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**To What Extent is Humanistic Language Teaching  
Incorporated in the Instructional Practices of the  
Foundation Teachers in Higher Colleges of Technology  
(HCT)-Fujairah, UAE? A Case Study**

مدى تطبيق الآليات الإنسانية لتعليم اللغات في البرنامج التأسيسي بكليات التقنية  
العليا – الفجيرة، الإمارات العربية المتحدة  
(دراسة حالة)

**By**

**Baha Eddin Hussein Shukri Abu Khait**

**Student ID number: 120137**

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Dissertation Supervisor:  
Dr. John Mckenny

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### Title

To What Extent is Humanistic Language Teaching Incorporated in the Instructional Practices of the Foundation Teachers in Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)-Fujairah, UAE?  
A Case Study

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## **Dedication**

To my parents. Who always stood behind me and knew I would succeed. Gone now but never forgotten. I will miss them always and love them forever. Thanks for all you did. This work is dedicated to them.

To my source of love and aspiration; my wife for her patience and tolerance all the days of my work and for taking upon her shoulders all the family responsibilities.

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the extent to which humanistic language teaching (HLT) is implemented in the Foundation Program in Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), Fujairah campus. The study also examines the degree to which HLT is perceived as an innovation that can improve the teaching/learning environment in the Foundation program for students and teachers. An online survey, interviews and a focus group discussion were used for this purpose. The survey consisted of 30 closed-item statements with a 5-point Likert scale to gauge the extent to which HLT is incorporated in the instructional practices of the Foundation teachers. The respondents were 13 male and 15 female Foundation teachers who were mostly from Western countries. 26 surveys were completed and returned. In addition, ten individual interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted with the teachers in order to examine the potential value of HLT in the Foundation program. The findings revealed that although the participants were not expressly familiar with the tenets of humanistic language teaching, they were already applying many of its prescribed methodologies ‘intuitively.’ The participants were also convinced that incorporating HLT in the Foundation context was beneficial to learners as it decreased learning anxiety and helped them become more engaged in learning. However, the participants were reluctant to afford learners a level of autonomy that would have added a new dimension of HLT to their professional practice. This was, in part, due to a perception among the teachers that the students were ill equipped to learn without the close presence of a strong leader in the classroom – partly due to perceived cultural peculiarities of the local context. It has been recommended that the paradigm of HLT be given further attention in the context of UAE higher education and beyond in order to assess the degree to which English language teachers are willing to embrace this potentially liberating educational philosophy and associated methodologies.

## ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف مدى تطبيق الآليات الإنسانية لتعليم اللغات في البرنامج التأسيسي في كليات التقنية العليا، فرع الفجيرة. وبما أن الآليات الإنسانية لتعليم اللغات تعد من أحدث وسائل التعليم اللغوي العصرية، لذا فإن الدراسة تهدف أيضا إلى التعرف على نظرة الكادر التعليمي إليها، وهل يراها كأداة مبتكرة قادرة على الارتقاء بالتجربة التعليمية في البرنامج التأسيسي، سواء بالنسبة للطلاب أو المعلمين، أم لا. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على استبيان عبر الإنترنت، والمقابلات الشخصية، ومناقشات مستفيضة مع مجموعة نموذجية. أما الاستبيان فمكون من ثلاثين سؤالاً اختياريًا من متعدد، مع مقياس لا يكرت خماسي النقاط، لقياس مدى تطبيق الكادر التعليمي للآليات الإنسانية. استجاب للاستبيان ثلاث عشرة معلما و خمس عشرة معلمة من الكادر التعليمي في البرنامج التأسيسي، والذين ترجع أصول معظمهم إلى الدول الغربية. بينما تمت الإجابة على ستة وعشرين نموذج استبيان بالكامل. بالإضافة إلى ذلك أجريت عشر مقابلات شخصية ومناقشة مستفيضة مع مجموعة نموذجية من الكادر التعليمي، لتحديد ما يمكن للآليات الإنسانية أن تضيفه إلى البرنامج التأسيسي. ولقد كشفت نتائج البحث أنه على الرغم من أن معظم المشاركين لم يكونوا مطلعين على الآليات الإنسانية لتعليم اللغات، إلا أنهم كانوا يطبقون فعلا قدرا لا بأس به من مبادئها بال "فطرة". كما أظهرت النتائج قناعة المشاركين بأن استخدام هذه الآليات كان مفيدا للطلاب حيث أنه قلل من التوتر المصاحب للتعلم و زاد من انخراطهم في العملية التعليمية. ومن جهة أخرى، تشكك المشاركون في جدوى منح الطلاب مستويات أعلى من الاستقلالية، وهو الأمر الذي كان سيعزز من تطبيق الآليات الإنسانية في العملية التعليمية. ويرجع ذلك، من جهة، إلى الاعتقاد السائد بين المعلمين بأن الطلاب غير مؤهلين للتعليم الذاتي، وبدون إشراف مباشر وحازم من قبل المعلم في الفصل، ومن جهة أخرى، إلى الصورة التي كونها المعلمين للسمات الثقافية الخاصة بالمجتمع المحلي. وتوصي الدراسة بإيلاء اهتمام أكبر بالآليات الإنسانية للتعليم اللغوي، في مجال التعليم العالي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، وذلك من أجل تقييم أفضل لمدى استعداد مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية لتقبل هذه الفلسفة التعليمية المتطورة وأساليبها الحديثة.

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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Around the world, learning English has become increasingly important as it is considered the language of science, business and technology. Consequently, English language teaching (ELT) has become the focus of attention for educational institutions at all levels and people from different cultures and backgrounds and with different aspirations are learning the language. As a result, a vast and expanding body of literature representing different schools of thought has been produced to provide direction as to how English language should be taught. Scholars and practitioners continue to express their perspectives regarding the most effective ways of teaching English. They have proposed a number of different styles of teaching and learning the language, which have drawn upon a myriad of methods, techniques, and philosophical orientations.

The humanistic approach, which began in the mid-20th century as a reaction to the psychoanalytic and behaviorist theories of psychology, has left a significant impression on the field of education. This approach takes a completely different perspective on dealing with the meaning of human behavior. Advocates of the humanistic approach gave a personal and subjective meaning to human behavior and they perceived the individual “as a unique and as a whole with an innate potential for self-development as he or she has self-agency and can decide on how to develop and grow” (Phothongsunan 2010, p. 4). Following the advent of the humanistic approach as a distinctive branch of psychology, its concepts were embraced in both the theory and practice of education, which paved the way for the emergence of humanistic language teaching (hereafter referred to as HLT). The two main principles that underpin HLT are a) catering for the cognitive and affective sides of learning in what is called educating the whole person and b) enabling learners to reach self-actualization (Rogers 1961; Stevick 1990). In short, HLT emphasizes the influence of the affective domain and emotional factors on language teaching and learning. By proposing a holistic approach to the learning process, advocates of HLT take the position that the language learning experience will be much more effective when both affect and cognition are considered.

## **1.2 Background of the study**

The Fujairah colleges (Fujairah Men's College - hereafter referred to as FMC - and Fujairah Women's College - hereafter referred to as FWC) are two of a nation-wide system of colleges in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) called the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT). This system is a community of more than 19,000 students and almost 2,000 staff based on 17 campuses throughout the UAE, which forms the largest institution of higher learning in the country. The colleges in the system offer a range of workplace-related programs (Business Administration, Applied Communications, Office Management, Customer Service, Communications Skills, Computer & Information Science, Education, Engineering Technology and Health Sciences) that mix theory with practice and are developed in consultation with leading UAE corporate and governmental employers. All courses are delivered in English and are monitored to ensure that they keep pace with industrial and technological change. More than 90 different programs are on offer in a range of diplomas and bachelor's degrees. The students have to complete a Foundations program before entering their chosen program major to ensure that they have a level of English proficiency that will enable them to pursue a bachelor's degree.

The HCT General Education Division has two primary units: The Foundations Studies program and the Liberal Studies program. The Foundations program, in which the researcher teaches English as a foreign language, provides support for students needing assistance in meeting the academic admission standards for HCT Bachelor's degree programs. It consists of four levels of English preparation and two levels of Mathematics. Depending on the student's entry-level scores, a student may spend between one semester (entering at the highest level) and four semesters (entering at the lowest level) preparing to meet degree admission criteria. To exit Foundations, students must earn an overall band 5.0 score in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

## **1.3 Significance of the study**

In colleges and universities of the United Arab Emirates, it has been difficult to attract and retain students – particularly male students – partly because of the difficulty in imposing the 'Western' style of education (that these tertiary institutions tend to espouse) on local learners (Hatherley-Greene 2012). It is apparently difficult for students graduating from local secondary institutions

to adjust to what they may perceive as an alien style of teaching. Maddock (1981, p. 13) described this issue as “the arrogance of ethnocentricity” and this is also applicable in this modern context, where the problem of Western-biased educational ethnocentricity may have made it difficult to successfully implement local higher educational policies.

UAE students may also struggle with ‘constructivist’ methodologies as they have not usually been exposed to these before university (Dahl 2010; Abdulla & Ridge 2011). In fact, their learning experiences prior to tertiary education may have been comprised mostly of rote memorization tasks and teacher-centered classes (Ahmed 2011; Al Subaihi 2011; Nereim 2012). Consequently, the difficulties faced by young students entering the Foundation program at UAE higher education are commonly observed in their performance in the classroom. Despite the best efforts of faculty members in the Foundation program, many young students are unable to manage the transition to a style of teaching and learning that does not suit their rote learning styles or, in some cases, their cultural sensitivities. They struggle to manage aspects of a challenging foreign language curriculum that demands major student improvement in a short space of time.

It may be that certain cultural continuities have made it difficult for students to adapt to the new world that they find when they enter the Foundation program. Attempting to complete their studies entirely in a foreign language after years of instruction in Arabic is beyond the capabilities of many students whose grasp of English is weak at best. When students realize that their skills and knowledge are not sufficient for them to succeed at the tertiary level, they feel anxious, isolated, and weak. They begin to suffer from “normlessness” as they are not sure how to adapt to the new environment (Alsheikh et al. 2010, p. 60). It is quite likely at this stage that new students will give up and not make the successful transition to higher education.

It is possible that the high rate of failure (in terms of actual IELTS band scores attained, for example) seen in the Foundation program stem not simply from low student ability, however, but also from feelings of alienation experienced by students toward systems and teaching practices that do not inspire them to embrace the system as it currently exists. One of the main premises of this study is that if a more humanistic style of teaching were implemented in the Foundation program, student satisfaction and motivation would improve, and student success rates would

rise in terms of measurable outcomes. The problem experienced by students is not simply one of language and ability then; it is also a problem of teaching methodology and the philosophical orientation of contemporary UAE higher education. A fundamental shift in these key areas might well afford the system of higher education in the UAE an advantage in terms of meeting the needs of students and helping them to be more successful as people and professionals in future years.

#### **1.4 Rationale for the study**

The idea of the humanistic approach to education is particularly appealing in contexts such as the United Arab Emirates, where the teacher is traditionally considered both the authority and the focal point of classroom activities (Hatherley-Greene 2012). Generally, learners in this context experience undue levels of tension (though teachers who ‘unconsciously’ adopt the humanistic approach can intuitively moderate this) as they experience a loss of control and lack of ownership over the work that they must complete to meet course objectives. Because of this, the adoption of the humanistic approach to education is particularly important in the UAE tertiary education.

