Making Connections between English Class and the Rest of Life
Social Foundations of Education for ESL/EFL

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Table of Contents

Abstract

For everyone who learns a second or foreign language, the outcomes of the activity go far beyond the language classroom. Some learners are interested in the language itself; others see language as a tool they can use to achieve some other goal. For instance, immigrants may be working toward success in jobs and community involvement. In a higher education setting, students may place highest priority on their degree programs. Most learners probably have some combination of language and content goals.

It is useful for second and foreign language teachers to consider the broader contexts in which learners will apply their skills. Basic social science models can help. In this paper, philosophical, economic, social, and political models are described. We will then consider the possibility that the interactions of social, economic, and political institutions shape the school systems within which teachers and learners work. They also shape the choices families make about the amount and kind of schooling they want. This paper concludes by looking at examples of textbooks to see how they reflect basic social science models. The goal is to help teachers think about connections between classroom activities and the lives of learners outside class.

For everyone who learns a second or foreign language, the outcomes of the activity go far beyond the language classroom. Some learners are interested in the language itself; others see language as a tool they can use to achieve some other goal. For example, many immigrant learners wish to improve their English proficiency to the point where they can get a job; then they disappear from English class. Some learners have specific long-range goals; they come to English class hoping to get not only language proficiency, but also other information that will help them achieve work or personal goals. In a university setting, some learners are more committed to pursuing their academic majors than learning English. They may choose to put forth as much effort in English class as it takes to get the background needed for success in major course work. Most learners probably have some combination of language and content goals.

For these reasons, it is useful for teachers to consider some basic social science models that underlie education. Such understanding may help teachers place goals for the classroom into the broader context of learners' lives and communities. Placing language learning into the context of more general social learning (including learning at all levels: higher education, K-12 schooling, and adult basic education) may help language teachers collaborate with colleagues from a variety of professional backgrounds and participate in policy decisions. It can help them think critically about what teaching the English language means for their students at these different educational levels. It can help teachers connect with students who come to the classroom from a variety of circumstances, most of which the individual teacher knows little about. Ideas from philosophy, economics, sociology, and political science can help teachers consider the purposes of language learning beyond achieving high scores on a proficiency test.

The following pages offer descriptions of models from economics, sociology, political science, and the philosophy of education. A dialectical model from comparative education can

serve as a tool for reflecting on how different approaches converge on education as an institution. The model suggests that politics, economics, and society all interact with each other, and with educational institutions, to create the education systems we have. For teachers and learners, these are the forces that have created the schools in which we work every day. Each model is supplemented with examples from the ESL/EFL literature, showing how scholars have applied basic social science ideas to the English classroom.

Finally, teachers of English as a second language, whether they work for universities, private language schools, or adult basic education programs, are part of the larger social institution that is education. Textbooks reflect the goals we have, beyond language learning. We will consider a textbook designed for adult immigrants and some strategies for teaching them, and also consider a textbook used in English classes in higher education settings. These textbooks are chosen as examples, to demonstrate how they reflect the social concerns at work in the classroom.

Needs Beyond the Curriculum

The fact that learner concerns go beyond the language classroom is observable in adult education centers in St. Paul. For example the Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning, an adult basic education center for the St. Paul Public Schools, offers its learners a variety of support services. Certainly there are English classes for recent immigrants, but there is also access to job counseling, mental health services, and advice on how to connect with other health and social services. In the classroom, English teachers integrate general life goals (work, health, family, etc.) with the language required to achieve them. At the Hubbs Center, English classes have multiple purposes that derive from the social worlds of the students.

There are also administrative goals that are only indirectly connected with the goal of improving English language proficiency. The Hubbs Center is accountable to school district, state, and federal authorities. To gain funding, the Hubbs Center English language program provides attendance data and reports student progress as measured by the CASAS test. The Hubbs Center, therefore, has multiple goals: keep students in class and see that they make progress as measured on the CASAS test to meet administrative requirements, as well as respond to out-of-class needs of learners and teach English to help students meet their goals. An English teacher at Hubbs expects to teach not just language, but also life skills. Textbooks combine life skills content with grammar and strategies for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Likewise, international students who come to English class at a college or university rely on their teachers for many kinds of support. They want to improve their proficiency in the four basic communication skills; they may have to take standard tests to demonstrate their eligibility to take regular university courses, enter a degree program, get or maintain a scholarship, or obtain a student job. Beyond these narrow goals, students also seek advice from their teachers for a variety of concerns; for example, how to handle a difficult situation with a professor, where to get help on a question of immigration law, or simply how to make friends. American classroom culture may seem a bit mysterious to students who come from very teacher-centered academic traditions. Teachers want to help students get the most benefit possible from a sojourn abroad in all its dimensions.

Philosophy, Economics, Sociology, and Political Science

Four social science theorists represent different ways of thinking about the broader social purposes of education. I see each theory as building on the previous ones, adding something to

how people approach the social processes and social purposes of learning. Models from the philosophy of education (Dewey, 1916), human capital economics (Becker, 1975), social capital sociology (Coleman, 1988), and political empowerment (Freire 1968/1970) illustrate four approaches to social science. Below I describe each theory in brief, then go on to consider each one in depth. Next I describe models in which social, economic, and political institutions interact to shape the school systems in which teachers and learners work (Fägerlind & Saha, 1989; Gambetta, 1987).

