A teacher’s moral role in mobilizing students’ motivation beyond L2 vision

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Language teachers are expected to play multiple roles: giving advice on language learning, facilitating intercultural awareness, understanding the aspirations of learners to provide better guidance, being linguistic and educational role models etc. In order to do so, it is important to understand a student as a whole person: that is, to “take a holistic view of the learner, in order to gain an insight into a learner’s self-beliefs in other domains which the learner perceives as connected” (Mercer, 2011, p. 168).

This paper concerns an intervention English course which was designed as part of a study with the aim to understand the impact of incorporating cultural elements in English language teaching for enhancing Japanese college students’ L2 vision as intercultural communicators. Data was collected during and after the course and it included: 1) written narratives (some with photos), 2) Semi-structured interviews, 3) Field notes & audio- and video-recordings of the classes, and 4) course evaluation by the students. The results show that this course was effective for the above mentioned study aim, and instigated some students’ desire to find a larger vision than that of L2.

The purpose of this paper is to shed further light on these results by focusing on one female student participant Aya. I will explain how her past language learning experience affected her engagement in my course, how she gradually came to aspire for a larger vision beyond her L2 self, and how the teacher facilitated her coming to terms with her visions.

This project has yielded powerful empirical evidence attesting to the need to view the role of language teacher as a “moral agent” (Kubanyiova & Crookes, 2016), which, in turn, confirms as well as extends a well-established notion of L2 self as a motivating force in supporting language learners’ engagement in L2 use.

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