

## INCULCATING UNIVERSAL VALUES VIA ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Haja Mohideen Bin Mohamed Ali

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### ABSTRACT

*The teaching and learning of languages need not necessarily be focused entirely on the acquisition of language skills. While the primary aim of language instruction is enhanced proficiency in a language, we need to inculcate values- moral, spiritual, human, ethical, etc. in our teaching and learning activities. Language education emphasizes the four macro skills, namely reading, speaking, listening and writing. Universal values involving special people, the environment, social issues, health, science and technology may easily be incorporated into the curriculum. The values that go along with the teaching and learning are universal, English being a global lingua franca. For the attainment of world peace, language teaching may be able to contribute in various ways. Values that may be promoted include many themes. Themes such as issues contributing to global warming, terrorism, the refugee crisis, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, the rights of indigenous people, minority communities, corruption, leading a healthy lifestyle, patriotism, freedom of expression, responsible citizenship, etc. These values could be incorporated into the teaching and learning activities of all the major language skills and their components. Although values are subjective, universal values which many can relate to should be identified for instruction purposes. Textbooks from certain countries contain values consistent with their own way of life. Even so, this may be informational to those who are unfamiliar with it. Textbook content and activities may ideally be used to inculcate values which are fairly universal. But we must bear in mind not to adopt the didactic approach, but rather impart the values in our teaching in a neutral, objective way. The paper will demonstrate how this may be done while acquiring various language skills simultaneously. Such value-based education may be a contributing factor towards global peace.*

Key words- values, education, humanity, universality, collective responsibility

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### 1. Introduction

#### What are values?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, values may generally be defined as “principles or standards of behaviour; one’s judgment of what is important in life (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/value>). On the significance of values in an organization, Jimenez (2008) observes competently that values enable us to guide our behavior for self-fulfilment. They are the fundamental beliefs a person possesses to be able to decide what is preferable for him/her to attain inner happiness. He adds that values are related to human needs and represent the aspirations, dreams and ideals of individuals and groups of people with common goals. Values are important for what they stand for and not for what others think of them. He stresses that values lay the foundation for community co-existence and relations with others. They regulate our behavior for collective well-being.

Universal values are positive virtues and values which give “individuals and societies the moral accountability that is the basis of human integrity” ([www.globaleducation.org/values.htm](http://www.globaleducation.org/values.htm)). The National Institute of Technology Raipur in India endorses universal values in technical education. The main purpose for practicing this is to “contribute for holistic development of an individual in every aspect leading to clarity, and determination to contribute towards ensuring a healthy order in family and in socio-economic system for the satisfaction of all” ([www.litk.ac.in/infocell/announce](http://www.litk.ac.in/infocell/announce)). Universal values are fairly synonymous with moral values independent of association with any religion. Kuehn (2016) strongly advocates teaching such values in the school curriculum for the youth to become more sensitized to the problems plaguing a community or society. Inculcating such values will prepare our children for future roles in society as good parents and exemplary citizens. There is excessive violence in schools in some countries. With the inculcation of values which strongly disapprove of bullying, cheating in exams and sexual exploits in schools, our students may be able to counter bad influence and set a good example. These values very often stick with us for a long time (<https://soapboxie.com/social-issues/Teaching-Moral-Values-in-School>).

#### Values in Education

Values-based education underpins all its practices on a set of universal human values such as respect, tolerance and peace ([www.valuesbasededucation.com/vbe.what.html](http://www.valuesbasededucation.com/vbe.what.html)) It emphasizes morals and values which are commonly acknowledged and appreciated. These values which are almost universally accepted are those such as love for fellow human beings, humane treatment of animals, non-violence, tolerance for one another’s religious beliefs, cooperation between members of the community, dignity of labour, basic humanity, volunteerism, being truthful and avoiding falsehood, respect for elderly people, empathizing with people with disability, showing compassion for the weak and vulnerable, of whom there are so many, etc. The Malaysian Education Ministry, for example, has identified many admirable values: intercultural understanding at national and international levels, relationship with parents and friends, caring for the environment, caring for senior citizens and children, consumer rights, combating drug abuse, patriotism and citizenship, love for world peace and harmony and awareness of dangerous diseases (Curriculum Specifications for English Language, 2003).

In conjunction with the National Teacher's Day in Indonesia, President Joko Widodo called on teachers to inculcate good values and ethics in daily life and interaction on social media. In addition to academic pursuits, the students must be made aware of positive elements such as discipline, hard work, honesty and optimism. He stressed that sharing knowledge on ethics and social values was a significant part of education and therefore knowledge and values need to be complementary. The President exhorted teachers to instill the values of respect, responsibility and trust in their students. He was optimistic such values might help to overcome negative behavior in the country's youth (*Stareducate*, 11 December 2016, p.6).

