



Mother Nature's Tongue Language Education for Promoting Environmental Sensitivity

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Abstract

Positivist and reductionist worldviews are dominating most areas of human's life: science, humanities, politics, economy, ecology etc. Disconnected from others, nature, and our Self, we grow up to become ego-centered consumers who suck the life out of the Earth. Our test-driven education is both the major culprit and victim of this compartmentalization. It force-feeds us with isolated packs of knowledge, having little to do with our intuition, feeling, interest, creativity, imagination, wisdom, and our real need for a healthy and natural environment.

Fortunately, a global "self organizing revolution" (R. Miller, 2008.p.26) which has a holistic vision of the world is emerging in many fields. It's vital for us, as educators, to keep up with this movement to save our bleeding Mother Nature. As the first step, we should sensitize our future businessmen, politicians, managers etc. to environmental issues and interconnection among all things through environmental themes and holistic approach in which "the relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body... the relationship to the Earth, and the relationship between self and Self" (Miller, 1996, p.8) is emphasized.

This qualitative case study is going to reflect on an already practiced holistic arts-based approach to education of 11-12 year old EFL beginners in one of the junior high schools of Iran. It aims to show how it is possible for a language teacher to promote teenagers' sense of interconnection with universe and consequently their ecological sensitivity, through imaginary drawings, in a way that participants' uniqueness and polarities are acknowledged, each participant is the subject of his or her own learning, and imagination and creativity are seen as means of contributing to personal development and language acquisition. (Dufeu, 1994, p.12-22).

Dominant atomistic test-driven and non-integrative curricula are the major blocks on the way of teachers who care for Nature and holistic education. Although they are limited in this way, they can raise their student's ecological sensitivity through the very subject they are teaching by involving the whole person in education.

Assessing the changes in students' inner "non-verbal, tacit" layers (Miller, 1996, p.181) were so restrictive to this research but through the examination of qualitative data triangulated from portfolios (including drawings, written descriptions of students' drawings and reflective essays), open-ended questionnaires, interviews, and observation, I found that their ecological sensitivity was improved. According to them, they "felt connected to the birds in the yard...and heard them talking ...for the first time."

This work is not going to be presented as a panacea or an attempt to answer with imaginary drawing all the problems of education. It is not to prescribe, but rather to describe a sample practical approach to



education to encourage teachers of all subject matters to devise and work out their own methods, trying other areas of art, in order to promote ecological sensitivity in their students.