Philosophy of Education

Dewey (1916) writes of true education as a social process. People affect each other through their interactions. To promote learning in the classroom, he proposed projects, activities, and original research, even for young children. People of all ages learn by working together. Dewey writes that people learn through the process of communicating. In the process of sharing experiences with others, people modify previously-held ideas and build new ones.

> . . . Giving and taking of orders modifies action and results, but does not of itself effect a sharing of purposes, a communication of interests.
>
> Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected. Try the experience of communicating, with fullness and accuracy, some experience to another, especially if somewhat complicated, and you will find your own attitude toward

> your experience changing; otherwise you resort to expletives and ejaculations. (p. 5).

Dewey advocates learning from the social environment. He does not, however, suggest that learners should move around in the wider social environment at random. A school offers a "simplified environment," that establishes progressively ordered experiences. Early, simple experiences provide the basis for attempting more challenging, more complicated, tasks later.

In Dewey's view, educators should certainly transmit to students the best of society's past achievements, but only with the goal of teaching students to use past knowledge to build a better future. Dewey goes on to comment that it is the job of educators to help learners have experiences that go beyond the limitations of the social group into which they were born (p. 20). The school must help learners negotiate influences from the various communities in which they live, from which they get conflicting messages.

> The school has the function also of coordinating within the disposition of each individual the diverse influences of the various social environments into which he enters. One code prevails in the family; another, on the street; a third, in the workshop or store; and fourth, in the religious association. As a person passes from one of t he environments to another, he is subjected to antagonistic pulls, and is in danger of being split into a being having different standards of judgment and emotion for different occasions. This danger imposes upon the school a steadying and integrating office (p. 22).

Dewey admits that individuals are at times selfish, and want their own way regardless of the needs of others, but he feels they are even more interested in participating in joint activities (p. 24)—in collaborative work with others. For Dewey, education should involve negotiation and

consensus. Control without understanding may bring the desired behavior in the short term, but throw future behavior out of balance (p. 26). In the end, behavior is guided by an understanding of how an individual's behavior interacts with the behavior of others. Behavior is a shared experience, not only an individual one. The outcome of schooling should be a desire for continued growth (p. 53).

The idea of learning from the social environment was not new. For precedent, Dewey pointed to the Greeks and to Enlightenment philosopher, Jean-Jaques Rousseau. Dewey agreed with Rousseau that learning must be a natural process, not something forced or grafted onto an individual. Dewey adds the idea that learning takes place within a social environment. In Rousseau's *Emile* (first published in 1762) the boy and the tutor are isolated from society until the boy is mature enough to comprehend social behavior. Then the tutor reveals the social world to the boy, Emile. For Dewey, the social environment is entirely natural and must not be excluded from the earliest stages of learning. It is this learning from community that makes education a democratic process.

Writers on teaching English as a second or foreign language refer to Dewey in discussions of experiential teaching strategies. For example, in her chapter on experiential and negotiated language learning, Janet Eyring (in Celce-Murcia, ed, 2001) mentions Dewey's project method, in which people learn by working together to investigate some question of importance to them. Barbara Hawkins (in Celce-Murcia, ed., 2001) describes beginning a lesson with what the learners already know, with their experience. Collaborating with classmates, learners analyze and evaluate their experiences.

Although Lightbrown and Spada (2006) do not refer specifically to Dewey, their description of communicative instructional settings is consistent with Dewey's emphasis on

learning collaboratively through experience. Learners use authentic materials, some of which may have been modified for language learners. The emphasis is on communication for meaning, even if that means accuracy is not perfect. In collaboration with each other, learners have many more opportunities to use language than they would have in a more teacher-centered situation.

Human Capital

In economics, material capital includes buildings, machinery, roads, and similar tangible things that are needed to produce goods. Returns to investment in material capital can be calculated. Investments can be amortized over the time the material capital is used. Gary Becker (1975) proposes that economists can also calculate the returns to education, investment in people. Individuals and organizations make rational decisions about how much to invest in schooling. Indeed, economists, individuals, families, and organizations all may compare investment in schooling to investment in physical capital. For example, a family may discuss the options of sending a child to an expensive college or helping the child make a down payment on a house. Both are reasonable possible choices. Each option will yield long-term economic returns.

Becker argues that education should be viewed, not as a cost to society, but as an investment in the quality of human resources. Physical capital is owned by someone; owners can amortize their investments over the length of time they use the building or machine to make economically rational decisions about investments. Becker proposed parallel ways of calculating how much training and education, and what kind, will yield enough returns to justify the investment in human capital.

Becker points out that general skills in human capital are portable. A firm that invests in basic literacy for employees may not get the returns on that investment; employees can take their

improved literacy skills to a new job at another company, where that company and the individual will see the returns, instead of the company that made the investment. For this reason, Becker says a rational firm will not offer general on-the-job training if it has to pay the costs. Rather, the firm will make individual employees pay the costs through below-market wages.

Specific training in its pure form is learning that is useful only in a specific job or firm. It is not transferable. Becker concedes that much on-the-job training is not purely specific; it is mixed general and specific. In its mixed form (which includes both specific and general skills) on-the job training benefits the employee's firm more than it could benefit any other firm. Employee orientation is an example of specific training. Knowledge of specific procedures for a specific job in a specific organization is not worth much to another organization. Still, a certain amount of specific training is necessary and paid for by the employer.