Values education is not exclusive, but rather it is to be made part of the curriculum and involves, particularly the teachers, learners and policy makers. The teacher, classroom interaction, educational policies, teacher development, their identity, content and testing are very much involved. Value-oriented decisions have to be made to maintain and improve student-teacher relationship (Johnston, 2003).

Core values to be introduced in the education system aims at the holistic development of students to become responsible citizens. Values-based education grooms an individual to live in harmony with nature and fellow human beings. It may be noted that there is an alarming increase in degradation of values due to the rapid progress in science and technology. It is therefore important to sensitize our youths towards community issues and society's problems ([www.litk.ac.in/infocell/announce](http://www.litk.ac.in/infocell/announce)). Teaching values can even start early in the primary classroom by teaching pupils the language of politeness(<https://oupeltglobalblog.com/2011>).

The question may arise as to why we have to inculcate such values in and through education. Education ought not to be seen as merely as preparation for a career in a competitive world. Modern education cannot be divorced from problems plaguing humanity. Getting educated does not have to be only knowledgeable about the content of the disciplines one pursues. The knowledge has to be useful to the individual and the society. There has to be a kind of marriage between education and values in life. There are many good reasons why it is noteworthy. Among the many objectives are:

To practice fundamental values

To realize one's inner beauty

To promote individual and collective well being

To be an agent for positive change in the society

To influence the learners to lead a healthy lifestyle

To groom students for responsible citizenship, and

To implement a country's founding principles for example, the Rukun Negara in Malaysia. It has five, namely: Belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country, Upholding the Constitution, Rule of Law and Good Behaviour and Morality.

The motivation for the study is to suggest the method of introducing values in the teaching of English subtly and indirectly. Such exposure may be helpful to groom the young to become responsible citizens. Through such an approach there is an integration of language skills and values which are largely common to us regardless of our diverse backgrounds.

The paper will go on to show specifically how values may be inculcated in the formal teaching and learning of the English language. The pedagogy however can be applied to language instruction in general. The paper illustrates how grammar teaching, vocabulary acquisition, practicing the macro skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening may be imparted through values education.

### **Values education in English language teaching**

The educational emphases as outlined in the curriculum specifications of the Form Four English Language Syllabus (2003) by the Malaysian Ministry of Education, for instance, clearly shows the inculcation of values education in English language education: In this respect, the incorporation of moral education, citizenship education, patriotism and thinking skills in the specifications will contribute towards the building of a modern and progressive Malaysian society. Two values based objectives to be achieved by students at the end of Form Four are 1) to be able to interact with people and develop skills in forming and maintaining friendships by expressing care and concern and willingness to help, and creating a sense of togetherness and 2) to be able to show an awareness and appreciation of moral values. Art does not have to be the sake of art alone. Knowledge acquisition does not have to be for the sake of acquiring knowledge alone. Similarly, language acquisition does not have to be only acquiring the language per se. These need to be complemented by values in life.

Values education may be integrated and practiced in relation to all the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. It could also be done in the three areas of language identified in the Form Four syllabus by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia, namely, Language for Interpersonal Use, Language for Informational Use and Language for Aesthetic Use (Lee, A, Roberts, L. and Chew, M. (2003). How could we do that in the instruction and learning of English?

The problem with English language textbooks which are imported from predominantly English speaking countries is that they pay little attention to inculcation of values. Most often they just focus on the content of teaching the language per se. Values exposure should be embedded in a country's educational system for responsible citizenship at present and in the future.

The study here is largely non-empirical. It exemplifies how universal values may be incorporated in language learning materials to address the major language skills. It may be considered as a kind of model for teachers interested in introducing values instruction.

### **Grammar instruction**

Grammatical competence is necessary and our learners should be able to produce grammatically acceptable sentences. We may complement this ability by giving them activities and practice which contain values content. This can be done with many grammatical categories. Some examples follow:

#### 1. Subject- Verb Agreement

Use the missing subject or verb in the following sentences to show agreement between the subject and verb.

- a) The officer ..... arrested for abuse of power and corruption.
- b) .....work hard for a living.

The values the learners are being indirectly exposed are that 1) the law will catch up with corrupt officers who abuse their position and 2) we need to show care and concern for those who work very hard to earn a livelihood/

#### 2. Tenses

Fill in the blanks with the correct tense of the verb in brackets.

- a) Pupils in some remote areas still..... (walk) a long distance to reach their school.
- b) The snatch thief .....(try) to escape fast in his motorbike, but he was quickly apprehended by members of the public.

The values instilled here are 1) to empathize with residents in some rural areas for whom life is hard, and 2) to realize crime does not pay and to instill awareness among the citizens that combating crime is also our responsibility.