The humanistic approach focuses on the learner as an individual and sees him or her as someone with needs beyond simple outcomes tied to a curriculum. The reorientation of higher education in this direction could help students to develop as people as well as learners because the humanistic approach can also stimulate the development of persons. This approach is more student-centered than traditional methodologies, and prioritizes the development of individuality and self-actualization as outcomes for learning. It also advocates a less authoritarian role for teachers, who can in turn allow students more creativity and autonomy as learners. Additionally, the practices associated with the humanistic approach allow students to determine classroom practices and procedures. This is a development that would be a welcome change in the context of UAE higher education where students have little authority or autonomy in the classroom at an official level.

What may distinguish this study is the light it sheds on the fact that in terms of personal characteristics such as language aptitude and level of maturity, the foundation program students are different to their peers in the bachelor program, although both types of students are in higher

education. Therefore, on the basis of their awareness of this fact, the Foundation teachers need to equip themselves with the kind of humanistic teaching methods and strategies that are conducive to and can be effective for the special nature of the foundation program students.

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which humanistic language teaching (HLT) is incorporated in the Foundation teachers' instructional practices. The basic principle of HLT is to shift the focus in education from teaching to learning, so that the teacher is no longer the focal point in class but someone who facilitates the process of education. HLT awakens the teacher to the fact that the learner can be a lot more independent, come up with his/her own judgment, and attempt a performance which is enjoyable because he/she is at ease and happy. Moreover, studies show that HLT can lead to more learning engagement, increased motivation, higher retention rates and fewer discipline problems (Kyriacou & Cheng 1993; Ghaith & Diab 2008; Zhang & Atkin 2010; Sultan & Hussain 2012; Khatib et al. 2013). Therefore, this study also seeks to examine the potential value of HLT to the Foundation program and to call the attention of the Foundation teachers to this approach of teaching. The current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is HLT incorporated in the Foundation teachers' instructional practices?
2. Can HLT contribute to more effective language learning in the Foundation Program?

## **CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Humanistic Approach**

Maslow (1968), Rogers (1961) and Combs (1965) laid the theoretical bases for the humanistic approach and proposed it as the third branch of psychology, or as “The Third Force” (Roberts 1975, p.290). This approach came as a reaction to Freud’s ideas of the psyche or psychoanalysis, which was the first important wave of psychology, and as a response to Skinner’s ideas of behaviorism, which was regarded as the second force. Unlike psychoanalysis and behaviorism, which explained human behavior from neurotic and mechanistic perspectives, the humanistic approach took a very different view of human personality as it stressed the positive side of human nature and considered human values and personal experience to be the major components of each person’s personality. The humanistic approach recognizes the potential within people, and it is essentially concerned with the innate drive in each person to grow and to achieve self-actualization (Maslow 1968; Matus 1990; Stevick 1990; Rogers et al. 1994; Arnold 1998; Moskowitz 1999; Snowman et al. 2009).

The psychological underpinning of the humanistic approach lies in Maslow’s, Roger’s and Comb’s studies on human behavior. In his account of the nature of human personality and behavior, Maslow (1968) argues that each person is born with a unique ‘nature’ and that this nature is shaped (but not controlled) by experiences and thoughts. Therefore, children should be given the chance to make their own choices and parents and teachers should prepare children to make these choices by satisfying their need for safety, love, belonging, and esteem (Maslow 1968).

Maslow’s (1968) studies on the behavior of well-adjusted people led him to propose the concept of ‘self-actualizers’ and he defined them as people with an innate desire for experience that will enable them to fulfill their potential. Self-actualization was also addressed by Moskowitz (1978) who identified its various constituents: developing fulfilling relationships, recognizing interdependence, expressing one’s feelings, achieving one’s potential, sharing oneself and giving and receiving support.

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs is probably one of the principal constructs of the humanistic approach. This five-level hierarchy places physiological needs at the bottom of the scale,



followed in ascending order by safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs (Maslow 1968). The model suggests that the ‘lower’ the need, the higher its importance because people will only try to satisfy a higher-level need if their basic lower-level needs for survival are met. At the top of the hierarchy are self-esteem - peoples’ evaluation of their own worth - and ultimately ‘self—actualization’ – their attainment of fulfillment in life (Maslow 1968).

Rogers, who was a psychotherapist, coined the term “learner-centered education”. The term originated from Rogers’s successful experiences with his patients as he helped them cope more successfully with their problems. He suggested that the patient should be the central figure rather than the therapist; therefore, the patient should neither be ‘diagnosed’ in the traditional sense, nor given a set of ‘instructions’ to recover. Instead, patients should be equipped (with the aid of their therapist) to solve their problems independently of the therapist’s help as they became more self-accepting and self-aware. Rogers found that this person-centered approach was most successful when he established a rapport with clients whose feelings and thoughts were apparent to him. Subsequently, Rogers, as a professor, concluded that his approach could be applied to teaching in the form of learner-centered education. The term suggests that learners can educate themselves without the help of direct instruction from teachers (Rogers 1961).

Combs (1965) subsequently introduced the concept of the teacher as a facilitator. He argued that the teacher should act as “facilitator, encourager, helper, assister, colleague, and friend to his or her students” (p. 26). Combs (1965) also posited that the manner in which a person views him or herself, similar to the concept of self-esteem, is of paramount importance. Therefore, a primary aim of teaching is to help students construct a positive self-image. He argued that “what a person believes about himself is crucial to his growth and development.... the student takes his self-concept with him wherever he goes...everything that happens to him has an effect on his self-concept” (Combs 1965, cited in Moskowitz 1978, p. 12).

In retrospect, the findings of Maslow, Rogers and Combs paved the way for humanistic education, which redefined the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than an authority figure and epitome of wisdom. This new conception of education requires that teachers be more responsive to the physiological, psychological and social needs of their students and

trust them enough to afford them more autonomy as learners than they have traditionally been allowed.

## **2.2 Principles of Humanistic Language Teaching (HLT)**

Defining ‘affect’ as “the feeling or emotional aspect of experience and learning” and ‘cognitive’ as “the activity of the mind in knowing an object, to intellectual functioning”, Lyon (1971) points out that humanistic education occurs “when the affective and cognitive domains are integrated in individual and group learning” (p.72). This definition of humanistic education underlies its proposition of teaching the ‘whole person’ - both the intellectual and the emotional dimensions. Without excluding the cognitive aspect, humanistic education focuses on the affective needs of the learner and it awards these considerable importance, as they are always present and thus bound to influence learning. Wang (2005) argues for this humanistic emphasis on the affective aspect of learning by claiming that unless the learner satisfies his or her basic psychological needs, he or she will not be able to effectively focus on language learning.

Moskowitz (1978) argues that despite its intense focus on the affective side of learning, HLT is not actually a form of therapy, nor is it a kind of sensitivity training or a way to trick students into learning a foreign language. Rather, HLT is a solid teaching and learning approach that connects with the feelings, experiences, memories, aspirations, values, needs, and fantasies of students. It seeks to integrate both learning objectives and personal growth outcomes into a curriculum (Moskowitz, 1978). Moreover, According to Moskowitz (1978, p.14), HLT is “a special type of interaction in itself”, which consists of sharing, caring, acceptance, and sensitivity. Thus, from an HLT perspective, overlooking the affective aspects and personal growth dimensions of learning may render it a comparatively monotonous and didactic process.

Saville-Troike (2006) discusses Krashen's (1982) “affective filter hypothesis” by defining “affective filter” as “Krashen's notion of a mechanism that allows or restricts the processing of input” (p. 185). She explains that when the filter is ‘up’, the input is blocked due to the learner being stressed, self-conscious, or unmotivated, whereas the filter is ‘down’ when the learner is motivated and relaxed. Such a conclusion suggests that if classrooms have a positive and interesting atmosphere, teachers can contribute positively to students’ motivation to learn.

Stevick (1999) argues that understanding the role of affect in language learning is vital due to the vulnerable nature of the experience of second language acquisition. More attention should be given to the emotional intensity of classroom activity and the affective domain should also be awarded special consideration by practitioners and researchers. Therefore, focusing on students' affective potential can minimize the anxiety and fear that may accompany language learning, while enhancing positive feelings such as security and self-confidence - in turn fostering the motivation to learn.

Advocates of HLT argue that feelings of fear and anxiety are likely to emerge if learners feel that a learning task is beyond their knowledge and skills. In cases like these, learners may waste their capabilities dealing with negative self-perceptions and emotions instead of completing assigned learning tasks (Snowman et al. 2009). Learning anxiety is considered a special problem in language classes; Allwright and Bailey (1991, p. 174) note that "... performing in a foreign language class is in itself potentially somehow more stressful than performing in other subject classes." This high level of stress is the result of the anxiety that learners associate with the public setting of the language classroom where a 'strange' foreign language is being used. This tension may also threaten language learners' sense of identity as teaching foreign languages in the classroom often "deprives learners of their mother tongue - the very means of communication they might otherwise use in other lessons to help them overcome their problems" (p. 174). Language learners respond to this pressure by either withstanding it or withdrawing and 'hiding' from it. To help alleviate the problems associated with second language acquisition, Dufeu (1994) recommends creating an affective learning environment in which learners can:

"feel comfortable as they take their first public steps in the strange world of a foreign language. To achieve this, one has to create a climate of acceptance that will stimulate self-confidence, and encourage participants to experiment and to discover the target language, allowing themselves to take risks without feeling embarrassed" (pp. 89-90).

As we gain a better understanding of the role of 'affect' in language learning and the resulting implications, the factors of motivation and engagement help to provide us with a holistic view of the interrelated elements on which HLT is based. Wright (2005, p. 155) defines engagement as

“The short-term management of ‘difficult’ emotional states and the long-term management of students’ commitment to the learning task”. In other words, engagement links local motivation (immediate responses to experience) with long-term motivation. Rogers (2002) suggests that if the language learning experience mostly involves positive reactions, then long-term engagement and enhanced self-esteem will be the outcome. Hatherley-Greene (2012) identifies “self-esteem [as] one of several key measures of adolescent life [that] is often reported as having the greatest impact on academic progress at school and personal happiness” (p. 123).

Conversely, an excess of negative classroom experiences will eventually disable long-term engagement and will lower learner’s motivation. Rogers (2002) argues that language learning is also subject to ‘blocks’, which can, if they persist, result in cases of ‘learning resistance’. He indicates that this resistance is related to students making “a great deal of investment into defending their existing patterns of knowledge, attitudes and behavior” (p.219). Attempting to establish new patterns or introduce changes to the learning process may result in “strong emotional reactions” (p.219). Put differently, learners often cling to the status quo and their resistance to change may be the result of accumulated negative learning experiences or learning habits established during childhood and adolescence.

As awareness of ‘affect’ in language learning increases, new classroom management styles have developed in response. Scholars have begun to view the concept of classroom management with deeper insight, exploring the subjective realities of learners as well as surface features of activities. Wright (2005) argues “in order to understand better how classrooms are managed, we need to go beyond observable activity into the cultural, social, psychological and emotional worlds of classrooms, or to the ‘inner’ dimensions” (p. 14). Such insightful perspective is vital in the case of classroom management where two dynamics of influence come to play: the observable and the unobservable.