Although Becker does not mention language, I think ESL/EFL instruction is consistent with Becker's description of general training. Language proficiency is easily portable from one employer to another. Therefore, rational employers are not likely to pay the full cost of English instruction. As a recruitment and retention device, however, an employer might offer general education benefits (including English classes). Although not related specifically to teaching strategies, awareness of the concepts of general and specific training can help English teachers understand the rationale behind who pays for English instruction, what outcomes are expected, and who participates in the classes.

Becker concedes that it is difficult to account for all of the variables that affect human capital: psychic vs. economic return, the value of opportunity costs (income people forego while they are studying), and different rates of return by gender and race. Still, the effort to account for the economic value of education is an important part of decision-making for individuals,

families, firms, and governments. Although it is difficult to quantify everything, the main idea is that decisions about training and education are largely rational economic decisions and can be quantified.

Two of Becker's colleagues used human capital models to calculate the returns to a college education (Murphy & Welch, 1989). They found that returns on the investment in college education were high through the 1960s, then dropped in the mid-1970s as the supply of new baby-boomer college graduates exceeded demand. In the 1980s, the number of college graduates shrank and the economic returns to college education rose again as growth shifted into more education-intensive industries. Government policy was to make grants and subsidized loans available to individual students. From a human capital point of view, the idea was to loosen the restrictions on available money so students could make rational decisions about investment in higher education. While the United States has made the decision to have individuals pay the cost of college, with help primarily for individual students rather than institutions or systems, other countries have chosen to make higher education more of a social (government) investment in the human capital of the entire nation.

Language proficiency can be viewed as a form of human capital. While economic models do not adequately account for language as a communication tool or cultural identifier, such models do track the participation of immigrants in the labor force. Espenshade and Fu (1997) suggest four conclusions about the role of education in increasing the human capital of immigrants, including their language proficiency: (1) Education received in the home country yields increasing returns, but education received in the United States offers diminishing returns. (2) Despite the diminishing returns, a year of education in the U.S. does have a larger impact on English proficiency than a year of education received in the home country. (3) The family is a

complicated set of incentives and disincentives. It is not simply marital status, but also household size and the individual immigrant's relationship to the head of household that affect English proficiency. (4) Commitment to staying in the U.S., represented by such indicators as the presence of family in the U.S., home ownership, and U.S. citizenship, is associated with higher English proficiency. English proficiency for immigrants is the outcome of many layers of experience, some of which can be evaluated with human capital approaches. For a fuller understanding, however, cross-disciplinary strategies are necessary.

Human capital approaches are used in setting education policy. For example, Levin and Belfield (2007) begin their report on investment in K-12 education in Minnesota by estimating the economic value of a high school diploma, comparing it to a certificate of deposit. They say the individual high school graduate is likely to earn an extra $475,900 more than a dropout over the course of a lifetime. The State of Minnesota gains $1,059,500 in social benefits that increase human capital, including reduced crime, lower public health costs, and faster economic growth. English language proficiency is not separated out; it is folded into more general life skills.

Levin and Belfield estimate the returns on investment in specific K-12 programs. The top three programs (First Things First, Talent Development, and Check and Connect) emphasize connecting learners with their schools through small learning communities, mentoring, close tracking of progress, and rigorous curricula. One program emphasized increased salaries for teachers (resulting, presumably, in more capable teachers); it ranked fourth of the eight programs evaluated. Clearly, human capital approaches are one way of evaluating educational programs. Although Levin and Belfield do not comment specifically on English language programs, it would seem that English proficiency is an important part of the human capital that leads to successful graduation from high school.

Human capital discussions come up on a daily basis in the ESL classroom. Adult learners must decide how much priority to give English class when other worthwhile opportunities (a job or saving money on child care by staying home) are available. In an ABE setting, teachers must respect the other responsibilities learners have. For example, at the Hubbs Center, teachers take attendance, ideally noting the times of late arrivals and early departures. Teachers work around irregular attendance, expressing friendly concern, but accepting whatever response the learner gives. Since there is no academic credit and no grades, teachers have no leverage with regard to attendance. These practices are meant as realistic concessions to the complicated lives of adult learners. The practices are also respectful of the opportunity costs learners incur by passing up other activities to attend class.

Teachers work around irregular attendance in a variety of ways. They work hard to plan lessons that allow early arrivals to get to work, later arrivals joining in. Recycling topics, introducing them and reviewing them over several days, is another strategy for exposing all learners to all of the topics. Learners whose attendance is irregular will most likely not master the material as well as those who come to class every day, but at least they are aware of the topics and can make adult decisions about attendance.

Because they are among the life skills assessed by the CASAS test, work, health, consumer issues, and community involvement are all part of the ESL curriculum in ABE programs. They are also of immediate interest to learners. Many learners are good human capital economists. For example, when we were talking in my class at the Hubbs Center about employee benefits, (one of which is family leave), a few of the students wondered why an employer would pay for that, beyond very limited sick and personal emergency days. In America, they argued, nobody gets paid if they do not work. I offered Becker's argument, that training an employee

costs something but improves the human capital for the company's benefit. Employers who offer generous family leave policies are probably trying to achieve good retention rates.