#### 3. Gerunds and infinitives

In the teaching of gerunds and infinitives, the teacher may provide value laden examples, for example:

- a) He gave up smoking (gerund) after being advised by the doctor.
  - b) He used to mingle (infinitive) with bad company and that is how he picked up smoking.
- It is possible to use both gerunds and infinitives in the same sentence as in (b).

Avoiding bad company and giving up bad habits are the values inherent in the examples.

#### 4. Connectives.

The four types of connectives- additive, causative, contrastive and sequential (Jones, J.H.,2012) may be taught by using positive examples

1. The employees were sincere in their work. *Moreover* they were loyal to their company (additive).
2. She drove the car recklessly. *Consequently* she met with a nasty accident (causative).
3. *Despite* her injury, the player wanted to win for the country (contrastive).
4. He *finally* secured a scholarship after many attempts (sequential).

#### 5. Modality

Four examples of modal verbs are given to understand their meaning coupled with values.

- a) We **need** to include vegetables and fruits in our diet (have to).
- b) They **need not** break the law to voice their grievances do not have to).
- c) We **should** care for our parents in their old age (must)
- d) The authorities **should not** allow deforestation indiscriminately as it will affect the environment (must not).

#### 6. Types of sentences

- a) They pray at their neighbourhood mosque ( simple sentence)
- b) They completed their homework and watched their favourite TV program (compound sentence).
- c) The university students decided to do some voluntary work after the exam was over (complex sentence)

#### 7. Active and Passive Constructions

- a) Good parenting raises well behaved children (active)
- b) Well behaved children are raised by good parenting (passive)
- c) The association invited successful personalities to motivate their members (active).
- d) Successful personalities were invited by the association to motivate their members (passive).
- e) The organization will host a gala dinner for charity (active).
- f) A gala dinner will be hosted by the organization for charity (passive).

#### Vocabulary acquisition

Base words which are provided in the word list of the curriculum may be exploited in various ways to blend values with their usage. Some words from the word list in the curriculum specifications for Form Four English, set by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia are exemplified here according to their guidelines, including using the target words as various parts of speech, plural forms and use of affixes in context.

Average- 1.He was just an average pupil in school, but he now owns a company with 120 employees. 2. Most children only do averagely well before their public exams.

Bless- 1. The mother gave her blessings to Jack to succeed in life. 2. Our country is blessed with natural resources, for which we should be grateful.

Confident- 1. Never lose confidence in yourself. 2. They represented their school in the competition confidently.

Disease- 1. The refugees are suffering from diseases and are helpless. 2. The gardener removed the diseased plants to give the garden a fresh new look.

Essential- 1. The homemaker stopped buying unessential items to save on expenses. 2. Essentially, Trump's triumph has seen the rise of racism.

Glory- 1. The team brought glory to the nation. 2. The glorious victory was accomplished through tough training and hard work.

Human- 1. The hunting of whales in abundance is inhuman. 2. Mother Theresa was made a saint for her service to humanity.

Request- 1. Did you request to be transferred to your wife's school? 2. No, the department rejected my request.

Suggest- 1. The doctor suggested that her patient go for regular exercise. 2. The patient accepted the suggestion.

Threaten- 1. Mrs. Tan's neighbor threatened to call the police if she continued to treat her pets inhumanely. 2. She took the threat seriously.

#### Vocabulary activities

1. Look at the sentences below and choose the correct alternatives.

- The store was broken into by *thieves/vagabonds*, but they were quickly apprehended by a passing patrol car.
- The manager was found *guilty/innocent* of misappropriating company funds to support his lavish lifestyle.
- She told him she was thirty, when her real age is forty. She's *dishonest/deceptive*.
- If the student did not really plagiarize, she must *deny/refuse* doing it straightaway.

#### 2. Collocation

Identify from the pairs of words given which one is more probable.

- The men in her office *admired/loved* her for her modesty and honesty.
- Procrastination is the *robber/thief* of time.
- Idling in shopping malls is time *wasted/saved*.
- Our township has been well built with many *amenities/facilities*.

#### 3. Register

Construct sentences with the following words in conjunction with applying for a job in a positive way:

qualifications, experience, promotion prospects, job responsibilities, long term goals, strengths, weaknesses, salary, training program, references, biodata

#### Reading comprehension

Passages selected for reading comprehension ought to include those which are related to some issues of concern which have been published in print or online. These may include topics associated with global warming, climate change, racism, honour killing, child labour, animal cruelty, child brides, pollution, globalization, free trade, free education, literature, music, statesmanship, feminism, good governance, etc.

