Embedding Empathy in Language Education: A Pathway to Global Citizenship

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Increasing globalization has urged educators to introduce empathy in language learning. Language acquisition is similar to an individual's experiences in the real world, especially as they interact and engage with people from their environment.

Educators respond to diverse students' social and academic needs by teaching them to understand, respect, and appreciate differences and similarities. Thus, embedding empathy in education, especially when teaching languages, has become a necessity. The principle of empathy is acknowledged in different fields, including healthcare. Yet, though Okayama University in Japan adopted empathy in studying, it is important to expand the notion to other field. Hence, the concept of solution design manifests in business field where empathy is used as a design in strategic planning to enable a company to achieve a competitive advantage in the market. In education, empathy is embedded in language learning through interaction and functional views. Therefore, prioritizing empathy in language education is important because it nurtures critical thinking and tolerance, as well as motivates learners who engage with the global community.

Understanding Language Education

There are different categories of language education in schools, especially in higher education. Empathy can be applied in language learning, considering structural, functional, and interactive views, as summarized in Table 1. It highlights how the functional, interactive, and structural views of language learning differ regarding focus, activities, and teaching approaches. Moreover, it provides a unique insight into how universities can embody empathy in language learning, taking different views while teaching students. For instance, when taking a structural view, a teacher can recognize that some students are struggling with grammar, which is why introducing interactive games that significantly develop empathy and empathetic behaviors becomes necessary (Doe & Smith, 2014). In terms of functional views, language is taught as a way of communication and expression to give learners diverse experiences and achieve their communication needs. Thus, a functional linguistic system can be established with the view that language is a dynamic system that can shape the language used by people within the social context (Xie & Tu, 2023). The other approach is the interactive view, whereby language is taught to create or promote social relations by focusing on negotiation and interaction during conversational exchange. At the same time, when taking the interactive view of language learning, empathy promoted through collaborative activities becomes central for the students to understand other people's perspectives. Therefore, when applied effectively to enhance language learning, empathy can promote student engagement and motivation, make them tolerant, and foster meaningful communication.

Aspect	Functional View	Interactive View	Structural View
Focus	Communication and expression of meaning	Social interaction and negotiation of meaning	Grammar rules and linguistic structures
Activities	Role-plays, problem-solving tasks, simulations	Group work, debates, discussions	Grammar drills, linguistic analysis, exercises
Teaching approach	Emphasizes language use	Promotes collaborative learning and interaction	Provides explicit instruction and practice of grammar rules

Table 1: Functional, interactive, and structural views of language learning

The Use of Empathy in Different Fields to Promote Language Learning Health and Science Education

Educators can foster critical thinking and adaptability among their health and science students by incorporating simulated play, which can also promote empathy and language learning structurally and functionally. Simulated patient is a complex but realistic scenario requiring healthcare students to think critically regarding the patients' needs, emotions, and conditions. The teacher can decide to present science students with a story that emphasizes important grammatical instructions with empathy to increase understanding. The story can be told in the context of a simulated patient to provide the students with a better idea and picture of the issue, hence easily promoting learning.