Social Capital

To the idea of human resources as capital, James S. Coleman (1988) adds the element of social relationships as capital. He proposes that relationships are a resource that has value. He does not try to assign an economic value to social relationships, only points out how they work. As an example, he mentions a public school district in the United States where school authorities were puzzled to discover that some Asian immigrant families purchased two copies of each textbook the child needed. One copy was for the child, the other for the mother to study so she could help the child do well in school. Coleman writes:

> . . . It is, of course, true that children are strongly affected by the human capital possessed by their parents. But this human capital may be irrelevant to outcomes for children if parents are not an important part of their children's lives, if their human capital is employed exclusively at work or elsewhere outside the home. The social capital of the family is the relations between children and parents (and, when families include other members, relationships with them as well). That is, if the human capital possessed by parents is not complemented by social capital embodied in family relations, it is irrelevant to the child's educational growth that the parent has a great deal, or a small amount, of human capital.

Social capital can include relationships with people outside the family as well, especially in a close-knit community. Coleman suggests the notion of "closure," multiple interlocking relationships. Not only do the children in a closely interrelated community know each other, but their parents also know each other and all of the children. The main idea of social capital is that

human capital most benefits the next generation if parents pass it on to their children and the community reinforces it as well.

Coleman conducted a study (1987) that compared Catholic learners in a Catholic school with Catholic learners in public schools. He found that Catholic learners in Catholic schools were less likely to drop out of high school than Catholic learners in public schools (3.4 percent vs. 14.4 percent). Catholic learners in non-Catholic private schools fell in between (11.9 percent). He argued that this was because of social capital: Catholic learners seem to benefit from membership in their church community.

Physical capital is a private good in that somebody owns it, and by the same token, human capital, according to Coleman, is also largely a private good. People invest resources in their own educations to get higher incomes, more satisfying work, or higher status careers for themselves as individuals. Social capital—the web of social relationships that provides benefits to individuals—is different in that it is partly a public good. For example, volunteers do valuable work that benefits not only their own families, but others in the community as well. People acquire social capital through their social networks. People do favors for each other to the benefit of both partners. This is not an exchange of money, nor is it the same as altruism. All parties benefit, in different non-monetary ways. It is a kind of reciprocity.

Bonny Norton Peirce (1995) applies the notion of social capital to the experience of immigrants learning English. She writes of the interdependency of social identity, investment, and language learning. It seems to me she is referring to investment in social capital. She writes of English language learners who feel socially excluded in the workplace because they do not understand the cultural references their native-born colleagues make. For some, this exclusion is

painful. Such workers can choose to either invest in overcoming the social obstacles or leave the workplace.

Peirce relates social identity to power. In the workplace, speakers of the dominant language have the power. They set the rules for acquiring social capital. Peirce writes of language as a factor in the formation of individual identity. As I read her article, I thought about the experience of immigrants who have achieved a wide network in one place, then lost it in the move to another. The learners described in Peirce's article have had their identities challenged by more powerful co-workers. I think they have also lost or given up much of their social capital, the networks of friends, family, and colleagues that supported them in their home countries. In the same way, the communities they left are changed by their departure. In this country, immigrants must rebuild their social capital. Among immigrants, recent arrivals rely on earlier arrivals and established immigrant communities for their social capital. It is astonishing to me how quickly many immigrants connect with speakers of their home language in their new home. They rely on each other in a variety of ways for social, emotional, and economic support. I think the support is reciprocal; new immigrants both benefit from and contribute to their new communities in the U.S.

Sojourners who study or work abroad may also worry about losing the social networks they worked so hard to build. For example, returned Peace Corps volunteers worry about missing the local holidays celebrated in the countries where they served, but not in the U.S. They may be a little sad that there are few uses in the U.S. for social skills like bargaining in the market or eating with the fingers. With the loss of usefulness of those social skills, they are anxious about losing the connections with the people who helped them build the skills.

Social capital is also observable in my class at the Hubbs Center. Learners support each other in a variety of ways, sometimes by sharing information about where to locate needed resources, other times by the sheer pleasure of being together at school. One of the challenges of teaching in an adult basic education setting is that learners have responsibilities in a complex web of social relationships that may compete with coming to class. They must maintain their social capital, and this may get in the way of education. With adults, there's always a good explanation for coming late or not coming to class at all. There is not much I can do about that. Admonishing someone for staying home with a sick child would not be helpful. I can think about the social connections my learners have when I ask them how they are and use what I find out about my learners to plan lessons that will be of help to them.

Political empowerment

Education, with its basis in the real world (as proposed by Dewey) and human and social capital benefits, can also be a political resource. Education as collaboration creates critical thinking skills that can be applied to the resolution of political problems. As Paulo Freire (1968/1970) writes:

> Instead of following predetermined plans, leaders and people, mutually identified, together create the guidelines of their action. In this synthesis, leaders and people are somehow reborn in new knowledge and new action (p. 183).

Freire refers to transmission of knowledge in the classroom as the "banking" model of education. In this model, information is deposited in the minds of learners, to be used later. Teachers using the banking model impose their view of the world on learners; they tell learners what facts and knowledge they must have, believing that learners use such knowledge to make successful careers within the existing social system. In contrast to the banking model, Freire's

goal is education that causes learners to change the way their society is organized. This political change comes from people working together to think critically about their situations, coming up with explanations, and then deciding what to do about them. Freire advocates education that causes learners to work for change, big changes to the existing system of power relationships.

