

A Visit to Character Education in a Language Classroom

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1. Introduction

It's surely a dream of every teacher to run a dynamic class without any discipline problems that could interfere with the actual phase of teaching and learning. I believe, the academic and emotional challenges teachers meet everyday in their classes lead them to look for new ideas to improve themselves in terms of their professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Thinking of the nature of language learning process, there are many things that both the teachers and the students should consider to promote learning in the classroom. For example, from teachers' side, Williams & Burden (1997) suggests that, teachers' words and actions can influence the learning that occurs in their classrooms. In this respect, in Knobloch's words, effective teachers who make a difference in the lives of their students are likely to be motivated and caring teachers who appear to demonstrate competent teaching skills and intellectual excitement, establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, align the content and course activities with an organized body of knowledge, and connect themselves, students and content (2003,p.1). In this sense, the motivating character of the learning context can be enhanced through conscious intervention by the language teacher (Dörnyei, 2007). On the other hand, looking at the matter from the students' side, it's certain that students' beliefs about themselves, their feelings and motivation can influence their learning. To this end, the contents of character education programs have much to offer to nurture the affective needs of a classroom including the teacher and the students. The results of recent studies show that these programs have positive effect on students' achievement (Benninga et al. 2003) and classroom behaviours (Character Counts, 2001) (in Kappa Delta Pi Record, Winter 2008, p.62).

This study aims to explore and find out if infusing the ideas of Character Education into the daily routine of an EFL classroom would have a positive impact on my students' learning English and facilitate their learning as well as my teaching. Thus, in line with the current literature, I attempted to incorporate components of some effective character education programs into my daily plans for teaching English and then reported the results from my and my students' perspectives.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Character Education

Character Education asserts the rightness of certain values—such as respect, responsibility, honesty, caring, etc.—and helps students to understand, care about and act upon these values in their lives (www.greenville.k12.sc.us). The character education movement emphasized the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of character development while encouraging students to know the good, love the good, and do the good (Lickona, 1996; Ryan and Bohlin, 1999, in Healea, 2005). Conceptually character has two parts. The first part refers to an understanding of what is right, fair or good thing to do in a given circumstance. The second part refers to the ability to do those things (the courage to act in accordance with one's understanding of what is right, fair, and good). Thus character constitutes understanding what is right and acting on what is right (Whiteley, 1988).

Modifying and extending character education for the purpose of advancing global understanding and cooperation is often referred to as “global citizenship” (Davies, 2006). To that end, it has become increasingly apparent that the teaching of character education in schools may be a positive tool for finding ways to build unity, peace, and common ground among the peoples of the world (Helterbran, 2009).

2.2 Caring and Character Education

Noddings(2005) states that caring relations provide a good basis for character education. According to her “teachers who work from the care perspective are in constant touch with their students. Their evaluation follows much the same pattern as that of parents. Watching students, listening to them, working with them, living with them teachers have a reasonably clear picture of how students are developing (p.5). Achievements of caring teachers are supported by the literature. Accordingly, caring teachers motivated the students to work harder (Easton, 2002), perform better academically (Bryk, et al.1990; Shann, 1999), whereas, a lack of caring was a reason why some students left school (Mc Millan & Reed, 1994; Renihan & Renihan, 1995), cited in Knobloch ,2003, p.2).

Garko et al. (1994, p.63) point out that “ the facilitation of learning rests fundamentally upon the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the student. It’s a relationship in which the teacher is authentic, values the learner, and possesses an emphatic understanding of the student.” Caring teachers are described as those who nurture; are accessible and attentive to students’ needs; have rapport, and connect with students; are authentic; show interest, thoughtfulness, kindness, respect, and appreciation; create a safe, orderly environment and sense of belonging, listen, affirm, show empathy and concern; engage in reciprocal dialogue; are understanding; have patience; flexible and fair; are effective teachers; make learning engaging, fun, and interesting, use responsive teaching methods; persevere in difficult circumstances, overcome obstacles; are committed and do not give up; challenge students; exceed the expectations of their students; believe in their students; are willing to take a stand and defend what they believe in; and, work hard and persistently strive for a long- term impact while being tempted to give in to immediate pressures of short term gratification(Alder, 2002; Beck, 1995; Bondy & Davis, 2000; Bosworth, 1995; Carson, 1999; Ferreira&Bosworth, 2001; Goldstein&Lake, 2000; Halldorsdottir, 1990; Horsh, Chen,& Wagner, 2002; Huebner, 1996;Knobloch, 2002;Larrivee, 2000;McCray et. al., 2002, Noblit, Rodgers &McCadden, 1995, Noddings, 1992; Smith, 2000;Tronto,1993; Vogt, 2002; Weinstein, 1998;Zimmerman&Philips, 2000), cited in Knobloch, 2003, p. 5).