Students should be required to think sensitively to topics which affect most of us globally. They need to come up with practical suggestions to eradicate poverty, famine and hunger, preserving the environment, treating the minority indigenous people with due regard for their rights, for example. Such an approach may help our learners to acquire admirable human values by becoming aware of the problem and to ponder over them. These topics may be included together with other human interest topics which are often available in prescribed and recommended textbooks. They often reflect the world we live in whether or not we share the values contained in the books. Authentic articles which are likely to appeal to the learners may be gathered from both online sources and those in print. The various reading skills such as skimming and scanning, identifying topic and supporting sentences, understanding context clues, drawing conclusions, predicting outcomes, interpreting non-linear texts, summarizing, etc. can be practiced with the values focused topics.

#### Listening comprehension

For listening comprehension practice, audio materials which deal with universal human values may be used together with other materials of interest concentrating on specific listening skills. Students may be asked to listen to a talk on recycling, evils of war, the pros and cons of arranged marriage, domestic abuse, treatment of refugees fleeing war and persecution, poems and stories which have values for the learners to contemplate, etc. in addition to the many topics suggested earlier. There are many motivational poems, for example, *If* by Rudyard Kipling, *Success Personified* by Byron Pulsifier and *Quitting is not the way* by Julie Herbert which students may listen to as such poems are imbued with inspirational content. Students may be given conversation texts wherein the characters discuss issues of importance to the community, for example, neighborhood watch, expressions of politeness in conversations showing courtesy in agreeing and disagreeing on a controversial topic such as euthanasia, immigration, etc. The skills which normally follow a listening comprehension activity such as noting the gist of a talk, summarizing, presenting the information in tabular form, identifying important details of the discussion heard, taking notes, making inferences, etc.

#### Writing skills

Writing activities are usually based on the main reading passages. Since it is suggested that values based reading passages are also included, the writing activities may be geared towards the realization of inculcating and imparting human values. These may

include writing letters to the editor of newspapers in print or online, for example, highlighting the plight of senior citizens abandoned by their children, homelessness, urban poverty; expressing personal opinions on race-based discrimination, gender equality, marginalized communities; writing an article for a magazine on the issues facing single parents, solution for teenage pregnancies, plagiarism of assignments by students in tertiary institutions; writing the transcript of an interview with a social activist on social problems affecting dwellers in low and medium cost high rise flats and apartments, for instance; presenting a chart on common illnesses and ways and means to take preventive measures; writing a short story which contains a moral, among other things, to stress the importance of integrity in an organization; writing a persuasive speech to highlight certain issues; writing about a problem and suggesting solutions using the problem-solution pattern, preparing a poster for world peace, etc.

### Speaking skills

Speaking skills are integrated with the other macroskills of reading, listening and writing. The speaking component is based on the main reading passage. Students should be able to talk about issues affecting humanity, social customs, cultural differences and tolerance, persuade people to protect the environment, conserve water, express care and concern for social issues such as drug abuse and vagrancy, share stories about those who have gone on to become achievers despite their disabilities, exchange opinions on human rights and agree or disagree politely, initiate a discussion on controversial topics, etc. Students may be asked to discuss topics such as environmental pollution, serious crimes in a group and present the group's consensus to the class. In pairs, students may be asked to make predictions about greater prospects for graduate employability. A role play may be conducted in pairs between a patient and a doctor. Individual speaking activities may also be given, for example, get students to talk about: If you were very rich, what would you do for your fellow human beings? In all these speaking activities, students must be taught to express clearly and coherently. Due regard must be maintained for different views from one's own.

### Conclusion

Values in education include many aspects: classroom content, management, methodology and assessment. For our discussion in this paper, we have focused mostly on classroom content. Value education and English language acquisition can go hand in hand. Values may sometimes be seen as subjective, but largely they are not. In a class of students from different nationalities and cultural backgrounds, the values we integrate into our instruction have to be appreciated as being universally acceptable. Where there are learners from a single identifiable group, we may include values associated with the target group. In a classroom of an Islamic institution, for instance, we could introduce Islamic values through various materials and language tasks (Shamimah, 2013). The inclusion of values through teaching of the English language and other languages is seen as akin to holistic education which emphasizes cultivating the emotional, moral and spiritual dimensions of the learners (infed.org/mobi/a-brief-introduction-to-holistic-education/). It must be emphasized though that the values introduced are not in isolation or values per se, but rather as part of the curriculum alongside prescribed texts. Materials containing values may be used as complementary materials, or if necessary new suitable value-laden materials may be developed to cater for specific target groups. The language examples we give in addition to those in the textbooks may more frequently be associated with ethical, moral and spiritual values which are often universal in nature. If an institution aspires to come up with its own materials, it may, of course, give more prominence to values, as it seems fit, alongside topics of general interest.

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Haja Mohideen Bin Mohamed Ali  
*Department of English Language and Literature*  
*Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage*  
*International Islamic University Malaysia*  
*Email: mohideen@iium.edu.my*