In one example (Freire, 1968/1970, p. 111), a group of tenement residents looked at a picture of a drunken man walking on the street. There were three young men conversing in the corner. The teacher did not tell the residents what to think about this picture; rather, they discussed it and came up with their own conclusions. The tenement residents concluded that the only useful and productive person in the picture was the drunk. He had probably been working hard all day for low wages. He was probably worried about how hard it is to take care of his family. He is a decent worker who drinks. The tenement residents saw themselves in the picture and could analyze the economic situation. The facilitator had intended to teach a lesson about the dangers of alcohol, but the learners saw a different issue in the picture, a picture of economic and political inequality.

The same critical thinking can occur in the English classroom when learners go on field trips, set their own goals, consider authentic materials from outside the classroom, and collaborate in groups to solve real-world problems. The leader must be prepared to act as facilitator rather than transmitter of facts and can expect surprising results from the brainstorming. A teacher in the Freire sense is a co-investigator, ready to go where the team of student investigators leads. Not only that, but the Freirean approach is transformative, seeking not only to identify power relationships, but to change them.

Alastair Pennycook (1999) was editor of a special edition of *TESOL Quarterly* focusing on critical approaches to teaching English as a second or foreign language. In his introduction to

the issue, he points out that critical pedagogy has several implications. First, it is not enough to relate teaching English to the world outside the classroom. Critical pedagogy not only identifies social institutions, but also considers how those institutions support and perpetuate power relationships. It examines how (for example) gender, ethnicity, nationality, income level, and employment status are related to power relationships. Second, critical pedagogy includes the possibility of changing power relationships. Neither completely free of limitations, nor the victims of their circumstances, learners have the potential to change their situations. Third, practitioners of critical pedagogy must continually question assumptions, including their own. I think Pennycook raises important questions. Do we teach English so learners can be integrated into current social systems or do we teach them so they can cause change?

Dialectical models

The previous models each focus on one approach: philosophy, economics, sociology, or politics. Ingemar Fägerlind and Lawrence J. Saha (1989), in their investigation of education as a national development tool, propose that various social institutions interact with each other to create education systems. To understand the school systems in which we work every day, it is necessary to consider the interactions of society, economy, and politics with school systems. Our schools are the result, not of individual institutions, but of the ways all institutions interact.

I think the same is true of the smaller world of the classroom. Learners bring a variety of social, economic, and political concerns to school. Sometimes they even hope that what they learn in school will solve their out-of-school problems. Effective learners (which includes those with the title "teacher") place their classroom activities into a broader perspective that takes these social, economic, and political concerns into account. When they leave school, the learners will put their knowledge to work in resolving these concerns for the rest of their lives.

Diego Gambetta (1987) investigated the decisions about schooling made by young people in northwest Italy. He worked to identify the push factors, influences that caused people to choose education, and pull factors, those influences that prevented people from getting the education they wanted. He found that people are not entirely passive, limited by circumstances they neither understand nor control. Nor are they entirely free of limitations on their ability to choose any existing option, having evaluated what the outcome is likely to be at some point in the distant future. Gambetta ends his book with:

> So, *were they pushed or did they jump?* If anything, they jumped. They jumped as much as they could and as much as they perceived it was worth jumping. The trouble, though, is that not all children can jump to the same extent and the number of pushes they receive in several directions, shaping their opportunities as well as preferences, varies tremendously in society.

Decisions at the national policy level and at the personal level are the result of interactions among social institutions. These interactions at the policy (Fägerlind & Saha, 1989) and personal levels (Gambetta 1987) are also at work influencing language classrooms. Understanding the influences and interactions can help ESL teachers be more sensitive in the classroom. It can also help teachers be effective advocates for learners' interests in the wider community.

Summary

I see these four models as building on each other. Dewey emphasized the connection between education and the real world of work, social relationships, and inner life. Human capital economists, like Becker, looked for ways to measure the returns on education as an investment. Coleman pointed out that social relationships among people have value as well. Where human

capital economists think of investment in terms of rational decisions individual people or organizations make, social capital is the environment of relationships within which people make those investment decisions. Paolo Freire added that, by working in collaboration, learners can take control of their political future by identifying the problems they face in everyday life, imagining possible solutions, and choosing courses of action to change the power structure of their community. Fägerlind and Saha offer a dialectical model, suggesting that political, social, and economic factors all interact with each other and with school systems to create the educational context in which individuals operate. Gambetta shows how a dialectical model looks at the individual and family level, finding that people are neither totally passive nor unrestricted in the choices they make.

In the next section of this paper, two textbooks will be considered to see how these broad social science models appear in the curriculum for English language learners in two very different ESL programs. These textbooks (one used in the adult basic education environment, the other in college and university classrooms) have been selected as examples. They reflect the economic, social, and political concerns of learners in these two different programs. Comments are added to point out how these social concerns were incorporated into lessons.

Ideas at Work: Using Textbooks for Adult Basic Education and University Classrooms

For adult basic education programs, the broader goal is to prepare learners for work and citizenship. Textbooks and teaching reflect that. Programs based in colleges and universities prepare students for success in their academic programs and later careers. The five models (philosophical, human capital, social capital, empowerment, and dialectical) can help teachers

see how textbooks are organized, how themes are interwoven, and how the textbook might be supplemented with real-world observation. Examples of textbooks illustrate how social processes are reflected in English language teaching. For the adult basic education example, *All-Star 3* (Lee & Sherman, 2005) and *All-Star 4* (Lee, 2006) have been selected. For the higher education example, *Quest 3: Listening and Speaking* (Blass & Hartmann, 2007) has been chosen. Both were selected mainly for convenience (I have worked with both of them), but also because they illustrate the social science issues that occur in English classrooms. Comments on the textbooks will be supplemented with remarks about how they can be used.