### **2.3 Use of technology to support HLT**

Snowman et al. (2009) point out that forms of educational technology available to second language learners are becoming more student centered in both their design and their use. For example, hand-held computers and mobile learning devices allow learners to acquire knowledge and take ownership of their learning, which enhances independent and self-directed study.

Furthermore, educational technology has a proven ability to enhance students' problem-solving processes, encourage deep thinking and create opportunities for social interaction (Cavanaugh et al. 2012).

In 2012, the iPad was introduced as the main vehicle for curriculum 'delivery' in Foundations-level English and Math classes at the three UAE federal higher education institutions including the HCT. The core objective of the initiative was to advance active learning methods that would achieve individualized and collaborative student learning in the post PC era by introducing challenge and task-based learning and providing students with the skills and experiences needed in a flexible work environment. Research has shown that personalized access and individual ownership are two important factors that contribute to the iPad being an effective learning tool (Brown-Martin 2010; Gilleland 2012; Meurant 2012). The technology allows learners to supplement their learning not only outside the classroom but also inside it. As their teacher speaks, they can carry out a web-based inquiry, take digital notes and download applications that will help them learn the subject matter discussed in class.

## **2.4 Humanistic activities**

The literature on the nature of humanistic activities is relatively limited. Researchers and practitioners in the educational field have addressed this aspect of HLT from different angles but with limited scope. The topics that the literature has dealt with concerning humanistic activities range from the nature of these activities to their effect on the teaching/learning process (Rinvoluceri 1999).

Hogan (1978) argues that for classroom activities to be humanistic, they have to value the learner as an individual rather than seeing him as a passive recipient of information. If the learner is perceived as a passive receiver, then teachers would fill him or her with information without regard for his or her affective status and unique needs. Hogan (1978) proposes the following interesting analogy: "When the student is viewed as a receptacle, the instructor has no more obligation to consider his or her individuality and autonomy than a worker filling a long procession of coke bottles has to consider the uniqueness of bottle # 743,816" (p. 261). The HLT perception of second language learners as active participants in the learning process presents them as self-directed and critical-thinking. According to Tennant (1998), self-directed learners

can develop critical thinking skills and reflective analysis through personal autonomy within an encouraging learning environment. Richards and Schmidt (2010) point out that critical thinkers can become involved in processes of analyzing, inferring and evaluating in reading comprehension and discussions. Thus HLT views learners as independent thinkers who are capable of particular mental processes.

Stevick (1990) argues that HLT draws heavily on peoples' innate capacity for learning on the one hand and on the personal meaning of this learning on the other hand. He points out that humanistic activities are pivoted around five aspects, which are emotions, group relations, responsibilities, cognition and self-actualization. The two main concepts that are the ultimate goals of almost all humanistic activities are the development of the whole person and learners' self-actualization. On the other hand, Hamachek (1977, cited in Williams and Burden 1997, p. 51) states, "for education to be an enriching experience the meanings that emerge must become personal, and they must be significant and important in some parts of the person's life." Thus, humanistic activities may also be connected with personalizing the learning experience.

Learner autonomy is also prioritized in humanistic learning activities. Hogan (1978) states, "humanistic instruction...allows and encourages students to be as autonomous, as committed, and as responsible in the learning process as they are capable of being or are willing to be" (p. 262). Hogan (1978) also points out that the effectiveness of humanistic activities is dependent on the use of appropriate curricula. He describes humanistic learning materials as those that encourage learners' autonomy, industriousness and commitment. These materials enable learners to develop these qualities because they contain external resources that students can use if they are committed to learning a particular skill regardless of whether the teacher is available or he/she is currently teaching the particular skill. As a result, the learners at various levels of interest and self-management can take as much responsibility for their learning as they are willing to take and pursue their learning outside of formal classroom situations.

Moskowitz (1978) proposed over a hundred exercises for the humanistic classroom and she described the common features of these exercises as follows: a) they focus on positive learning experiences and avoid negative ones, b) they are low-risk exercises, c) they seek to help students verbalize things they like about themselves and d) they foster group work and cooperation. These activities are also believed to have the ability to develop feelings of closeness, acceptance and

belonging in students. Moreover, Moskowitz (1999, p. 178) points out that humanistic activities deal with “enhancing self-esteem, becoming aware of one’s strengths, seeing the good in others, developing closer and more satisfying relationships, becoming conscious of one’s feelings and values and having a positive outlook on life.” From a humanistic point of view, when classroom exercises address these issues, learning becomes a meaningful, effective and rewarding experience.

In the same vein, Puchta and Schratz (1999) proposed a group of sequenced activities based on humanistic teaching methodology. These activities are distributed throughout nine units and each unit has aims, language areas to be covered, materials to be used and rationale of the activities. The ultimate goal of these activities is to nurture cooperative independent learning as it is considered “one of the most important results of a successful education” (Puchta and Schratz 1999, p.3). The other premises on which these activities are based are a) cooperative independent learning is a long-term goal that requires continual patience and motivation from teachers, b) students need to be offered ample chance to share their feelings as a prerequisite to understanding others’ behavior and reacting with humanity, c) students and teachers should be able to exchange feedback in a non-judgmental way and d) students need to have an active role in the discussion and negotiation of instruction processes.

## **2.5 Three humanistic methods**

Three main methods have emerged from the humanistic approach: community language learning, the silent way and suggestopedia. In community language learning, teachers are mainly counselors who gradually give up their power to their learners to help them recognize their worth and take responsibility for their own learning. One variation of this method is learners sitting in a circle as a community and deciding what they want to talk about. Then they record a conversation, listen to it and analyze it for mistakes. This method is extremely learner-centered as it aims at enhancing learners’ autonomy in using the target language (Curran 1976). In the silent way, learners are also given maximum autonomy as the teacher delivers the lesson using Cuisenaire rods and keeps silent during class as much as he/she can but maintains his/her position as a controller of the class (Gattegno 1972). Finally, suggestopedia is based on the premise that learners need to be surrounded with a relaxing and anxiety-free environment in

order to learn effectively. Therefore teachers use music, songs and games and act as partners to the students, taking a genuine and natural role in the activities (Lazanov 1978).

Amini and Amini (2012) argue that the above three humanistic methods are by no means the only examples of humanistic activities. They claim, “in addition to these methods, almost all of the methodological proposals for language teaching seem to contain some elements of HLT. In this regard, no language teaching method is non-humanistic in nature” (p.115). Communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) are among the methods that borrowed from the axiomatic beliefs of humanistic education. Amini and Amini (2012, p.116) claim that the “...basic tenets of HLT are broad and comprehensive enough to be relevant to all general aspects of language learning/teaching.”

## **2.6 Criticism of humanistic activities**

In spite of the above-mentioned pedagogical benefits of humanistic activities in language classrooms, some scholars have questioned the theoretical framework that underpins these activities and their capacity to effectively meet the various demands of language learning with regard to mastery of the four language skills; listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Rinvoluceri (1999) points out that humanistic exercises have received three main criticisms. The first was made by some advocates of HLT who pointed out that the humanistic system lacks a unified and coherent system. They claim that humanistic exercises are isolated techniques and lack a comprehensive vision based on linguistic criteria and supported by a logical sequence of exercises. This shortcoming may hamper the learner’s systematic progression toward learning the target language. Rinvoluceri (1999, p.201) responds to this criticism, arguing, “the problem is that, outside the concrete reality of a given group of learners, it is hard to define what the ‘relational and linguistic criteria’ would be.” In other words, humanistic language teaching does not advocate a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to language teaching and learning; a ‘coherent’ system is accordingly impossible to develop as the HLT discipline recognizes diversity between learners and groups of learners.

As for the second criticism, some scholars argue that humanistic exercises place too much emphasis on students’ feelings and overlook their cognitive development, which they feel should be the main objective of learning. In responding to this criticism, Arnold (1998) asserts that in



humanistic exercises, affect is prioritized in order to enhance learning along with the existing cognitive targets. So it is not a matter of hampering the cognitive development but a question of incorporating humanistic strategies into already-existing curricular materials.

The third criticism claims that many humanistic exercises can be a source of undesired painful emotions, especially when they touch on personal experiences and provoke very strong emotions. Rinvoluceri (1999) refutes this criticism by claiming that it depends on the knowledge and skill of the teacher to create a smooth progression into language learning for students using humanistic exercises. Learners' distress can be avoided if the teacher carefully considers the social and contextual factors in his/her teaching context.

## **2.7 The role of the teacher**

Stevick (1980, cited in Khatib et al. 2013, p.48) asserts "in a language course, success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom." One of the basic principles of HLT is shifting the focus from teaching to learning, so that the teacher becomes a facilitator of the educational process rather than the focal point of the class. Underhill (1999) argues that this kind of role entails the teacher needing to abandon the traditional role of the teacher as controller of the class and becoming more sensitive to the requirements of the student-centered classroom. From the HLT perspective, the role of the teacher as a facilitator is performed in a humanistic environment that prioritizes learners' meaningful cognitive and affective engagement and their autonomous cooperative work. Underhill (1999) describes a facilitator teacher as one who, aside from being competent with the strategies and methods of teaching the topic, is also aware of the psychological learning processes. He adds that if the teacher wants to be a facilitator, he/she needs to pay attention to the way he/she listens and speaks, to his/her use of power and authority and to the nature of group work processes. Furthermore, Brown (2007, cited in Khatib et al. 2013, p.49) points out "teachers who are regarded as facilitators should provide the nurturing setting for learners to build their meanings in cooperation with others." So the teacher as a facilitator should create an environment conducive to learners' increased independence and the accompanying new psychological atmosphere in class. In summary, the teacher as a facilitator is one who "assists learners in their headway to autonomy and self-awareness through a skillful use of techniques and strategies" (Khatib et al. 2013, p.49).

## **2.8 The role of the learner**

HLT proposes a new role for the learner as assuming greater responsibility for his or her own successful mastery of curricular learning objectives and overall academic success. HLT is primarily concerned with the learner's point of view regarding the content of lessons, which reshapes the traditional concept of instruction. It dramatically changes teacher and learner roles in the classroom. As a result of the learner's new role, however, he or she may experience some psychological discomfort due to the sudden shift toward expanded learner autonomy. So the teacher, who is mainly a facilitator of learning, should seek to create a positive psychological space that compensates for the learner's potential disorientation arising from his or her unaccustomed independent learning role (Arnold 1998; Amini and Amini 2012; Khatib et al. 2013).

Additionally, the learner may face some psychological pressure (arising from the need for self-assertion and self-esteem), as a member of a group of learners and a teacher-facilitator (according to the HLT model). As he or she tries to cooperate with the teacher and his or her classmates at the same time, the learner needs to cope with experiences of success or failure. Therefore, he or she needs to demonstrate the ability to cooperate with the teacher and compete with his or her fellow-students. So the new role entails more psychological demands for the learner. However, Arnold (1998) argues that this stress is beneficial and constructive as it enhances the learner's intelligence and curiosity which works to his or her benefit.

## **2.9 Related literature**

As HLT is an area of education that deals mostly with emotions and personal nature, there arises a need for empirical evidence from previous studies on the pedagogical value of humanistic activities. Such evidence would help to demonstrate that the many advantages of HLT are not just based upon subjective personal impression, but are valid and quantifiable. As well, it would support the application of humanistic pedagogy in second language teaching (Moskowitz 1999, p. 179).