A study by Kagawa et al. (2023) recognizes that patient storytelling has attracted empathy education among Japanese health students because it promotes understanding of patient's experiences, perspectives, and feelings. According to cognitive development theory, empathy is a cognitive ability that involves perspective-taking (Kagawa et al., 2023). In a patient care situation or a simulated patient scenario, cognitive attributions become important because students need to understand the patient's inner experiences and stand a chance to communicate with them and understand them. The cognitive principle implies that language subconsciously proceeds with the students paying attention to controlling their learning process through seeking clarifications or asking questions about words they did not understand during the learning process. Therefore, simulated science patients present real-life scenarios that facilitate cognitive attributions and tolerance among learners.
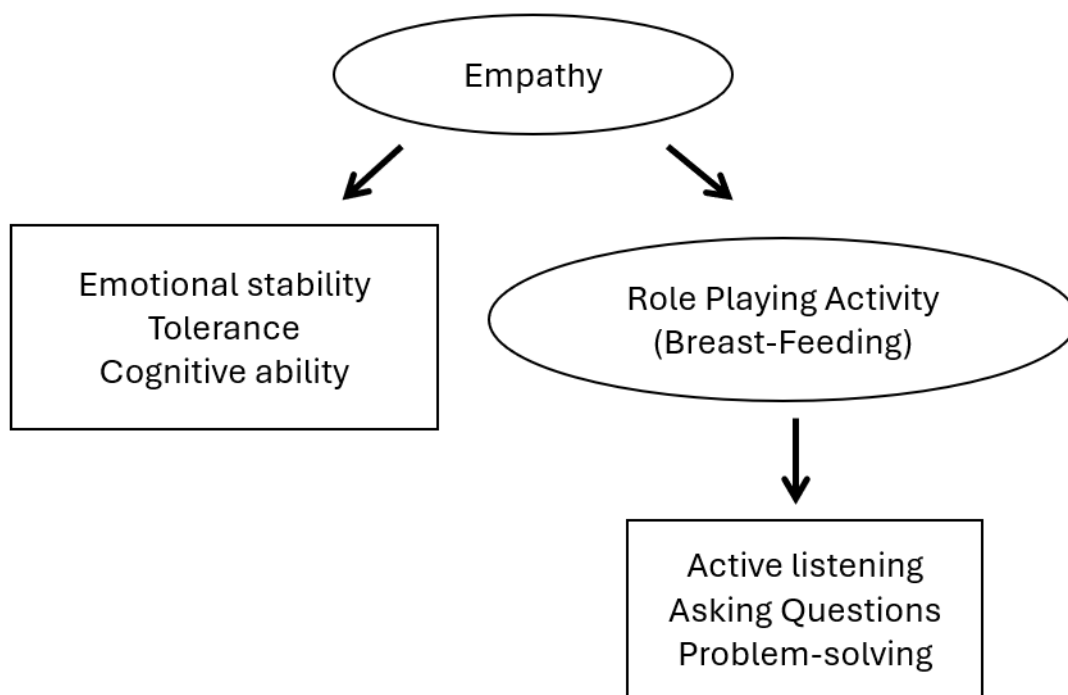

Figure 1: Empathy fosters tolerance when applied in language education in institutions.

Note. The right side of the chart shows that, when empathy is embedded in language learning in healthcare institutions, students develop emotional stability, tolerance, and the ability to think (cognitive skill). A role-play activity, such as breastfeeding, promotes functional language learning, hence encouraging tolerance as students actively listen, ask questions, and learn to solve problems.

Business Education

The solution design concept in empathy, specifically in the business context, should emphasize the importance of human experiences and perspectives. The solution design uses empathy to achieve a final goal during training (Baaki et al., 2023). Empathy fosters better relationships among business students with clients, colleagues, and partners. In business institutions, language curriculum should include modules that focus on empathy to build students' skills in business. The teachers can integrate case studies or real-life scenarios through which students can connect and learn the essence of customer service interactions and negotiations empathetically. On the other hand, the fundamental motivation of the learners is to learn foreign culture, such as humor, which would broaden their life experiences and worldviews in the future. Zhai & Wibowo (2022) have proposed the introduction of AI chatbots in the classroom, which integrated empathetic dimensions to enhance business satisfaction and better outcomes in tasks. The chatbot can emotionally convey human-like applications, enhancing better learning in commerce and retail. In this case, the chatbot is meant to promote functional dynamics of language learning by presenting a social context in a business world as shown in Figure 2. The diagram shows that chatbot activity provides real-life experience to students. The chatbot operates through voice-based interaction with business students. Moreover, it can generate texts to improve language learning by interpreting the language from role-playing clients from different cultures. Students can learn while being motivated to interact and learn negotiation skills. The machine can simulate human-like conversations providing the