Literacy and life skills for immigrants

The *All-Star* series for adult ESL learners builds language skills while considering life skills topics. Issues of work, law, financial planning, health, and more form the content as learners practice language strategies for effective communication. Indeed, at the front of each volume is a table for teachers, which matches textbook content with skills: listening and speaking, reading and writing, critical thinking, vocabulary, grammar, and civics concepts. It even matches textbook content with national standards assessments, including CASAS Life Skill Competencies.

Volumes three (Lee & Sherman, 2005) and four (Lee, 2006) have the following units:

All-Star 3	All-Star 4
1. Setting Goals	1. Skills and Abilities
2. Housing	2. Getting Around
3. Healthy Living	3. Your Health
4. Money and Consumer Issues	4. Rights and Responsibilities
5. Accidents and Emergencies	5. Consumer News and Views
6. Community	6. Rules and Laws
7. Work	7. Career Paths
8. Communication	8. Money Matters

I think these topics are compatible with the five models presented in the first section of this paper. Learners engage in real-world activities, as Dewey suggests. They prepare for work and health, increasing their human capital. They develop social skills by talking with classmates about their experiences, practicing pragmatics, and acquiring information about American procedures. This builds their social capital. They become aware of how to take control of their lives and even advocate for others, increasing their political empowerment. All of these come together in our classroom, as Fägerlind and Saha, and Gambetta, suggest. The discussion here will be limited to the *All-Star* units on work readiness.

In *All-Star 4* (Lee, 2006), each chapter opens with a humorous two-page graphic spread. For example, the drawing (pp. 112-113) for Unit 7, on career paths, shows a variety of activities in a store called "Price $ Place." Everyone in my class at the Hubbs Center compared it immediately to WalMart and Sam's Club. In the picture, employees are engaged in productive, loafing, and unsafe behavior. In discussion of the picture, everyone had experience to share about good and less-good behavior they had seen in workplaces. The picture connected people quickly with previous experience. It gave them space to talk about their own experiences and interpret them in their own ways.

In the companion lesson from the *All-Star 4 Workbook* (pp. 122-123) we went on to talk about how to approach supervisors and co-workers about problem behavior. It turned out to be a good pragmatics topic, how to express concern about problems in the workplace. Groups of four talked about their experiences while I walked around finding out what problems learners had seen. Excessive talking about non-work topics seemed to be the most common complaint.

All-Star 3 (Lee and Sherman, 2006) has a lesson on fit between jobs and individual employees (pp. 112-113). The companion lesson in the *All-Star 3* workbook (pp. 122-123)

introduces the Holland code, a model commonly used by career counselors to help learners match their preferences with possible careers. The Strong Interest Inventory is based on the Holland categories. In All-Star 3, learners read short descriptions of each category (realistic, investigative, conventional, artistic, enterprising, and social). Then they are asked to match jobs with Holland codes.

The day we discussed this lesson in my class at Hubbs, I placed five large color pictures of people at work on each table. As learners arrived, they began talking with their table-mates about the jobs. When most people had arrived, I distributed descriptions of the Holland codes (from the All-Star 3 workbook). The groups matched the pictures with one or more of the Holland codes. After that, they did a fill-in-the-blank exercise, completing sentences to match jobs with Holland codes.

I was pleased with the lesson because learners who arrived on time immediately had something to do. They could begin looking at the pictures. As latecomers arrived, they could join the conversation. When everyone was present, we talked about the theoretical model, which learners seemed to get quickly. Once their attention had been focused by pictures and theoretical model, they used their knowledge to reflect on themselves. The lesson contained elements of Dewey's real-world problem-solving approach. The group (including me and the learners) could share social capital by talking about our experiences.

Learners acquire language skills as they consider workplace skills and content. In *All-Star 3,* the unit on work includes asking polite questions, listening to conversations, and reading about work. Learners write resumes and cover letters. They take notes, read articles and job listings, and practice their pragmatic skills in role plays. The suggested grammar point is real

conditionals, but any grammar point can be practiced using sample sentences based on the content material. Vocabulary is highlighted throughout. These concepts recur in *All-Star 4.*

Human capital. The human capital element was preparation for work. I suggested to the learners that being able to talk about fit between job and worker was good preparation for job interviews. Learners practice making phone calls to inquire about jobs; they read job ads, prepare resumes, and write cover letters for job applications (*All-Star 3,* pp. 116-119and 122-123, and the workbook, pp. 124-129).

During a discussion of job benefits, one of the learners raised a good human capital question about why employers would pay for long family leaves. I suggested that training and providing orientation for employes costs money. The employer hopes not to lose that investment and so might pay to ensure that employees will return to work after the family leave.

Social Capital. The topics just mentioned (inquiring about a job, interviewing, resumes, and cover letters) all help learners develop social capital. They introduce learners to the culture of American workplace. Some learners may consider how work, U.S. style, might affect their social networks. For example, one learner proposed that women benefit more than men from family leave policies. In explaining why, he said it is easier for women to stay home with a new child than for men. Some of the women in the group objected, saying men can take youngsters to school or day care or take care of babies at home. We ended up deciding that different families will make different decisions about who takes advantage of family leave benefits.