Snowman et al. (2009) point out that belonging, which is considered one of three basic psychological needs and thus one of the goals of HLT, has been the subject of extensive research. Belonging refers to relatedness and sense of community. In other words, it is the

student's desire to gain attention and support from and be accepted by teachers and peers and to have the chance to play an active role in classroom planning and decision making. Research shows a correlation between fulfillment of the need to belong and such school-related outcomes as "increased intrinsic motivation to learn, a strong sense of competence, a higher sense of autonomy, a strong sense of identity and lower levels of anxiety" (Snowman et al. 2009, p. 391). Conversely, research also shows that feelings of rejection from the group result in such negative school outcomes as "higher levels of stress, behavior problems in school, lower interest in school and lower achievement" (p. 391).

Two studies were carried out by Moskowitz (1999) on 461 students to determine the effects of HLT on groups of learners. The second study was carried out a year after the first to ensure the consistency of the findings. The aim of the two studies was to determine whether humanistic activities improved students' feelings about learning the target language and helped them improve their self-concepts and relationships with their classmates. The students, who ranged from grades 7-12 and were a source of problems for their teachers, were exposed to humanistic activities for a period of two months. Three questionnaires were used before and after the two-month-humanistic-teaching period to collect data from students related to the possible benefits of HLT. The results of the studies indicated statistically significant and positive results. After two months of HLT, the students felt more positive about learning the second language as it had become much easier and more enjoyable for them and they also felt more positive about their teachers and classmates. Feelings of closeness, acceptance and belonging also developed among students as a result of the awareness activities which helped students feel accepted, understood and valued more. The studies also demonstrated that students had increased self-esteem and had started to think more positively about learning.

A study conducted by Zhang and Atkin (2010) sought to apply the principles of HLT to a project called "Teaching by Joint Presentation" or TJP. The project involved students and their teachers in performing co-presentations and co-critical inquiry in an English literature course. The context of the study was a Chinese university and the participants were 289 college English literature students and 87 in-service secondary school teachers. The results of the study indicated that incorporating humanistic activities in the instructional practices of a language classroom is rather a complicated process. One of the complexities of HLT lies in the degree of readiness the teacher

and learners have for the change in their conventional methods of teaching and learning. However, the main finding of the study was that “humanistic ideals increase students’ learning competence of critical insight, independent thought and reflective analysis” (Zhang and Atkin 2010, p. 121).

Finally, Ghaith and Diab (2008) conducted a study to determine the role of several context-specific factors in the English language learning process of 67 Arab college students. The instrument used for data collection was a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. After an intensive treatment of 200 contact hours, it was found that students’ aptitude for language acquisition was partly determined by a number of student-related and contextual factors such as students’ motivation to learn and a positive class attitude. Most importantly, the study concluded that “using humanistic/affective methods of teaching could decrease students’ feelings of class discomfort and increase their motivation and class sociability” (Ghaith and Diab 2008, p.278).

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study aims to explore the extent to which HLT is incorporated in the HCT Foundations Program and seeks to examine its potential contribution to more effective language learning. These research aims have also provided the rationale for selecting a mixed methods approach to data collection and analysis (MMA). The MMA is based on a pragmatic world vision and researchers adopting this method emphasize the research problem and use pluralistic approaches to derive knowledge relating to it (Creswell, 2003). The MMA is based on the premise that the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches offers a better understanding of research problems than just one method (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007). According to Lazaraton (2000, p. 180), both qualitative and quantitative methods “highlight reality in a different, yet complementary way.” This approach also serves the purpose of triangulating the data collected from different sources as it aims at “seeking convergence across qualitative and quantitative methods” (Creswell 2003, p.14). It should be noted, however, that while the triangulation of data enhances the credibility of the study, it may also cause difficulty in merging and comparing multiple types of data (Creswell 2003).

In the current study, the use of the quantitative method provided the researcher with descriptive data about the extent to which HLT is implemented in the Foundations Program and the use of the qualitative method helped the researcher in explaining and further interpreting the results of the quantitative inquiry. Thus, a clear picture and an in-depth understanding of the incorporation of HLT in the Foundations Program on one hand, and the teachers’ perspectives of its potential value to the program on the other, were best achieved through the use of the sequential explanatory MMA and the triangulation of the collected data.

The limited time scale of the current research (which was around three months) and its concentration on a specific situation in one educational institution (which was the HCT-Fujairah campus) influenced the researcher’s decision to conduct the inquiry as a case study. Bell (1999, p. 10) states that a case study is “particularly appropriate for individual researchers because it gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale.” While case studies are advantageous because they allow the researcher to identify

and focus on unique areas in a particular field and compare current views with new phenomena, they are also limited in terms of generalizability (Bell, 1999). Therefore, Bassey (1981, cited in Bell, 1999. p.12) argues that “The ratibility of a case study is more important than its generalizability.” That is, the merit of a case study is dependent on the extent to which the details of different contexts are identical enough so that a teacher working in a similar context can build his decisions on the findings of the case study. While the current study is focused on a specific setting which is HCT-Fujairah campus, the Foundation teachers involved in the study could still be a representative sample of the Foundation teachers across the HCT system and thus teachers from different campuses would be able to relate the findings of the current study to their own context.

In this study, the absence of students’ voices may be seen as a weakness as students deserve to be heard in the same way as their teachers. The study, however, is exploratory in nature and it is primarily concerned with the experience of teachers - as language teaching practitioners – and their views regarding the application of HLT pedagogies in teaching practice for purposes of professional development and teaching-specific innovation. As well, given the political nature of the research context, it is very difficult for a researcher – in particular a male researcher – to gain access to students – particularly female students – outside of the classroom. In some cases, this is expressly forbidden and in most cases it is very difficult to get permission to conduct this kind of study in a public institution of higher education in the UAE.

### **3.2 Participants**

The participants in the study were the Foundation Program teachers in the HCT-Fujairah Men’s and Women’s Colleges. They were 28 teachers who taught all levels in the Foundation program (Pre-Foundation Level 2 and Foundation Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4). The teachers were 13 males and 15 females of different nationalities, but they were mostly from Western countries. The native speaker teachers were of five different nationalities (American, Australian, British, New Zealander and Scottish) and the non-native teachers were of two Middle Eastern nationalities (Egyptian and Jordanian). The majority of the teachers were MA holders while some had only bachelor’s degrees and one had a doctorate. The teachers’ qualifications were mostly in education and TESOL. Table (1) shows a summary of the teachers’ demographic information.

<b>Teacher's attribute</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	13	46%
	Female	15	54%
Highest qualification	BA	7	25%
	MA	20	71%
	PhD	1	4%
First language	English	24	86%
	Arabic	2	7%
	Other	2	7%
Total number of years of teaching English	1-5	3	11%
	6-10	6	21%
	11-19	15	54%
	20 or above	4	14%

Table 1: Participants' demographic information

### **3.3 Research Tools**

#### **3.3.1 The survey**

The data collection was carried out using three methods: an online cross-sectional survey, which yielded the quantitative data, and semi-structured interviews alongside a focus group discussion, which yielded the qualitative data. In the first phase, the survey was used to explore the extent to which HLT was being incorporated in teachers' instructional practices. The survey was selected as one of the research tools due to its cost-effectiveness and "rapid turnaround in data collection" (Creswell, 2003. P. 146). Furthermore, Cohen et al. (2007) point out that the frequencies of responses generated from closed questions can facilitate more effective data analysis.

A 30-item Likert-scale survey was designed by the researcher to answer the first research question that sought to gauge the extent to which HLT is incorporated in the teachers' instructional practices. The researcher developed the 30 close-ended statements in a way that

represented the instructional practices of HLT (see appendix A). The items were based on and derived from the following key books on HLT: Moskowitz, 1978; Stevick, 1990; Rogers et al. 1994; Arnold, 1999; Puchta & Schratz, 1999 and Dörnyei, 2001. The following studies which dealt with various aspects of HLT were also utilized in the writing and compilation of the survey items: Matus, 1990; Kryiacou & Cheng, 1993; Arnold, 1998; Sultan & Hussain, 2012; Amini & Amini, 2012 and Khatib et al. 2013. The survey items were arranged to deal with different aspects of HLT as follows: items 1-4 deal with rapport, items 5-8 deal with self-actualization, items 9-13 deal with meaningful engagement, items 14-17 deal with different learning styles, items 18-21 deal with cooperative language learning, items 22-23 deal with the affective side of learning, items 24-25 deal with individual differences, items 26-27 deal with learning autonomy, items 28-29 deal with self-esteem and motivation and item 30 was an anti-humanistic technique. The 30 items were scaled “Very often” (meaning most of time), “Often” (meaning from time to time), “Sometimes” (meaning on some occasions) and “Rarely” (meaning infrequently), and “Never” (meaning not at all).

### **3.3.2 The interviews**

In the second phase of the data collection, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers to follow up on the findings from the quantitative data and to gain deeper understanding of the teachers’ attitudes towards HLT and its potential contribution to more effective language learning in the Foundation Program. Schwarzer et al. (2006) point out that interviews produce rich detailed information and through this method the actual voices of the participants can be heard as well as the researcher’s voice. Moreover, Richey and Klein (2007) maintain that data from interviews “allow the researcher to get a clear understanding of events, to determine why they occurred, and to gather data from participants about their thoughts and beliefs” (p. 113).

Ten Foundation teachers were interviewed; four were from the men’s campus and six were from the women’s campus. This was a purposive sample as the researcher used his knowledge and experience to select a sample that met his research criteria. According to Richey and Klein (2007), the goal of purposeful sampling is to select participants that are “information rich” (p. 89). The priority in the selection of teachers was given to those with the highest number of years of teaching experience in the HCT-Fujairah Foundation Program. The rationale for this was the



idea that the more experienced the interviewed teachers at the Foundation Program were, the better they could furnish the researcher with the information required. The second criterion was to select teachers from all Foundation levels so there were teachers from the Pre-Foundation Level and L1, L2, L3 and L4, and the third criterion was selecting teachers from both the men's and women's campuses.

The interviews were mainly directed towards answering the second research question, though the first question was also addressed. The researcher used different types of interview questions (see appendix C) including open and closed, direct and indirect, and specific and non-specific questions (Richards 2003). The need to uncover rich data to address the second research question (concerning the potential value of HLT in the Foundation Program) entailed very specific interview questions. There was also room, however, for any new questions that might emerge as the discussion proceeded with the interviewees. The researcher also did his best to keep the wording of each question equally meaningful to each participant so as to elicit information relevant to the topic of the study from all interviewees. Additionally, during the interviews, the researcher had the opportunity to develop, adapt, and create follow-up questions based on the course of the individual interview.

The following interview considerations were addressed during the interviews. First, rapport was established with the participants in order to obtain demographic and background information about them. Then interviewees were guided to reconstruct their past and present experiences at the Foundation Program in Fujairah colleges. Then the topic of HLT was posed and the discussion started. In the end, an opportunity was given to the interviewees to conclude and give final thoughts on their participation. Each interview lasted between 40 and 50 minutes.