students with personalized support and assistance with their learning (Zhai & Wibowo, 2022). The chatbot can be equipped with natural language processing capabilities to make it possible to respond to learners' queries and concerns. For instance, AI chatbots can provide learners with interactive business skills and scenarios, enabling them to gain better insight and skills that they can apply in their future careers in retail and commerce. The students can use AI chatbots to practice customer service, sales negotiations, and problem-solving.
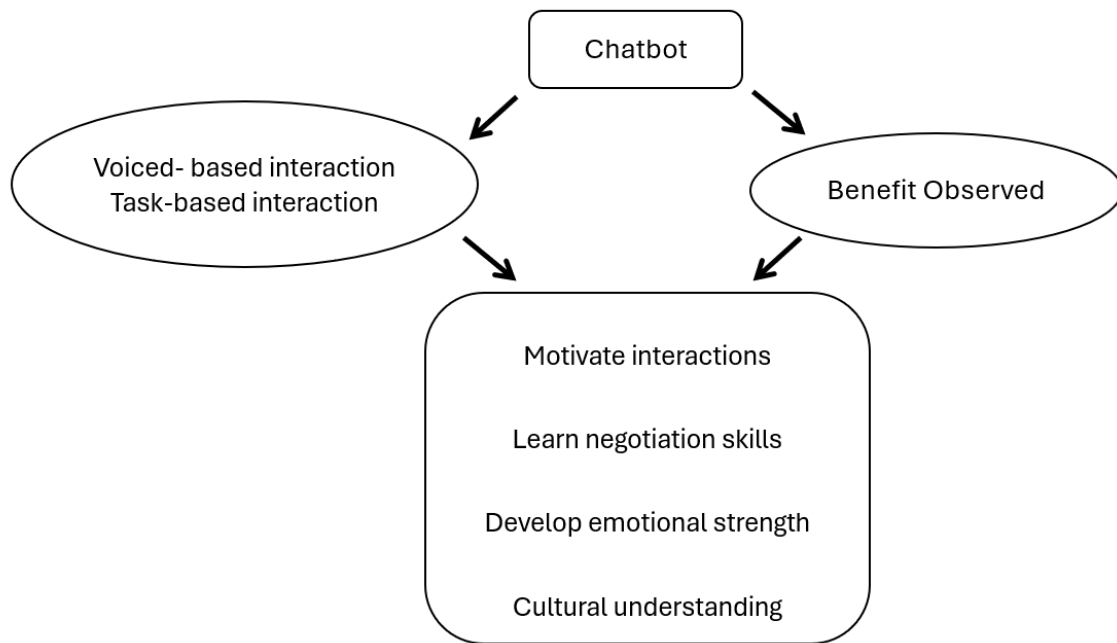

Figure 2: Chatbot activity provides real-life experience for the students.

Social Work

Embedding empathy into language learning in social work should help university students develop essential skills to effectively communicate and connect with clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. According to Hall & Valdiviezo (2019), promoting language competence in social work education is not limited to speaking only but also monolingual activity, whereby the students are expected to

learn how to operate in third place between their linguistic frame and that of the client. The goal is to make them culturally responsive and empathetic while offering social work services. Zhang (2022) argues that language teachers should not only teach students language proficiency but also develop an approach or method designed to assess the learner's ability to use numerous instructions to have different perspectives about life. Role-playing exercises whereby the students play the roles of social workers and clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds should be introduced in the classroom as shown in Figure 3. It shows the effectiveness of motivation through role-playing games. Language learning happens during interactive games, which involve better dialogue, feelings of inclusivity as a result of engaging with different people, and positive attitudes and emotions. As a result, social work students become motivated to communicate with diverse clients in the future without worries about how to engage them. Moreover, the interactive activity enables them to control their emotions while serving clients from other cultures.

The teacher's goal is to motivate students and make them courageous so that they can effectively communicate with clients in real life while doing social work. At the same time, cultural and linguistic competence training can be initiated as part of the social work education program. The program will allow students to understand different languages and cultures, including cultural values, non-verbal communication, and cues. A cross-cultural communication workshop, which focuses on cross-cultural communication, can enable social work students to learn how to actively listen, empathize with clients from different backgrounds, and communicate effectively in different languages.
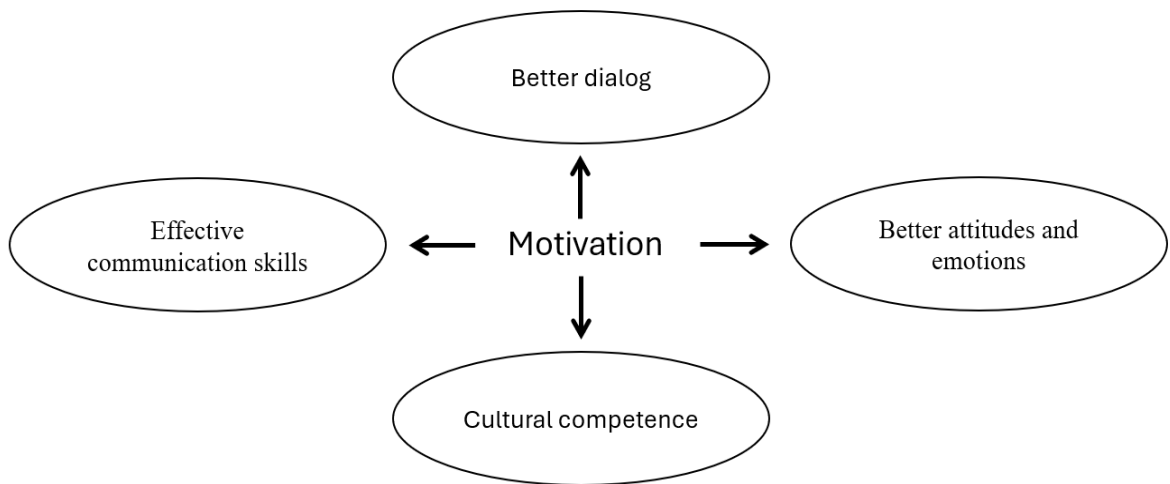
Figure 3: The effectiveness of motivation through role-playing games