3. The Purpose of the Study

As the above literature review shows, there is a positive relationship between character education and academic performance, and the caring perspective of a teacher can facilitate this relationship. Being aware of the fact that the contents of character education programs have much to offer to nurture the affective needs of a language classroom including the teacher and the students, I incorporated some ideas of character education and global citizenship to my daily lesson plans. By doing this, I specifically aimed at raising my students’ awareness on the importance of acquiring some character traits such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, caring, respect, etc. and some themes of global citizenship such as unity, peace, and common ground among the peoples of the world (Helterbran, 2009). In this way, I tried to help my students “understand what is right and act on what is right” (Whiteley, 1988) not only for their being better language learners during the time they spend at YADIM but also for their being better human beings in the following years of their lives.

4. The Study

4.1 The Problems Experienced

- Students who come to YADIM are high school graduates who had spent their previous year by studying hard for the university entrance exam. For this reason, some of these students are mostly tired of studying, unwilling to learn, and are usually very difficult to motivate.
- During an academic year, English being the only lesson to be taught for 25 hours a week, some students tend to get bored very easily.
- Students may misbehave (chat with peers, use mobile phone, be late to the classes, stay unwilling, unmotivated and disoriented during the classroom activities).
- There are many students at YADIM who come from different parts of Turkey with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These students usually have difficulty in mingling with the other students in class because of their political, religious or cultural beliefs. Some of them may be prejudiced against the teacher's or the other students' ways of thinking, behaving or even clothing styles.
- Some students may have problems about setting goals, controlling their emotions and moods, making use of their social skills and doing collaborative work.
- Attendance is 80% compulsory at YADIM. So, students who don't attend regularly to the classes lose their right to take the final exam and its make up, which means –loss of one year-

4.2 The Context of Study

The students who attend the language programs at YADIM continue learning English for eight months. This eight months period is divided into four blocks in itself. Each block lasts for eight weeks and students learn 20 hours of English weekly. At the end of each block, students take an achievement test for that block and move on to the next level (Total Beginner-Pre-Intermediate-Intermediate-High Intermediate). At the end of the year, students take their final test and graduate from YADIM and go to their departments according to their fields of study.

4.3 My Students

A class of 25 students who were attending a language program at The Preparatory School of Languages (YADIM) at Çukurova University, Turkey participated in this study. There were two female and 23 male students. All of them were high school

graduates and 15 of these students had different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In terms of language competency they were Total Beginners. During one year, I was their language teacher for twelve hours a week.

4.4 My Background as a Teacher

My teaching experience, background and personality as a teacher contributed a lot to the conduct of this study. Being a teacher in the same institution for 15 years I was already familiar with the types of different students and the possible problems that I could encounter in my classes during an academic year. However, at YADIM, each year is a different page in the sense that we meet new students and their problems might change accordingly. Besides, my special training on emotional intelligence and character education helped me to become more aware of the needs of my students and thus try possible solutions. As a caring teacher by nature, I was always ready to assist my students whenever and wherever they needed guidance.

5. The Action Plan

Confronting the problems mentioned above, and seeing that similar problems might disrupt the dynamics of my classroom and interrupt the enthusiasm for continuity in my students' learning and my teaching, I developed an action plan. I believed, for better learning and teaching to take place, these issues were needed to be dealt with from the character perspective. For this reason, starting from the first day of school I infused the ideas of character education and global citizenship, firstly, into my teaching philosophy, then gradually into my lesson plans.