After class, I talked with one learner. I knew from previous conversations that she has six children. I asked her whether her husband participates in child care. She said yes. They have had to negotiate that, arriving at different solutions at different times. From that conversation, I learned about that learner's social capital: her cooperative husband.

On a different topic, job hunting, learners are encouraged to ask people they know about possible ob openings, but also make sue of announcements in newspapers, on bulletin boards, and on-line. I think the content offered in *All-Star* prepares learners to expand their social networks to include job counselors and similar social service and school professionals.

Political empowerment. I think the approach in *All-Star* has potential for critical pedagogy. The graphic spread in *All-Star 3* shows various jobs in a newsroom, some of which (news anchor, for example) are glamorous. The graphic does not limit itself to technical and support positions. The lesson on Holland categories is intended to let learners think about their interests and not limit themselves too early in the process of career planning. The lesson *All-Star 4* and its companion workbook could start discussions of workplace management. It is up to the teacher and learners to follow up on the cues (or not). The graphics allow users of the textbook to choose a wide variety of issues for discussion. There are lessons on employee benefits (pp. 114-115 in *All-Star 3* and pp. 122-123 in *All-Star 4*) that could start critical discussions on the responsibility of employers toward employees. Learners are encouraged to ask lots of questions about benefits before they accept a job. There are details on the Family and Medical Leave Act (*All-Star3* workbook, pp. 132-133), a law that surprised some of my Hubbs Center learners. Federal Equal Opportunity laws (*All-Star 3* workbook, pp. 132-133) protect employees against discrimination. Ideally, this information helps learners defend their rights in the workplace.

College and University Skills for College and University Students

Quest 3: Listening and Speaking, for academic settings, is organized around academic subjects, reflecting the top priority international students place on academic success. In addition to academic subject content, there are study and test-taking strategies transferable to any

academic field. Attention is drawn to both classroom and social situations. This reflects international students' need to succeed in a classroom situation that may be quite different from what they have experienced before, while also having satisfying social lives while they are in the U.S. The career, family, and community lives of international students will most likely occur back in their home countries. Therefore, the emphasis on long-range planning for work and community life in the U.S. is missing. Listening and speaking for academic purposes is, however, linked with more general communication strategies for use outside the classroom. Although most international students are sojourners, planning to return to their home countries when they have completed their degrees, their attention is drawn to how the U.S. economy, society, and political system work. As with *All-Star*, there is a table at the front of the *Quest* books, making explicit the connections between academic content and study skills, and general critical thinking and social skills.

In the introduction to *Quest 3: Listening and Speaking*, the authors explain that they work toward helping students make the leap from social language to academic language. Students need both. The authors go on to say they are sensitive to the enormous volume of listening and reading students do in their academic courses. The textbooks aim to help English language learners go through the same process native speakers use as they build academic skills. The emphasis is English for academic purposes, bridging social and academic situations.

Quest 3 is organized around several content areas: anthropology, economics, literature, and ecology. Depending on their majors, students may find some of these more directly related to their academic courses than others. Each unit includes activities for reading and listening strategies, understanding language, critical thinking, and test-taking. I think this reflects the reality of academic life. For the most part, instruction in practical skills and general social

interactions are handled indirectly. It appears students should expect to get most of their information about American higher education and culture outside the textbook.

The language topics for the first chapter of *Quest 3: Listening and Speaking* include noticing grammar, inferring meaning from context, listening for topic and main idea, having questions in mind, non-verbal communication, and expressing surprise. There are no specific grammar points, but more general communication strategies are addressed. I think strategies are entirely appropriate for college and university students who must cope with large volumes of language efficiently and succeed in their degree programs.

Human Capital. In contrast to the textbooks for immigrants examined above, practical issues are not included. International students are in the U.S. to get a degree, so the skill-building for work and citizenship found in *All-Star 3* is missing. For international students, future family, career, and community lives are likely to be back in the home country. There is little emphasis on using specific skills in the labor market or long-range financial planning. For international students, the process of choosing a major and planning a career may be quite different from the individual decision-making Becker describes. I think economic issues do lurk in the background for international students, as they learn about the academic and career planning processes their American classmates follow. An underlying goal may be to help international students have a successful academic and social experience in the U.S. that they can apply to future career success in a global economy.

Human capital issues may be at work as international students make choices about which courses to take. Eager to make progress on their degrees, some international students resist ESL courses, especially non-credit introductory courses. They may feel the need to complete their degrees as quickly as possible and enter the labor market. These students may not see the

connection between English courses and timely degree completion. Some of these same students may say they are uneasy socially and find it difficult to make friends with Americans. They may not see the connection among social skills, doing well in their degree programs, and building social networks they can call on later in their careers.

Social Capital. Social capital is addressed in *Quest 3*. Like *All-Star 3* and *All-Star 4*, each chapter begins with a picture and discussion questions. Students begin learning that the social skills they need include the expectation that there will be discussion in many classrooms. Each chapter includes some strategies for academic reading and listening, as well as communication outside class. The idea of space and privacy has been mentioned. Sensitivity to different definitions of these is part of student's social capital, the ability to benefit from social connections. Other social capital concepts addressed in *Quest 3* are listening for emotion and managing a conversation. Topics for conversation include summer jobs, community involvement, movie heroes, and environmental health. These are not strictly academic topics, but they do prepare students for entering into relationships with the people around them. Although it is not said directly, I think an underlying goal is to help students to develop the social skills needed to succeed in the U.S., which students can pass along as social capital to their own families, friends, and colleagues once they return to their home countries.