### **3.3.3 The focus group**

A focus group is an “unstructured discussion among a small group of participants, focused on a general topic and guided by a skilled interviewer” (Singleton & Straits, 2005, p. 563). The focus group discussion was selected as a research tool as it had an advantage over the individual interview. In a focus group discussion, ideas and thoughts are generated and developed from one person to another. Lichtman (2006) points out that the advantage of using the focus group as a tool for collecting data lies in the latent quality of this tool in provoking ideas and thoughts that would be more difficult to fathom through traditional interviews. The focus group was composed

of 5 of the previously interviewed teachers. Edmunds (1999) maintains that “with fewer participants, there is more emphasis on the topic and less on polling the participants” (p. 19).

The discussion took about 50 minutes. The participants were homogeneous; as Krueger and Casey (2002) point out: focus groups should be “composed of participants who are similar to each other in a way that is important to the researcher. The nature of homogeneity is determined by the purpose of the study” (p. 10). The focus group discussion took place at HCT- Fujairah Women’s Campus.

The discussion was audio-taped and some questions from the individual interviews were repeated. However, the questions were adapted and developed according to the flow of the discussion. Lichtman (2006) describes the focus group as “a semi structured method of data collection wherein the moderator/interviewer comes with a developed list of questions and a preconceived plan for conducting the session” (p. 129). The following issues were also considered during the discussion following Lichtman’s (2006) guidelines: identification of participants, developing rapport, elaborating, probing, posing non-directional questions one at a time and waiting a given time for answers from the participants.

### **3.3.4 Validity and reliability**

Validity is defined as the ability of the instrument to measure what it is intended to measure (Bell 1999). Two steps were taken to achieve the validity of the survey. Firstly, using the above outlined references to develop the survey items contributed to their validity as HLT ‘orientation criteria’ for the surveyed teachers. Secondly, the survey was piloted with four experienced native-speaking teachers in order to check the survey duration, the clarity of the items and the relevance of the survey content to the topic. The pilot showed that the items effectively represented the practices of HLT and they were clear and well-written. However, there were a few technical terms that needed to be removed so that HLT practices were reflected in the clearest manner. The teachers understood all of the items except for item 22 where a minor modification was suggested to add the words ‘try to’ so that it started with ‘I try to ensure’ rather than ‘I ensure’.

Reliability is “the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions” (Bell 1999, p.103). The use of the MMA in itself is believed to

have added to the level of reliability of the study. The survey served the purpose of producing reliable quantitative data as all the participants were exposed to the same questions and responded in the same manner, and the qualitative data collected from the interviews and the focus group discussion followed up the quantitative data and added to the depth of the study. Finally, the triangulation of the data collected from the different instruments further enhanced their reliability (Bell 1999; Creswell 2003; Cohen et al. 2007).

### **3.3.5 Ethical issues**

Berg (2001) points out that “researchers must ensure the rights, privacy, and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies” (p. 39). Therefore, due to the fact that all teachers were working in the same campus and were well known to each other, they were ensured that their participation would be completely anonymous, their data would be kept confidential, and no personal data would be solicited during any of the stages of the study. In addition, the participants were informed about the purpose and goal of the study prior to their participation and they were also told that their participation was optional.

### **3.3.6 Data analysis**

Data collection and analysis were conducted in a chronologically sequential manner as all data from the survey, the interviews and the focus group discussion were collected before the processes of analysis took place. The three stages in Gordon and Langmaid’s (1988) approach to data analysis were applied throughout the process. In the first stage, any data irrelevant to the study was removed. In the second stage, qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed and presented, and in the third stage a conclusion was drawn and verified. The quantitative data underwent statistical analysis in which frequencies and percentages of responses were worked out using SurveyMonkey.com and SPSS. Charts were also used for further illustration of results. The relevant qualitative data collected from the interviews and focus group discussion were manually transcribed then analyzed through generating units of meaning, classifying and categorizing these units and finally interpreting the data (Cohen et al. 2007).

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which HLT is used in the Foundation Program at HCT-Fujairah campuses. It also seeks to examine the value of this approach in the Foundation context. The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent is HLT incorporated in the Foundation teachers' instructional practices?
2. Can HLT contribute to more effective language learning in the Foundation Program?

To answer the first research question, the quantitative data obtained from the survey and qualitative data collected during the interviews are presented. The responses from the survey are presented in mean scores and percentages. In addition, and for further illustration, graphs and tables are used to present the findings. Some of the teachers' comments on the survey are also taken into consideration when presenting the results. To answer the second research question, the qualitative responses from the interviews and the group discussion are presented and wherever necessary, the exact words of the interviewees and quotes from the group discussion are used. Finally, a summary of the findings is presented below.

### 4.1 To what extent is HLT incorporated in the Foundation teachers' instructional practices?

To answer this question, 28 online surveys were distributed to teachers and a total of 26 were completed and returned. Figure 1 below demonstrates the survey mean scores per section.

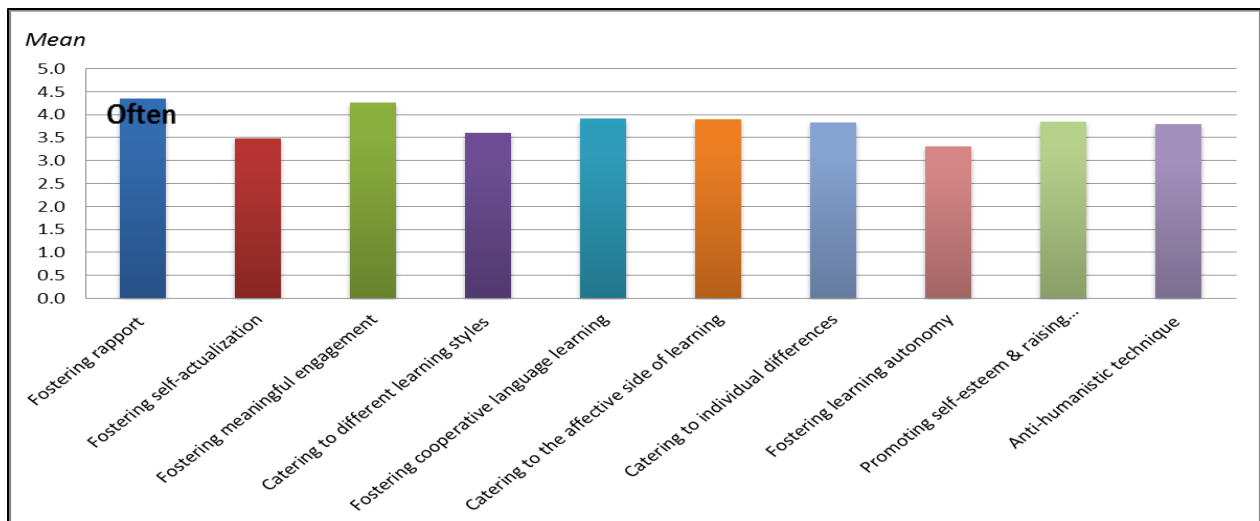


Figure 1: Survey Mean scores per section

Apart from the last column, which refers to an anti-humanistic technique, Figure 1 shows that the mean scores for the nine sections of the survey fluctuate between 3.5 and 4.5 which indicates that the main aspects and techniques of HLT are already incorporated in the Foundation teachers' instructional practices, albeit to varying extents. However, it was not clear at this point of the analysis whether the teachers' incorporation of these techniques was based on their familiarity with HLT or if it merely happened subconsciously. This was especially true in the case of one of the teachers, who commented, "Most of these I do intuitively" (referring to the HLT practices listed in the survey), on the comments page. Therefore, this issue was further explored during the interviews with the teachers.

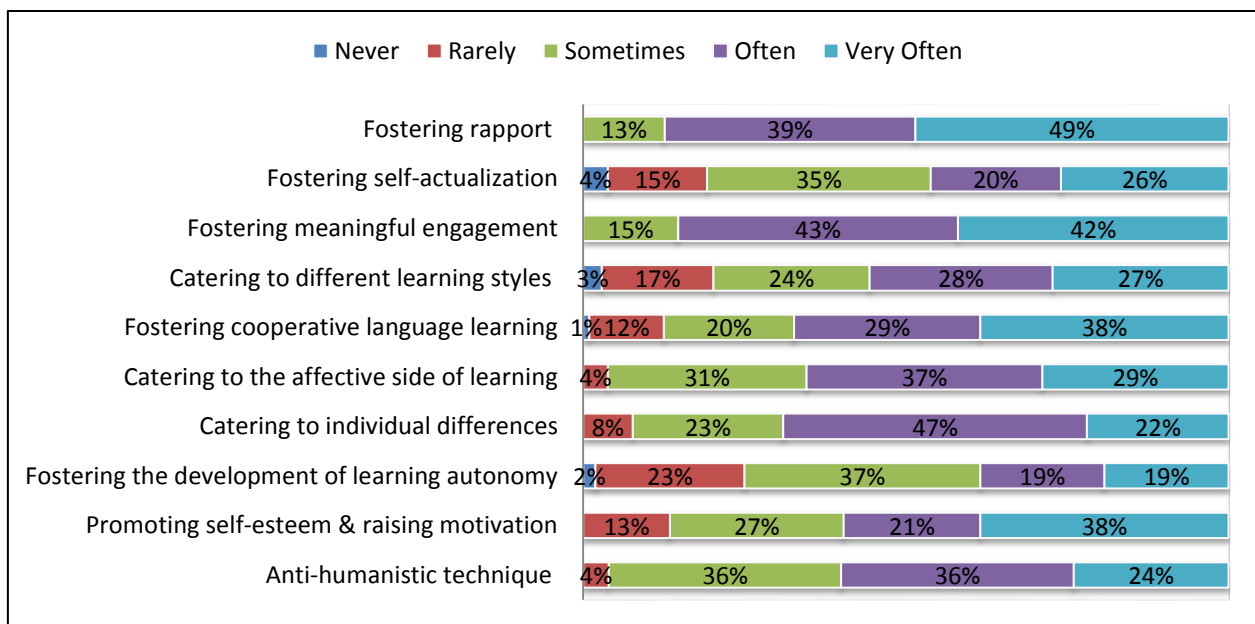


Figure2: Percentages of responses within each survey section

As figure 2 shows, the responses within each of the following survey sections tended toward 'often' and 'very often': Fostering rapport (39%, n= 10; 49%, n= 13), fostering meaningful engagement (43%, n= 11; 42%, n= 11), fostering cooperative language learning (29%, n= 7; 38%, n= 10), catering to the affective side of learning (37%, n= 10; 29%, n= 7) and catering to individual differences (47%, n= 12; 22%, n= 6). This finding shows that more than two thirds of the 26 Foundation teachers often or very often use strategies and techniques that are in line with the five main aspects of HLT outlined above. In the HLT category of fostering rapport, for example, it was found that nearly all of the teachers often or very often addressed their students

by their names (95%; n=25), which reflects the teachers' awareness of the value of this practice in creating good rapport with students. The findings were similar in the teachers' responses to things like bringing in a sense of humor and viewing students with an unconditional positive regard where most of the teachers (85%; n=22) responded with 'very often' or 'often'. In fact, the findings indicate that percentages of responses to most of the survey items that represent the above five HLT aspects tended to be 'often' and 'very often', which means that the main requirements for HLT classrooms already exist in the context of the Foundation program.

On the other hand, the percentages of responses within the four remaining survey sections, which are fostering self-actualization, supporting different learning styles, fostering autonomy and promoting self-esteem and motivation, indicated that some of the HLT strategies and techniques are sometimes or rarely used by the Foundation teachers; therefore, these sections were selected for further exploration during the interviews and group discussion with the teachers. The following section deals with the findings pertaining to these survey sections.