So, at the beginning, I started incorporating character components and the themes of global citizenship to my lesson plans in Turkish when I needed. As the students' level of English improved, I employed various activities in English as well. Especially, during the third and fourth blocks, students' level of English was good enough to follow the activities that would also help them increase their language proficiency.

Here is a list of ideas and activities of different effective character education programs I shared with my students while teaching English;

- I tried to communicate warmth and interpersonal sensitivity (had eye contact, listened respectfully, attended to my students' needs). Creating a positive classroom environment was my priority (Meyers, 2003).

- I organised different activities outside the school, such as going out for lunch or to the cinema. When they invited me to their football match, I went to support them.
- I always tried to be a good model and treated my students in the way I wanted them to be treated (Brannon, 2008).
- Whenever possible, I took advantage of teachable moments (...pointing out good examples of character when you see them.) (Brannon, 2008, p.63) and became a good mentor (Lickona,1997).
- I used discipline as an opportunity to teach about moral reasoning, (Lickona,1997). We had discussions on quotes and stories about different themes of character such as honesty, respect, responsibility, integrity, caring, perseverance, etc. and of global citizenship like peace, unity...
- I encouraged democracy in the classroom (Lickona,1997) and provided opportunities to talk about the emerging problems explicitly (Meyers, 2003).
- We worked mostly in pairs and groups while practicing English and students benefitted from learning cooperatively.
- I always encouraged my students to take pride in their work (Lickona,1997), praised their efforts and success.
- I always tried to raise their awareness about the contemporary problems of the world, shared newspaper headlines, suggested good films and books which may help them improve their knowledge, perspective, sensitivity, understanding for the good of humanity and asked their opinions.
- I encouraged my students to set future goals, seize the right moments, act accordingly and evaluate their alternatives.
- As it's also suggested by Wesley (Dec 1998/Jan 1999), I tried to see all my students as if they were my own children, and dealt with the emerging problems from the care perspective and communicated empathy especially when conflicts arouse.

5.1 The Procedure Followed

As their level of English improved, mainly in the third and fourth blocks of the academic year, my students were able to understand and respond in English to the character activities I employed in class. Of course I didn't expect much about their language accuracy and fluency at the beginning.

So, starting from the third block, each week, I assigned them a new character trait to think about. The students were already familiar with the ideas behind each character trait and the global citizenship themes since we had already thought and

talked about them in the first two blocks. This time, my primary aim was to help them improve their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills in learning English.

5.1.1 Reading Activities: These activities mainly consisted of stories (see Appendix 2). According to the virtue of the week, students were given a story either to be read in class or as an assignment to read and think about. These stories were fun to read and very useful for teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension. At the same time students learnt about different themes of character through these stories.

5.1.2 Writing Activities: After reading a story or having a discussion about a quote related to a character trait, I asked my students to write about what they understood from what they learnt in class (see Appendix 4). We also dealt with different activities which I collected from different web sites (see Appendix 3) and students wrote about the character trait as was required by the activity itself.

5.1.3 Listening Activities: I didn't use a specific listening task to teach about character to my students. However, I choose some feature films which I believed were good to teach about good character (like *The Pursuit of Happiness, 2006, Columbia Pictures, Remember the Titans, 2000, Walt Disney Pictures, etc.*). In this way, students had the chance to hear authentic language, improved their understanding of real life English. It was a motivating activity because students really enjoyed watching films.

5.1.4 Speaking Activities: Almost everthing we did in class about teaching character was integrated with speaking. The discussions we had about the quotes, the stories, the films were aimed to help students' improving their speaking skills.

6. Results

6.1 What Literature Says from the Teacher's Perspective

Brannon (2008, p.63) cites the feedbacks of some teachers who implemented Character Education in their classrooms on a consistent basis. Accordingly, these teachers report that, fitting Character Education into their daily plans has caused dramatic results.

- Students' learning and demonstration of positive behaviours improve,
- Their on task time and enjoyment of academics increase,
- They become more accepting and respectful towards one another,

- They learn to develop compassion and a sense of responsibility for their choices and actions,
- They feel empowered to make a positive impact on their class and in life.
- Character Education has been found to help create a calmer and more caring atmosphere that helps children focus on learning.