Philosophy of Education. The activities in *Quest 3* are based in reality, as Dewey advocates. Students begin acquiring experience with the kind of language they will encounter in their academic work. As the authors note, social skills are included. For example in *Quest 3: Listening and Speaking*, the first chapter (on anthropology) introduces academic content: the concept of space and place. Part one (pp. 4-6) opens with pictures of a suburban American home and a traditional Chinese home. Learners are encouraged to talk about how arrangement of space

reflects culture. They ask each other what is important to have in a living room, what compliments a guest might give to a host, and what changes have occurred in home design over the past 100 years. I could imagine supplementing the book with pictures from interior design magazines and furniture store catalogs. There might be conversations about visiting an American home, possibly strengthening students' social skills, helping them build the social networks Coleman describes. Certainly the link between an academic discussion of cultural anthropology and its application in the social world seems consistent with Dewey's concern that classroom activities prepare learners to live in the real world.

Part two (pp. 7-11) addresses the question, "How close is too close?" This is about privacy and personal space, including questions of studying alone or with a partner, when an apology is necessary, and definitions of privacy. These are not presented as classroom skills, but as necessary for functioning well in a college or university situation. Learners are encouraged to interview classmates about personal space, then think about whether the answers were determined by culture or individual circumstances. Again, I could imagine supplementing the book with other activities. Learners could observe behavior on a bus, in a coffee shop, or at a library. When they have a choice, do people sit together or as far apart as possible? Do they use body language to claim personal space? Do they talk to each other or find ways to let other people know they need some privacy? The book by itself may not be sufficient, but it is suggestive. It is a starting point for discussion of social skills, consistent with building social capital.

Although *Quest 3* presents itself as based in academics, it does encourage learners to think about their lives outside English class as they work toward success in other courses and in their social lives. I think the linking of academic material with out-of-class activities is

consistent with Dewey's philosophy. The emphasis on social skills is consistent with Coleman's idea of social capital.

Political Empowerment. Political empowerment, discussed by Freire, does not appear in *Quest 3*. In *All-Star* there is quite a lot of emphasis on taking charge of one's life at work, in the community, and at home. I think this is what Freire advocates. In the academic environment of *Quest 3*, taking charge is addressed through critical thinking. Skills addressed include: making inferences, internet research, using information from multiple sources, applying old information to new situations, comparing, and mind mapping. All of these are tools students need to succeed in the American academic environment. They are also tools students can use to evaluate situations, which is what Freire advocates. Although they may not be powerless in the sense Freire describes, international students are at a disadvantage as newcomers to the U.S. There is much they need to learn if they are to take their place in the campus community and get their needs met.

My most powerful experience with this was viewing an exhibition of photographs with a group of Chinese students. The exhibition included pictures of China, taken by Chinese photographers, and collected by a Chinese curator. The students were strongly impressed by views of their home country that they had not considered before. Although we did not talk directly about the Chinese students changing their behavior or thinking, I believe they did (after some time) conclude that it is worthwhile to think about different points of view and why different people can legitimately entertain different opinions. This may be a change of mind in the Freirean sense. It may lead later to behavior that these students would not have chosen if they had not experienced the challenging art exhibit. I think this is the kind of result Freire hoped for, although the specific people and situations involved are quite different from the "oppressed"

mentioned in Freire's book. I also think this is the kind of thing Dewey means when he mentions that education can help people grow beyond the boundaries of their upbringing.

Conclusion

All-Star 3 and *All-Star 4* for immigrant learners, and *Quest 3* for academic settings, are organized to integrate language skills with skills for outside the classroom. *All-Star* incorporates skills for the workplace, citizenship, and family. These are consistent with the goals of immigrants, who are planning careers and families in their new home. These goals are also consistent with the CASAS skills, which many English programs use to establish their eligibility for funding. *Quest 3: Listening and Speaking* reflects the goals of most international students, who need to do well in their academic programs and want satisfying social lives for the time they are in the U.S. *Quest 3* combines study skills with academic matter and language for social settings. Neither of these textbooks is sufficient on its own. They can and should be supplemented with authentic experiences: discussions, reading authentic materials, and transfer of learning from the classroom to out-of-class situations.

The social skills English language learners need are very similar to the ones native speakers need. Real-world problem-solving skills, planning for careers, building social networks, and the ability to advocate for one's rights are of interest to all learners. Teachers can benefit by stepping back from the day-to-day activity of the classroom to consider Dewey's experience-based philosophy, human capital economics, social capital, and empowerment. As Fägerlind and Saha suggest, these interact with each other and with schools to shape education. As Gambetta suggests, families, too, consider the interactions of social institutions as they make decisions about how much and what kind of education is worthwhile. These ideas help teachers focus on

the purposes and processes of education, including learning English. They can help us recognize how textbooks are organized to pursue multiple goals. They can also help teachers imagine the lives of learners and meet their needs better. They can help teachers focus on the uses of the language they teach. These social science ideas are also tools for teachers to use in their own continued learning. They can help teachers reflect on experience and to use experience as they become better teachers.

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