Figure 3 below refers to the technique of inviting senior students to talk to the class about their positive experiences. This technique is associated with the survey section of fostering self-actualization. The findings indicated that 42% (n=11) of the surveyed teachers rarely used this technique and 15% (n=4) of them never used it. In addition, all of the interviewed teachers indicated that they never used it despite understanding that it can aid students in the process of self-actualization. During the interviews, some teachers indicated that the lack of time and their concern about "getting through the materials" were the main reasons for not using this technique. However, it is not quite clear why the Foundation teachers do not commonly use this technique. It may be that, coming from a different culture, they are unaware of the fact that young people tend to look up to older people in Arab cultures (perhaps more so than in other cultures) and highly appreciate learning about their experience in life (Hatherley-Greene, 2012).

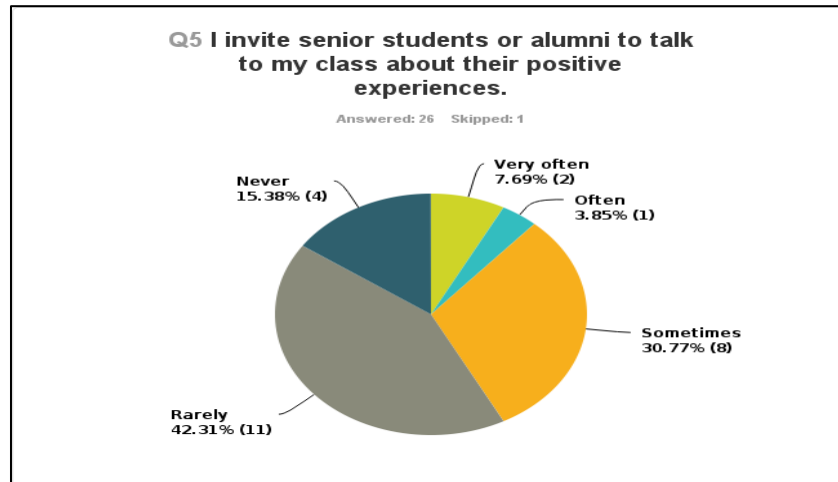


Figure3: Percentages and counts of survey responses to item no. 5

Figure 4 below addresses the practice of assigning PowerPoint presentations as an element of coursework. This technique belongs to the survey section of catering to different learning styles. The findings indicated that 54% (n=14) of the surveyed teachers sometimes used this technique, 12% (n=3) of them rarely used it and 4% (n=1) of teachers never used it. From a HLT perspective, PowerPoint presentations have several pedagogical advantages, such as addressing different learning styles, encouraging group work and enhancing student self-esteem and self-confidence. During the interviews, some of the teachers expressed the belief that during PowerPoint slide preparation, very little learning occurs and too much time is spent on designing the slides. One of these teachers said, “while they are making the slides they speak in Arabic...and the few words that go on the slides are often incorrect...and when they stand up and give the presentation, there is far more effort put to the beauty of the slides and the visual aids than any language content.” Another teacher said that she could not see any pedagogic value in PowerPoint presentations. When asked about how she viewed the idea of using PowerPoint presentations to foster student confidence and self-esteem, the teacher indicated that this technique could be useful for students who were already confident but for other students who lacked confidence and self-esteem, it would be the hardest thing to get up and to speak before the whole class. This teacher also believed that giving a PowerPoint presentation would be “a nightmare” for some students. Other teachers, however, supported the use of PowerPoint presentations in language classes and they mentioned the many ways in which students could benefit from it: “They give them the chance to research the subject... access the Internet and find

out about it... it teaches them how they aesthetically organize the slides and they also use the language they have learnt.” So the idea of using power point presentations was subject to the teachers’ personal convictions about its pedagogic value.

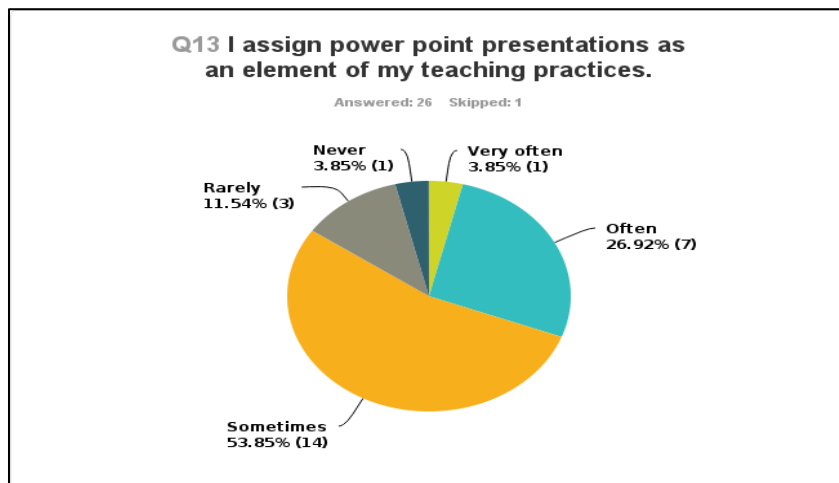


Figure4: Percentages and counts of survey responses to item no. 13

Figure 5 below refers to the technique of using debates as an element of teaching practices. This technique comes under the survey section of fostering autonomy and promoting self-esteem. The findings indicated that 58%; (n=15) of the surveyed teachers rarely used this technique whereas 8%; (n=2) of them never used it. In addition, most of the interviewed teachers indicated that they never used this technique due to their belief that topics of debates are normally controversial, which requires speaking skills and a level of global awareness that is beyond the Foundation students’ capacities. However, three of the teachers pointed out that it may have a place in Level 4 where students’ speaking abilities and debating strategies are stronger.



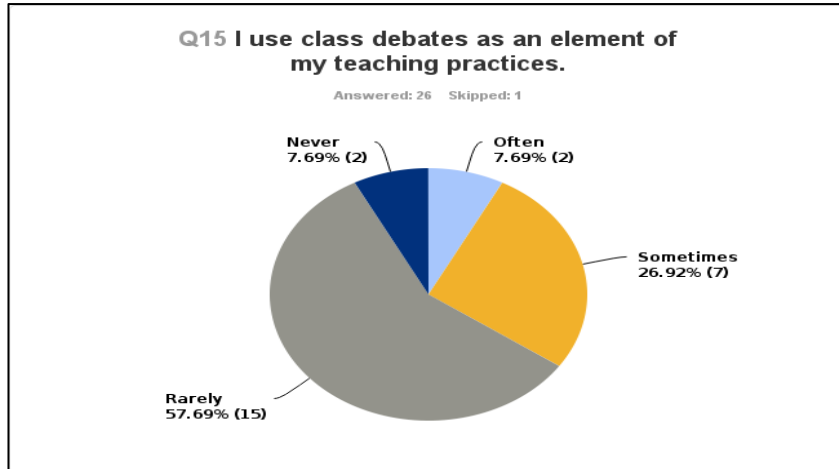


Figure5: Percentages and counts of survey responses to item no. 15

Figure 6 below refers to the technique of allowing students to choose the level of difficulty in the tasks assigned to them. This technique connects to the survey section of fostering learning autonomy. The findings indicated that 42% (n=11) of the surveyed teachers sometimes used this technique, 42% (n=11) of them rarely used it and 4% (n=1) never used it. As mentioned in the literature review, HLT has a unique emphasis on learners' autonomy and considers it a prerequisite for developing the whole person and fostering self-actualization, which are the two fundamental principles of HLT. However, most of the interviewees seemed reticent about the idea of involving students in the choice of the activities and most of them said that fostering learning autonomy has always been a major challenge to them. Yet, and quite interestingly, one of the teachers believed that the students are already engaged in this but in an indirect way: "... in many ways they do make that decision for us in terms of the topic because you know what your students will be interested in.... they are already making that decision... in a way, they choose what to engage in and the teacher knows this." Another teacher pointed out that in the case of Level 4, the IELTS exam constrains both the teachers' and students' choices: "We have the IELTS and...we have exams that are kind of driving what we choose to do with our students too... so they do not always know what they need." However, the teacher believed that even in this context, there was still some room for learner autonomy when teachers provided students with a range of topics to choose from, yet these topics still needed to be within the framework of IELTS reading topics.

Another teacher, who has been teaching in the Foundation program in HCT-Fujairah for the past 15 years, said that it has always been difficult for him to encourage independent learning

amongst his students. He attributed this to the fact that most students stop learning as soon as they leave the classroom and even more when they leave the campus. He added, “it has always been very difficult to give any sorts of homework tasks.” However, the teacher pointed out that there has been little improvement in recent years: “there is one improvement by default is that they are exposed to more English off campus now because they got access to the web [and] satellite TV.”

The findings also indicated that fostering independent learning has been quite a challenge in the case of the Pre-Foundation level. On the survey comments page, one of the teachers pointed out: “There is very little independence with Pre Foundation learners. The activities, books, tasks do not meet the interests, linguistic needs or abilities of the learners. They are still learning the alphabet and are true beginners in basic literacy.” This comment highlights the fact that the curriculum may also be an obstacle in the case of these very weak Pre foundation students who barely have a grasp of the fundamentals of the language. Another teacher pointed out that for these types of students, encouraging independent learning can only happen if teachers scaffold students towards it. He said, “you have to instill it slowly but surely all the time...you need to take them out of their comfort zone and teach them how to challenge themselves and their previous learning skills or perceptions in a way that helps them be ready for a different learning experience.”

There was a consensus amongst the interviewees that students’ resistance to working independently and their tendency to rely heavily on teachers was due to their primary and secondary education, where their dependence on teachers was almost total. Teachers also indicated that it might be due to their culture, where independent thinking was not part of their upbringing. One of the teachers said, “this is basically the sort of package they carry from their previous education...it is not easy to get over this at all and it is a real challenge to help them abandon old habits... it is not going to happen overnight.” To sum up, most of the teachers faced difficulties trying to generate autonomous learning among students in the Foundation Program.

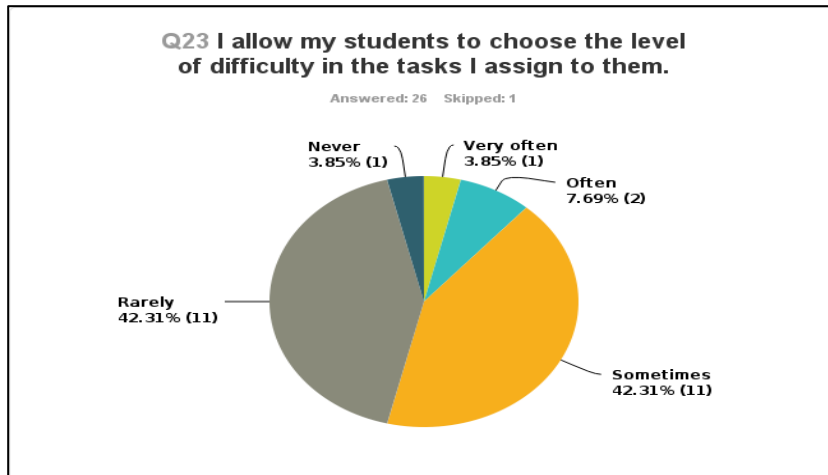


Figure6: Percentages and counts of survey responses to item no.23

Finally, Figure 7 refers to the technique of placing stronger and weaker students in the same group. From the viewpoint of HLT, this technique is inadvisable as stronger students tend to dominate most of the learning activities, which discourages weaker students and leaves little opportunity for them to play an active role in the group. The findings indicated that 24% (n=6) of the teachers very often used this technique whereas 36% (n=9) of them often used it. When these findings were discussed with the participants, most of them supported this technique, claiming that mixed-ability groups offer the chance for weaker students to benefit from their stronger peers. One of the teachers said, “sometimes when I put them in groups, I hear stronger students trying to teach weaker students.”