6.2 From my perspective

The ultimate aim of this study was raising my students' awareness on the importance of acquiring some character traits such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, caring, respect, etc. and some themes of global citizenship such as unity, peace, and common ground among the peoples of the world by infusing into the daily routine of the classroom in order to facilitate language learning and teaching. Since cognition and affect are inseparable in language learning, I had a lot of gains both related to the affective needs of my students and their language proficiency.

First of all, by working on character I had the chance to clear away some affective barriers that may hinder my students' language learning and my teaching process. This gain was two sided. Because, as I felt in my class, when my students were ready to learn affectively, their readiness for learning English also increased. This helped me a lot while I was teaching to them. There was understanding and caring among us. The more I cared for them the more they cared for me. So, they followed the lessons respectfully, and worked cooperatively during the pairwork and group work activities. In this respect, some of my feedback will be very similar to the teachers' feedback who fitted character education into their daily plans as was reported in Brannon's study (2008). Other results can be listed as the increase in my students' on task time and enjoyment of academics. Mainly, they became more controlled and more responsible for their actions, more respectful and accepting towards one another.

6.3 Students' Reflection on Character Education

Throughout the academic year, in the informal interviews, I asked upon my students' views considering the language learning experience during the program with specific reference to the character activities. They all mentioned positive outcomes of this program including the positive effects of the calm and caring atmosphere of our class to their learning, their increased motivation and confidence, enjoyment and not getting bored because of active participation and collaboration. Many of the students indicated that raising their awareness about different character virtues like respect, responsibility, caring, perseverance kept

them alert against the behaviors, beliefs, attitudes which may hinder their potential performance and success in their learning process. Additionally, the students also reported benefits of these activities in terms of improving their language proficiency. Improvement in reading, writing, listening and speaking skills and vocabulary enrichment were listed as the positive side-effects of the character education program.

7. Conclusion

The overall conclusion that can be drawn from the results of this study is that the contents of character education programs have much to offer to nurture the affective needs of a language classroom including the teacher and the students. Moreover, caring relations provide a good basis for character education (Noddings, 2005). Therefore, as Wesley (1999) suggests teachers should try to see all their students as if they are their own children, and deal with the emerging problems from the care perspective and communicate empathy especially when conflicts arise. Since, cognition and affect are inseparable in language learning, by conducting this study, I had a lot of gains both related to the affective needs of my students and their language proficiency. Thus, the main implication of this study is that the language teachers should consider the affective dimension of language learning and try to have place for the ideas of Character Education firstly in their philosophy of teaching, then in their daily teaching plans.

Appendix 1

SOME QUOTES I USED FOR DISCUSSIONS

We tell lies when we are afraid... afraid of what we don't know, afraid of what others will think, afraid of what will be found out about us. But every time we tell a lie, the thing that we fear grows stronger. ~Tad Williams

Respect your efforts, respect yourself. Self-respect leads to self-discipline. When you have both firmly under your belt, that's real power. ~Clint Eastwood

They cannot take away our self-respect if we do not give it to them. ~Mahatma Gandhi

If you want to be respected by others the great thing is to respect yourself. Only by that, only by self-respect will you compel others to respect you. ~Fyodor Dostoyevsky

The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You do not blame them on your mother, the ecology, or the president. You realize that you control your own destiny. ~Albert Ellis

We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future. ~George Bernard Shaw

Some defeats [are] more triumphant than victories. ~Montaigne, *Essays*, 1588

"Our country, right or wrong." When right to be kept right; when wrong to be put right. ~Carl Schurz

I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him. ~Abraham Lincoln

Heroism on command, senseless violence, and all the loathsome nonsense that goes by the name of patriotism - how passionately I hate them! ~Albert Einstein

To him in whom love dwells, the whole world is but one family. ~Buddha

I am not an Athenian or a Greek, I am a citizen of the world. ~Socrates

Taken from www.quotegarden.com

Appendix 2**STORIES TO TEACH ABOUT CHARACTER & GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP****The Color of Friendship**

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

Once upon a time the colors of the world started to quarrel.
All claimed that they were the best.
The most important.
The most useful.
The favorite.

Green said:

"Clearly I am the most important. I am the sign of life and of hope. I was chosen for grass, trees and leaves. Without me, all animals would die. Look over the countryside and you will see that I am in the majority."

