

Outcome 5

Description

A Christian Perspective of Language and Language Learning combines sections of the Position Statement with forum posts written for TESL 505 Second-language Acquisition, taken with Dr. Rich Robison in the Fall I session of 2017. For this document, I have selected the portions of these sources relating to the connection between spirituality, faith, and a Christian worldview and language and language teaching.

Reflection

During this entire MA program, I have been challenged to consider the ways that my faith should affect my approach to language teaching. I have come to the realization that in my previous teaching, I was guilty of keeping spirituality separate from the classroom and failing to acknowledge the spiritual nature of language learners and of language itself. The Smith (2008) and Robison (2011) readings in TESL 505 particularly challenged my unconscious assumptions that faith doesn't have a legitimate place in the secular language classroom beyond helping me to be a better teacher. I have grown to understand that if spiritual beliefs and faith are important to my students, I should provide a way for them to express these in the language I am teaching them.

Application

I will welcome discussions of faith and spirituality in my future teaching, rather than shying away from them. I will remember that my students are spiritual beings, not machines of cognitive learning processes, and that the spiritual can and should intersect with classroom learning. Specifically, I will consider how to bring topics like forgiveness, death, suffering, and prayer into class content in ways that are appropriate, meaningful, and relevant for my students.

Revised Application Statement

I will welcome discussions of faith and spirituality in my future teaching, rather than shying away from them. I will remember that my students are spiritual beings, not machines of cognitive learning processes, and that the spiritual can and should intersect with classroom learning. Specifically, I will consider how to bring topics like forgiveness, death, suffering, and prayer into class content in ways that are appropriate, meaningful, and relevant for my students. As one means to this end, I plan to use relatable, true life stories (Smith, 2008) to facilitate discussions of moral and spiritual topics.

Commented [LC1]: In the Portfolio Components PPT from week 1, it says, "If newly created artifact, then state it as such and use your TESL 580 course information/term" (Slide 7). I think what you have written is all good and appropriate; I would just add a sentence before it indicating that this is a newly created artifact for this course.

Commented [LC2]: I wonder if you could simplify the first part of this sentence by just saying something like, "This document articulates a Christian view of the connection between..." Just a thought.

Commented [LC3]: Well-written reflection!

Commented [LC4]: Remember to add your references for these.

Commented [LC5]: Your application is well-written and good. I think it would be even stronger though if you could add one specific example of a teaching technique or classroom activity you might use that shows how you would combine language learning with one of these issues that relates to the spiritual side of your learners.

TESL 580: Peer Review

Outcome Author: Bethany Lee

Reviewer: Lynnette Christiansen

Outcome #: 5 – A Christian View of Language & Language Learners

DRA: I think your DRA statements are strong and well-written. As noted above, I'd add a brief statement to the Description about this artifact being newly created and a specific example to the Application section to make them even stronger.

Artifacts: You are very articulate, and I think your artifact is very clear. You have addressed both the nature of language as well as language learners from a Christian worldview.

I think, however, that there are a few areas that are missing or that you could strengthen in your artifact. Dr. Robison mentioned several times in his video about this outcome to make sure that our artifact(s) shows an awareness that there is not one specific Christian worldview that all Christians alike believe. I think you have articulated your own view well, but maybe you could add something that demonstrates your awareness that other Christians may hold an understanding of language that is different from your own. I think this is related to the theoretical views of language and learners that you mentioned in your note and is addressed more in Dr. Robison's article.

The other area that I think you could strengthen is addressing language learners as a whole beings (cognitive, emotional and spiritual). You've done a great job explaining how to address the spiritual side of learners. You might add what you will do to address the cognitive and emotional aspects of learners. I don't think I addressed this very well in my artifact either. When I wrote it, I focused too much on defining what cognitive and emotional needs are as opposed to how my Christian worldview affects how I view my students and address their cognitive and emotional needs. Maybe the question we both need to answer is something like this. If I, as a Christian, believe God made people with minds, emotions and spirits, how does that impact how I see and interact with my students, and how do I then address each of these aspects? I don't know if that is helpful or not. Hopefully, my ramblings will stimulate some thoughts for you on how to address learners as whole beings more clearly. Obviously, I'm still trying to figure this one out too.

Highlighting of Artifacts: Highlighting is appropriate.

Summary/General Notes: I think you have a great start on this outcome! Everything you've written is articulate and appropriate. I would just fill in a few gaps as noted above. Keep up the good work!

Revised Sections from Outcome 5 Artifact

From a Christian point of view, language is God’s perfect design, not an accidental phenomenon borne out of necessity. While Christian perspectives agree that language is a gift from God, created by God, there are differing points of view as to “whether a capacity for language arose *ex nihilo* with the creation of Adam, or whether it was archetypically present in the Trinity from eternity” (Robison, 2011, p. 3). Although I had never contemplated this question before examining Robison’s (2011) arguments, I now identify language as part of God’s eternal nature as a God who spoke the world into being in the Genesis account (before the creation of humankind) and who has spoken to people—his creation—throughout history.

Whether language can be viewed as one facet of the *Imago Dei*—a trait that we share with God the Creator— is also a question that does not have universal Christian consensus; however, I support the view that language has, at the very least, “a close connection to the *Imago Dei*” (Robison, 2011, p. 6). The thought that language may be one part of what defines humans as made in God’s image is truly awe-inspiring and should prompt a reverent handling of language in the classroom and in life.

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Language Learners as Whole Beings

The Bible and the sciences agree that humans are multi-faceted beings, with the ability, desire, and need to operate in the realms of the physical, mental, and emotional. God’s command to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deuteronomy 6:5, ESV) encompasses a wide range of capabilities including cognition and emotion. As we look at language learners and second language pedagogy, it is easy to focus on

learners as cognitive beings, leaving the emotional aspect of learning by the wayside. As Christian practitioners, it is essential that we recognize that the emotional aspect of learning (including the effects of past positive or negative experiences) is part of God's design and has as much of an impact on language learning as the mental processes employed.