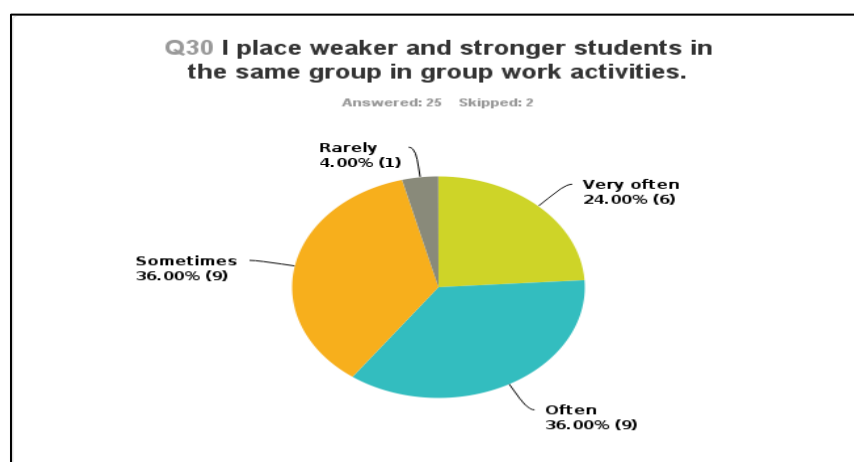


Figure7: Percentages and counts of survey responses to item no. 30

#### **4.2 Can HLT contribute to more effective language learning in the Foundation Program?**

To answer the second research question, the qualitative data collected from the interviews and focus group discussion are presented. The interviews and the group discussion aimed to explore the potential value of HLT in the Foundation context. The objective of these discussions was to ascertain whether the premises, strategies and techniques of HLT might contribute to the effectiveness of the teaching/learning process in the Foundation Program. One of the areas investigated was Foundation students' perceived affinity for HLT, as this is believed to be a crucial factor for the success of this approach in the Foundation Program and language learning programs generally (Zhang and Atkin 2010).

The first interview question addressed cooperative learning as this is one of the main aspects of HLT. All of the interviewees supported this technique as it has proved to be effective in the Foundation context. Additionally, the interviewees indicated that their students always enjoyed group work and were engaged when they undertook group-learning activities. One of the teachers said, "Pairs and groups works well with most of the students...they are a very social kind of student body." Another teacher said: "Most of the time I find that learning is more effective when they work in pairs and groups...our students are really sociable human beings...if they are working together, they finish the work more efficiently." In the focus group discussion, one of the comments was, "if you try to get them to do individual work, they gravitate back to work with a friend...collaborative work seems to be part of the culture and we have to use that as much as possible." There seemed to be a consensus among the teachers that the Foundation students were sociable by nature, which always made pair and group work activities quite successful. However, many teachers pointed out that they preferred to keep the number of students in groups low - not more than four to a group. The teachers gave different reasons for this but mainly they felt that classroom management problems usually arose with larger groups. The interviewees also discussed ways in which they monitored students to keep them on task during group work. One of the teachers said: " You have to be very clear on the instructions...if they are not clear on the instructions, do not do any group work... there are bound to be more questions about the task...then you repeat...and then you wander around to check they are on

task.” The teachers’ obvious concern about keeping students on task poses a question about the amount of independent learning that can take place when students work collaboratively.

As for the question relating to using games, most of the teachers appreciated the value of games in introducing an element of motivation and fun amongst students. However, games can be a source of noise and chaos, as pointed out by some teachers. One of these teachers felt that, “this is one of the areas where they get out of control and they get very loud...it becomes very chaotic...I just still have that fundamental issue about maturity level and keeping things structured.” This was a factor that discouraged most of the teachers from using end-of-the-day fun activities, as some of them indicated.

Two other teachers talked about games relating to iPads. One of them said, “I think that because the students are iPads heavy and they play a lot of games anyway... I want to move them away from that.” The other teacher said that games need to have an element of learning and the iPad is not helping with this: “Ironically with the iPad it is more difficult because they themselves who start playing games that have nothing to do with English language and you can’t see what they are doing on the iPads.” The teacher also pointed out that most of the games on the iPad are designed for young learners. As for the use of music and songs, most of the interviewees said that they preferred to avoid them due to religious and cultural sensitivity issues.

During the group discussion, the issue of independent learning was posed again, which created an opportunity for more investigation into this essential principle of HLT. As sufficient data had already been gathered on this topic during the interviews, the researcher steered the discussion towards how independent learning can enhance students’ critical thinking. It was found that in spite of the many techniques the teachers employed to help their students transform into critical thinkers, the majority of them agreed that this goal has been hard to achieve. One of the teachers said: “a lot of our students can’t get into the critical thinking skills because nobody at the lower levels of education teaches them.” Another teacher pointed out that, “critical thinking for them is something they are not used to...and you have to focus on it all the time and sometimes impose it in class.” In summary, most of the teachers agreed that because their students had grown

accustomed to being directed by their teachers in primary and secondary schools, they were now finding it difficult to develop independent learning and critical thinking skills.

The topic of personalizing the learning experience and aligning it more closely to students' cultural background was also discussed during the interviews and the group discussion. It was interesting that all of the teachers agreed that their students were much more engaged in the lesson when it was relevant to their personal experiences. It was also established that Foundation students had very limited global awareness in the estimation of the interviewees, one of whom speculated, "our students live in such a bubble... there is no way they will be interested in London or Paris or even Cairo unless they know they are going to go there." Another teacher said, "It is a kind of a protection thing... our students have quite protected lives." However, another interviewee pointed out that her students were very interested in global topics such as the British royal family and wildlife in Australia. She pointed out that: "...by the time they have got to this far, they are sick of learning about camels and pyramids because they have been doing it all the way through school - dates...Arab people...Ibn Battuta...they have had enough!" The teacher added that there should be a balance between the students' cultural background and topics of global awareness.

As the success of humanistic activities depends on building a climate of trust in which sharing life experiences takes place, it was important to find out to what extent the Foundation students and teachers felt they could openly share their personal life experiences. In answering a question on whether they share their personal life experiences with their students, most of the teachers said they did this but with caution about what aspects to share. One of the teachers said that he has been very careful about sharing his private life with his students because he believed it was not appropriate in the conservative society of Fujairah. As a male teacher working in the women's college, he believed it was especially risky. However, the same teacher pointed out that:

"When it comes to life experiences yes; up to a point. But in a vague way. For example, happy vacation memories, best places visited, favorite cities and so on. But I would not talk about or elicit really life-changing events such as

births, weddings and funerals...em...years ago I did attempt such topics, but when I had a student run out the room in floods of tears, I never did it again!”

During the group discussion, most of the teachers seemed comfortable with the idea of sharing personal life experiences. They also agreed that their students enjoyed those lessons and found them memorable. One of the teachers said, “I try to go for the ‘happy’ personal stories such as ‘your proudest moment’ or ‘a memorable journey’. I agree that personal stories make the language come alive and this is what we are aiming for.” Another male teacher from the men’s college said, “I share them when they accidentally crop up in the course of a class. I sometimes intentionally share these experiences with them if I think they will serve the point I am making or to set a good example for them to follow.” Thus the HLT principle of ‘sharing and caring’ already exists in the Foundation Program, as the teachers seemed to be quite aware of the human side of teaching. One of the teachers pointed out that, “if the teacher sees himself or herself as a role model and not just an instrument for filling the heads of the students with information and data, then he cannot separate his humanity from the job he is doing.”

Regarding their perspectives on how students think and feel about class activities, the interviewees agreed that it was hard to separate feelings and thoughts. One of them said, “I think how the students feel is more important than anything because it influences how they think.” The teachers were convinced that students needed to feel relaxed, comfortable and safe environment in order to learn, and it was the teacher’s job to facilitate these things. The teachers also agreed that a trusting and warm class environment is essential to minimize students’ anxiety and enhance their engagement and motivation. However, although one of the teachers agreed that thinking and feeling are integrated, he said, “I am not too sympathetic because at the end of the day, they are language learners.” Two other teachers agreed with him, arguing that learning a language is not always fun and there are always ‘dry’ stages in the lesson where students have to learn the rules of grammar, for instance.

When asked about the potential value of the methods of community language learning and the silent way in the Foundation program, most of the teachers believed that community language learning was particularly useful with advanced level learners, where the students are more

mature, can work in groups and have the requisite speaking skills. One of the teachers pointed out that the large size of the Foundation classes (20-25 students) was one of the reasons why community language learning would not be an effective method to employ. As for the silent way, only two of the teachers opted for using this method, arguing that it could work well because it offers an alternative to traditional ways of teaching. One of them added that this method would help cut down on teacher talking time (TTT). The rest of the teachers were skeptical about the effectiveness of this method in the Foundation context where students, according to one of the teachers, “always expect the teacher to guide them throughout the lesson or at least say something.” It was obvious during the group discussion that these two methods were not commonly used by the teachers.

The last part in the group discussion was dedicated to talk about the value of the iPad with relation to HLT strategies and techniques. All of the teachers agreed that they did not regard using the iPad as an impediment to their application of the strategies and techniques they had discussed during the interviews and the group discussion. The pedagogical values of the iPad that were mentioned during the discussion were in line with the HLT premises and associated methodologies. For example, most of the teachers appreciated the element of learning mobility that the iPad provided for learners. Another advantage was using iPad-based electronic interactive textbooks that enabled students to do their readings more independently. However, all of the teachers agreed that the iPad can be a source of distraction as many students cannot resist opening applications and playing games during class time. In addition, most of the teachers seemed uncertain about whether or not using the iPad enhanced students’ critical thinking abilities. Finally, the teachers believed that the iPad should not be the only teaching/learning tool and that other traditional tools such as ‘pen and paper’ could still hold significant value in the learning/teaching process in the Foundation Program.



### **4.3 Summary of the findings**

The participants in this study supported most of the tenets of humanistic language teaching and utilized methodologies associated with HLT in their daily professional practice. They sometimes carried out these methodologies unwittingly, however; they appeared to be more familiar with HLT practice than theory and had not set out to create a classroom environment that was explicitly in line with HLT pedagogy. There were also aspects of HLT that the participants did not incorporate in their professional practice. Using guest speaker/mentors, PowerPoint presentations, and debates, for example were not popular activities among the interviewees. As well, the participants felt that encouraging students to be autonomous learners was problematic in their professional context; they indicated that the local education system and elements of local culture had made students reluctant to engage in independent or critical thinking within learning activities. Finally, the participants indicated that collaborative learning undertaken in a friendly and supportive environment was a compulsory element of a successful classroom, but acknowledged that behavioral concerns with students could make this ideal more difficult to attain in practice. Overall then, the participants agreed with the basic philosophies of humanistic language teaching in theory and applied many of these in their day-to-day practice. They indicated that this application would help to ensure that they were creating a safe and comfortable learning environment in which student learning was maximized, though they recognized that contextual peculiarities could, to a degree, complicate the process.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **5.1 Discussion**

This study aimed at exploring the extent to which HLT was incorporated in Foundation teachers' instructional practices in HCT-Fujairah Colleges. It also sought to examine the perceived value of HLT in the Foundation context. The quantitative and qualitative findings obtained from the three research instruments (the surveys, the interviews and the focus group discussion) indicated the strong presence of HLT in the instructional practices of teachers in the Foundation Program. However, the fact that the teachers had little knowledge of the established principles of HLT and yet appeared to be 'unconsciously' incorporating its strategies in their teaching practices is consistent with Amini and Amini's (2012) claim that the premises of HLT are comprehensive enough to be part of most general aspects of language learning/teaching.