Blue interrupted:

"You only think about the earth, but consider the sky and the sea. It is the water that is the basis of life and drawn up by the clouds from the deep sea. The sky gives space and peace and serenity. Without my peace, you would all be nothing."

Yellow chuckled:

"You are all so serious. I bring laughter, gaiety, and warmth into the world. The sun is yellow, the moon is yellow, the stars are yellow. Every time you look at a sunflower, the whole world starts to smile. Without me there would be no fun."

Orange started next to blow her trumpet:

"I am the color of health and strength. I may be scarce, but I am precious for I serve the needs of human life. I carry the most important vitamins. Think of carrots, pumpkins, oranges, mangoes, and papayas. I don't hang around all the time, but when I fill the sky at sunrise or sunset, my beauty is so striking that no one gives another thought to any of you."

Red could stand it no longer he shouted out:

"I am the ruler of all of you. I am blood - life's blood! I am the color of danger and of bravery. I am willing to fight for a cause. I bring fire into the blood. Without me, the earth would be as empty as the moon. I am the color of passion and of love, the red rose, the poinsettia and the poppy."

Purple rose up to his full height:

He was very tall and spoke with great pomp: "I am the color of royalty and power. Kings, chiefs, and bishops have always chosen me for I am the sign of authority and wisdom. People do not question me! They listen and obey."

Finally Indigo spoke, much more quietly than all the others, but with just as much determination: "Think of me. I am the color of silence. You hardly notice me, but without

me you all become superficial. I represent thought and reflection, twilight and deep water. You need me for balance and contrast, for prayer and inner peace."

And so the colors went on boasting, each convinced of his or her own superiority. Their quarreling became louder and louder. Suddenly there was a startling flash of bright lightening thunder rolled and boomed. Rain started to pour down relentlessly. The colors crouched down in fear, drawing close to one another for comfort.

In the midst of the clamor, rain began to speak:

"You foolish colors, fighting amongst yourselves, each trying to dominate the rest. Don't you know that you were each made for a special purpose, unique and different? Join hands with one another and come to me."

Doing as they were told, the colors united and joined hands.

The rain continued:

"From now on, when it rains, each of you will stretch across the sky in a great bow of color as a reminder that you can all live in peace. The Rainbow is a sign of hope for tomorrow." And so, whenever a good rain washes the world, and a Rainbow appears in the sky, let us remember to appreciate one another.

Don't Change the World

by: Author Unknown, The Prayer of the Frog

Once upon a time, there was a king who ruled a prosperous country. One day, he went for a trip to some distant areas of his country. When he was back to his palace, he complained that his feet were very painful, because it was the first time that he went for such a long trip, and the road that he went through was very rough and stony. He then ordered his people to cover every road of the entire country with leather. Definitely, this would need thousands of cows' skin, and would cost a huge amount of money. Then one of his wise servant dared himself to tell the king, "Why do you have to spend that unnecessary amount of money? Why don't you just cut a little piece of leather to cover your feet?" The king was surprised, but he later agreed to his suggestion, to make a "shoe" for himself. There is actually a valuable lesson of life in this story : to make this world a happy place to live, you better change yourself - your heart; and not the world.

The Fence

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, to hammer a nail in the back fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Then it gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The

father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say 'I'm sorry', the wound is still there."

The Ants and the Grasshopper

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

The Ants were spending a fine winter's day drying grain collected in the summertime. A Grasshopper, perishing with famine, passed by and earnestly begged for a little food. The Ants inquired of him, "Why did you not treasure up food during the summer?" He replied, "I had not leisure enough. I passed the days in singing." They then said in derision: "If you were foolish enough to sing all the summer, you must dance supperless to bed in the winter."

Rebellion Against the Stomach, The

by: Author Unknown, The Book of Virtues

Once a man had a dream in which his hands and feet and mouth and brain all began to rebel against his stomach.

"You good-for-nothing sluggard!" the hands said. "We work all day long, sawing and hammering and lifting and carrying. By evening we're covered with blisters and scratches, and our joints ache, and we're covered with dirt. And meanwhile you just sit there, hogging all the food."

