a short annotated list of *Further readings*.

Johnston, B. (2003). *Values in English Language Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

This book provides an in-depth and wide-ranging exploration of the ways in which language teaching is ‘shot through with values’ (p.1). It argues that the morality of teaching is ‘highly complex, paradoxical, and saturated with important and difficult dilemmas’ (ibid.) and presents readers with practical value-related conundrums to prompt reflection. Following an introduction which defines key terms and emphasises the interplay between ‘the social’ and ‘the individual’ as values play out in practice, subsequent chapters focus on: the value-based complexities and dilemmas of classroom interaction (see also Buzzelli and Johnston, 2002); the politics of ELT in the world (including perspectives on Critical Pedagogy); the moral dilemmas which underlie language testing and assessment; value-based issues within language teacher identity (including teacher-student relationships, professionalism, and teachers’ religious beliefs); and the values, and indeed clashes of values, that underlie teacher development.

Menard-Warwick, J. (2013). *English Language Teachers on the Discursive Faultlines: Identities, ideologies, pedagogies*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

This book explores the language ideologies, linguistic and cultural identities and cultural pedagogies of teachers from Chile and from California, drawing on the perspectives of the teachers themselves. The discussion takes as its starting point the idea that socio-historical and cultural

contexts influence the linguistic and cultural identities of teachers. This affects the ways in which language teachers engage with competing discourses, summarised by the author as ‘ways of referring to and evaluating particular topics, such as sexuality, celebrity and the legal system – or ELT ... realised through language’ (p.2). As teachers increase their own awareness of the interconnections between language, ideology, culture, and identity, they will be better able to make informed decisions about locally appropriate English language pedagogies.

About the Contributor

Graham Hall is Associate Professor in Applied Linguistics/TESOL at Northumbria University, UK, where he teaches on the university’s Applied Linguistics and TESOL programmes. He has been involved in English language teaching/TESOL for over twenty-five years, working in Poland, Hungary, Saudi Arabia and the UK, first as a teacher, then as a teacher educator and researcher. He is the author of *Exploring English Language Teaching: language in action* (Routledge, 2011; 2nd edition, 2017), winner of the 2012 British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) book prize. He also edited the *Routledge Handbook of English Language Teaching* (2016) and was editor of *ELT Journal* from 2013-17. His professional and research interests range from classroom discourse and language teaching methodology to the cultural politics of English language teaching.