Environmental Science

Universities need to embed empathy in language learning within the context of environmental science to foster the learners' understanding of environmental issues while promoting effective communication and collaboration across linguistic boundaries. The teacher can encourage the environmental science learners to develop awareness of different languages, which they can use to connect with other environmentalist across the globe. Understanding cultural perspectives can enhance their empathy to appreciate diverse viewpoints and approaches toward the environment. The teacher can introduce collaborative projects where the students are encouraged to work with other students from different schools to explore environmental topics through the lens of culture and language (Panula et al., 2022). The project is meant to promote mutual understanding and respect among students from diverse backgrounds, which is the first step toward preparing them on how to consider different viewpoints. A narrative-based approach can be encouraged to allow students to share their personal stories and experiences with environmental issues in their native languages, which can be translated by students who

understand the language. The process is captured in Figure 4, which summarizes language development when empathy is applied. Empathy is promoted in such a learning environment as it highlights human dimensions of environmental challenges.
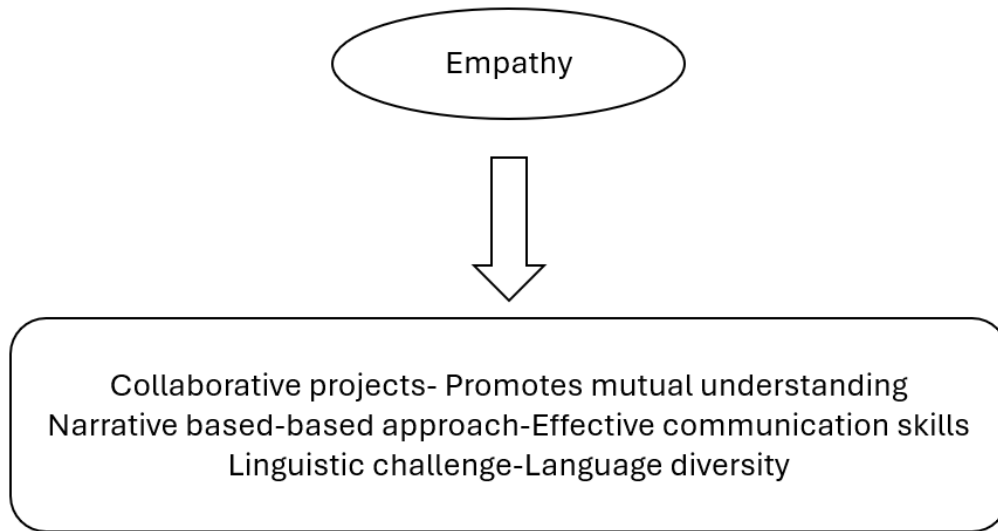

Figure 4: Language development when empathy is applied in environment science class

Note. Through collaborative projects, environmental student learners have a mutual understanding of the subject, while the narrative approach promotes effective communication, and linguistic challenge enables them to have diverse ideas about language use.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is the role of educators to prioritize empathy in language education because it can nurture tolerance, motivation, and critical thinking, which are important skills for learners to engage in the global community. Among health students in Japan, empathy can be promoted in language education by teachers taking functional and

interactive views of learning. Simulated patient is another way in which empathy can be promoted among science students since it encourages critical thinking and adaptability, which are necessary skills among professionals. On the other hand, in business, solution design using chatbot can motivate students to learn how to become empathetic in business, convey emotional strength, and practice negotiation skills. In social work, language learners develop better dialogue techniques, become culturally competent, and have better communication skills from role-playing activities, which is an interactive way of learning language. In environmental science, empathy when properly embedded in language learning, can promote cultural competence and the global perspective necessary to address complex environmental challenges.

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