"We agree!" cried the feet. "Think how sore we get, walking back and forth all day long. And you just stuff yourself full, you greedy pig, so that you're that much heavier to carry about."

"That's right!" whined the mouth. "Where do you think all that food you love comes from? I'm the one who has to chew it all up, and as soon as I'm finished you suck it all down for yourself. Do you call that fair?"

"And what about me?" called the brain. "Do you think it's easy being up here, having to think about where your next meal is going to come from? And yet I get nothing at all for my pains."

And one by one the parts of the body joined the complaint against the stomach, which didn't say anything at all.

"I have an idea," the brain finally announced. "Let's all rebel against the lazy belly, and stop working for it."

"Superb idea!" all the other members and organs agreed. "We'll teach you how important we are, you pig. Then maybe you'll do a little work of your own."

So they all stopped working. The hands refused to do lifting and carrying. The feet refused to walk. The mouth promised not to chew or swallow a single bite. And the brain swore it wouldn't come up with any more bright ideas. At first the stomach growled a bit, as it always did when it was hungry. But after a while it was quiet.

Then, to the dreaming man's surprise, he found he could not walk. He could not grasp anything in his hand. He could not even open his mouth. And he suddenly began to feel rather ill.

The dream seemed to go on for several days. As each day passed, the man felt worse and worse. "This rebellion had better not last much longer," he thought to himself, "or I'll starve."

Meanwhile, the hands and feet and mouth and brain just lay there, getting weaker and weaker. At first they roused themselves just enough to taunt the stomach every once in a while, but before long they didn't even have the energy for that.

Finally the man heard a faint voice coming from the direction of his feet.

"It could be that we were wrong," they were saying. "We suppose the stomach might have been working in his own way all along."

"I was just thinking the same thing," murmured the brain. "It's true that he's been getting all the food. But it seems he's been sending most of it right back to us."

"We might as well admit our error," the mouth said. "The stomach has just as much work to do as the hands and feet and brain and teeth."

"Then let's get back to work," they cried together. And at that the man woke up.

To his relief, he discovered his feet could walk again. His hands could grasp, his mouth could chew, and his brain could now think clearly. He began to feel much better.

"Well, there's a lesson for me," he thought as he filled his stomach at breakfast. "Either we all work together, or nothing works at all."

The Ass and the Mule

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

A Muleteer set forth on a journey, driving before him an Ass and a Mule, both well laden. The Ass, as long as he traveled along the plain, carried his load with ease, but when he began to ascend the steep path of the mountain, felt his load to be more than he could bear. He entreated his companion to relieve him of a small portion, that he might carry home the rest; but the Mule paid no attention to the request. The Ass shortly afterwards fell down dead under his burden. Not knowing what else to do in so wild a region, the Muleteer placed upon the Mule the load carried by the Ass in addition to his own, and at the top of all placed the hide of the Ass, after he had skinned him. The Mule, groaning beneath his heavy

burden, said to himself: "I am treated according to my deserts. If I had only been willing to assist the Ass a little in his need, I should not now be bearing, together with his burden, himself as well."

That's Not My Job

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

This's a story about four people: Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it but Nobody realised that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody have done.

24 Things To Always Remember

by: Bill Greer, Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul

Your presence is a present to the world.
You are unique and one of a kind.
Your life can be what you want it to be.
Take the days just one at a time.

Count your blessings, not your troubles.
You will make it through whatever comes along.
Within you are so many answers.
Understand, have courage, be strong.

Do not put limits on yourself.
So many dreams are waiting to be realized.
Decisions are too important to leave to chance.
Reach for your peak, your goal and you prize.

Nothing wastes more energy than worrying.
The longer one carries a problem the heavier it gets.
Do not take things too seriously.
Live a life of serenity, not a life of regrets.

Remember that a little love goes a long way.
Remember that a lot ... goes forever.
Remember that friendship is a wise investment.
Life's treasure are people together.

Realize that it is never too late.
Do ordinary things in an extraordinary way.
Have hearth and hope and happiness.
Take the time to wish upon a start.

And do not ever forget
For even a day
how very special you are !

A Scorpion Moment

by: Bill Greer, Chicken Soup for the Veteran's Soul

There was this Hindu who saw a scorpion floundering around in the water. He decided to save it by stretching out his finger, but the scorpion stung him. The man still tried to get the scorpion out of the water, but the scorpion stung him again.

A man nearby told him to stop saving the scorpion that kept stinging him.

But the Hindu said: "It is the nature of the scorpion to sting. It is my nature to love. Why should I give up my nature to love just because it is the nature of the scorpion to sting?"

Don't give up loving.
Don't give up your goodness.
Even if people around you sting.

Shake It Off and Step Up

by: Author Unknown, Source Unknown

A parable is told of a farmer who owned an old mule. The mule fell into the farmer's well. The farmer heard the mule 'braying' - or - whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened and enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back, a thought struck him. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back: **he should shake it off and step up!** This he did, blow after blow.

"Shake it off and step up... shake it off and step up... shake it off and step up!" he repeated to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows, or distressing the situation seemed the old mule fought "panic" and just kept right on **shaking it off and stepping up!**

You're right! It wasn't long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, **stepped triumphantly over the wall of that well!** What seemed like it would bury him, actually blessed him. All because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

These stories are all taken from the web site www.inspirationalstories.com

Appendix 3. A Sample Character Activity for Classroom Use

Are You a Respectful Person?

True	False	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I treat other people the way I want to be treated.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am considerate of other people.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I treat people with civility, courtesy, and dignity.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I accept personal differences.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I work to solve problems without violence.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I never intentionally ridicule, embarrass, or hurt others.

I think I am/am not a respectful person because: _____

(Take this self-evaluation and decide for yourself.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Agree or disagree: Courtesy and politeness are a lot of nonsense.
2. What can you do to make this a more respectful world?
3. Do you think that people in our society are respectful enough of each other? Why?
4. Do you consider yourself to be a respectful person? Why, or why not? In what ways do you show respect to others?
5. What does respect have to do with the quality of your character?
6. What are the benefits of people treating each other with respect?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Watch a sitcom on television, and then write about how the actions of the characters demonstrated either respectful or disrespectful behavior.
2. Write about a time when you were disrespectful to someone. Why did it happen? Was it the right thing to do? What were the consequences? How did it make the other person feel? What did you learn from the experience?

3. Describe three things you could do to be a more respectful person. How would that affect your relationships with others? How does it benefit you to be a respectful person?

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CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

UNDERSTANDING THE VIRTUE SHEET

VIRTUE:

1. MY DEFINITION OF THIS VIRTUE

.....

2. HOW DO I SEE THIS VIRTUE IN OTHER PEOPLE?

.....

3. MY DESCRIPTION OF THE PEOPLE WHO LACK THIS VIRTUE

.....

4. THIS VIRTUE IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE

.....

5. A TIME WHEN I DISPLAYED THIS VIRTUE

.....

6. I WISH I DISPLAYED THIS VIRTUE WHEN

.....

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Summary

A VISIT TO CHARACTER EDUCATION IN A LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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The importance of a better educated youth in the coming decades can not be ignored. This is mainly because in line with the scientific and technological developments going on in the world, different societal and moral problems continue arising. Thanks to recognition of this fact, the importance of social and emotional learning and character education has started to be emphasized as much as academic learning in education. "Findings point to new advances in understanding the human brain not as a purely cognitive information processing system, but as a system in which affective functions and cognitive ones are inextricably integrated with one another" (Picard et al. , 2004, p.253). Language education has its share in this matter because emotions accompany all cognitive processes including teaching and learning (Fogarty, 1998; Hargreaves, 2000). So, language teachers should be well equipped with these valuable ideas to better serve their students. This study is a try to achieve this goal. It is an 8 months story of a language class at YADIM, the Preparatory School of English at Çukurova University, located in Adana,Turkey during 2008-2009 academic year. For the purpose of this study, some core virtues of character development such as honesty, responsibility, respect, understanding, caring, citizenship, etc. were infused into the daily routine of the classroom in order to facilitate language learning and teaching. These ideas were mostly shared through students` mother tongue in the first four months, but later on as their level of English improved, the students were involved in different reading, writing tasks and discussions in English. This helped them not only understand and apply these virtues in their daily lives as students but learn and practice more English as well.