The findings also revealed that the Foundation teachers' instructional practices very often or often included strategies and techniques that fell under the HLT rubrics of fostering rapport, fostering meaningful engagement, fostering cooperative language learning and teaching to the affective side of learning. This may indicate that a teaching/learning environment conducive to HLT already exists in the Foundation program. However, as the Foundation teachers were following HCT's centrally devised curriculum which dictated prescribed learning outcomes for students (and their teachers), none of the teachers felt that they had the time or the requisite level of autonomy to apply a humanistic pedagogy completely. It was not clear, however, whether the absence of a systematic logical sequence of humanistic exercises was connected to the practical difficulty of developing a formal and universally accepted HLT-based curriculum (Rinvoluceri 1999).

Despite the fact that the majority of the participating teachers came from Western countries with education systems that differed considerably from the Emirati system (which the Foundation students had attended prior to enrolling at HCT), it was interesting to note that they were aware of the nature of the teaching/learning environment in local (UAE) schools. This awareness was clearly articulated during the interviews and the focus group discussion; many of the participants believed their students' difficulties in adapting to the model of independent learning and critical thinking skills development that the college supported was the result of their learned reliance on

the didactic teaching methods used in local schools where memorization and rote learning were standard. This finding (which indicated the negative impact of the Foundation students' previous learning experience on their current learning context) substantiates the findings of some studies (Dahl, 2010; Abdulla & Ridge, 2011; Ahmed 2011; Al Subaihi 2011; Nereim 2012) which posited that Emirati students may find independent learning and critical thinking activities particularly challenging as they have not usually been exposed to these before college. The teachers also appeared to realize that their students' progress towards autonomy and self-reliance is a long-term project that will likely advance through a number of stages.

It can be argued that the Foundation teachers' awareness of the nature of their students' previous school learning experiences was the motivation for their intuitive employment of HLT strategies, which they felt helped students to overcome the habits they had developed as primary and secondary school students. The survey results showed very high positive response rates to items such as 'discussing with students their problems in learning English as well as their academic goals,' 'assigning activities that suit students' interests as well as their linguistic abilities and needs,' 'varying teaching resources and activities,' 'monitoring each student's progress' and 'teaching independent learning strategies.' It was also apparent that the teachers perceived high levels of anxiety among their students. When the question of whether the students experienced language learning anxiety was raised during the focus group discussion, the participants related incidents they had witnessed in which students had refused to talk, apparently due to acute learning anxiety. One of the teachers said: "Without a doubt... I have had three incidents in the past two weeks where students refused to articulate... it is not that they do not understand but they do not want to articulate and that is extreme language anxiety." It can likely be argued that the humanistic aspects of teachers' instructional practices that targeted the affective side of their students' learning (such as addressing students by their names, praising students for their achievements, viewing students' with an unconditional positive regard and maintaining a sense of humor) were successful in reducing learning anxiety and creating a safe and trusting class environment, which supports Krashen's (1982) "affective filter hypothesis" and Dufeu's (1994) argument for the indispensable role of affect in creating an effective learning environment.

Moreover, most of the teachers were able to capitalize on their students' enthusiasm for humanistic methods and techniques such as pair and group work, personalization of the learning

experience and fun educational games. Consequently, these teachers were able to gradually help their students become more engaged in learning, more independent as learners, and more positive as young adults with relatively high levels of self-esteem and potential for self-actualization. These positive outcomes are consistent with the results of various studies which have highlighted the merits of HLT (Moskowitz 1981; Kyriacou & Cheng 1993; Ghaith & Diab 2008; Zhang & Atkin 2010; Sultan & Hussain 2012; Khatib et al. 2013).

It was noted, however, that despite the teachers' effective use of group work activities, very few of them seemed to be aware of the humanistic value that this technique might add in enhancing students' sense of belonging and community. Therefore, the teachers' accounts of the group work activities they normally used did not include any innovative ideas regarding ways in which to foster closer relations among students and help them understand the humanistic value of collaborative work as described by Snowman et al. (2009).

On the other hand, some humanistic practices were sometimes or rarely used by the teachers for a number of different reasons. Generally, it was noted that the more the class activities demanded autonomy on the part of the students, the more cautious the teachers were regarding the dynamics of these exercises and the more patient they were regarding the desired outcomes of such activities. For example, most of the teachers seemed reluctant to allow students to work in groups of more than four during group work activities as this often lead to classroom management issues. The teachers indicated that a low level of maturity was the main reason for chaos when the size of student groups exceeded four people. The fact that most of the interviewees did not report any significant improvement in this regard over time raises questions about the potential of HLT pedagogy to foster self-direction and critical-thinking among learners. It may be that the ultimate transformative goal of HLT (to change students' behavior holistically) is partly dependent on students' innate readiness for this change (Zhang and Atkin 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that the younger the learners are, the easier and faster the holistic change can happen as younger learners have not yet developed rigid patterns of thinking and behavior as may be the case with adult learners. Another important question is whether the two year period of Foundation studies is really sufficient to achieve the HLT primary goals of self-direction and critical thinking. In this regard, one of the teachers pointed out:

“I do not think I have any impact on attitude...the best thing I can do is to create interest in the class...but a whole approach to their lives as students...I do not believe that I have a huge say in that because when our girls come to us, they are already 18 or 19...they are young women...they have already formed their identities and formed their approaches to life.”

In other words, the teacher seemed skeptical about her ability to support the holistic attitude and personality development of her students, which is the paramount goal of HLT. It is possible, however, that change may be taking place but at a pace that is dependent on variables extraneous to the teachers' control. This position resonates with Zhang and Atkin's (2010) study, which indicated that a determinant of HLT effectiveness is the level of readiness among students for a holistic change to their thinking and behavior.

Regarding the roles that HLT proposes for the teacher (mainly facilitating the learning process) and the learner (mainly thinking independently and working collaboratively), it was clear that the Foundation teachers and their students were not performing these roles idealistically. The teachers had not been able to fully abandon their roles as controllers of the class nor had the learners been fully able to take charge of their learning. It appeared that there were impediments to performing these roles, which would make transitioning to HLT standards an involved process. This involvement might be embodied in the introduction of a series of steps or stages in the case of the Foundation context, as change in the traditional roles of the teacher and the learner only seems to happen in a gradual way. This position accords with Kyriacou and Cheng's (1993) study which showed that there is a distinction between adopting the principles of HLT as ideals and actually applying them in real classrooms.

In spite of the many advantages that the iPad might offer in fostering independent learning and enhancing engagement and motivation, the participants did not report that they had been able to effectively utilize this tool to develop their students' critical thinking skills. Instead, they felt that the iPads were a distraction for many students, who often abused the technology in the sense that they 'escaped' from the lesson by playing games or otherwise going off task. In some instances,

teachers indicated that (they felt) students did not have the level of maturity needed to take full advantage of the learning opportunities that iPad technology could offer them.

Finally, regarding the humanistic exercises proposed by Moskowitz (1978) and Puchta and Schratz (1999), it seems that there is still a place for these in the Foundation Program, but perhaps only to a certain extent. It is quite possible that the Foundation teachers can borrow from this pool of knowledge and incorporate its wisdom in their syllabuses in a way commensurate with the needs and abilities of the students. It does not seem feasible, however, for teachers to adopt a pedagogy that draws exclusively upon a 'catalogue' or inventory of HLT methodologies, due to the perceived realities of the local context, such as the constraints resulting from following a prescribed institutional pedagogy, a curriculum inclusive of specific outcomes for learners, and issues relating to weak student aptitude.

## **5.2 Limitations of the study**

This study examines the perspectives of a group of English language teachers in the United Arab Emirates regarding humanistic language teaching. Its focus is on the manner in which teachers in the research context see the benefits of incorporating HLT pedagogies in their regular teaching practice. It is necessary to examine the limitations of the study here, for purposes of reflexivity and the overall trustworthiness of the study. It is also important for the researcher to acknowledge ways in which he or she may have biased the study through subjectivity, and this is especially true in studies that utilize qualitative methodologies (see Cohen et al., 2007; Breen, 2007).

In terms of methodology, the relatively small sample size of the study will mean that its findings are of limited generalizability, but the study itself can likely be replicated in similar contexts where research outcomes may also be similar (see 3.1 above). As well, this research study was conducted by an insider-researcher, which increased the possibility of bias at all stages of the research process. It may be, however, that this position also permitted the researcher key insights to the research context that would have been impossible for an outsider to attain

(Kerstetter, 2012). In this way, it was a benefit to the study and the researcher to have relatively in-depth knowledge of the research context in order to carry out the study expediently.

Finally, the purposive sampling strategy employed for purposes of data collection means that not all of the English language teachers at the institution were heard regarding their perspectives on HLT. A more 'random' sampling of informants may have strengthened the study from the perspective of its generalizability. The rationale for selecting the informants, however (as outlined above), is related to their perceived status as information rich participants and considered a sacrifice worth making to get the best data for the study.

All of the methodological decisions that were made in carrying out this study required the judgment of the researcher and these "researcher effects" will likely have biased the study to an extent, as researcher effects do in all studies (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 171). It is important to acknowledge the likelihood of bias in this study (as an element of reflexivity) and indicate how the limitations outlined above were considered at all stages of the research process and rationalized here to the extent possible.

### **5.3 Pedagogical implications of the study**

Incorporating humanistic elements as an element of ELT curricula is strongly recommended after a consideration of the findings of the study. Reconsidering the findings of this study and the literature currently available on HLT, it would seem that transforming this methodology into a recognized educational paradigm would be a positive development in educational contexts worldwide. It is true that contextual peculiarities in cultural and educational systems may limit the effective application of (methodological specificities of) HLT to a degree, but its basic tenets are conducive to effective learning and the 'core' of HLT is an important element of any pedagogy in any educational program.

It may be that practitioners working in diverse educational contexts will need to apply the specific methodological recommendations of HLT in an 'experimental,' 'trial and error' fashion to observe which are best suited to the given professional milieu. This may be a practical reality of education, however, it is unlikely that a 'one-size-fits-all' system of pedagogy could be

universally applied across educational contexts and function equally well in all. For example, in the context of higher education in the United Arab Emirates, certain aspects of HLT may be more effectively applied than others. For example, teachers wishing to apply HLT as an element of effective practice might want to limit group work activity and focus more upon developing learning activities that engage individual learners.

## **5.4 Recommendations**

It is recommended that this study be replicated in other contexts to ascertain whether the findings are transferable to other research settings, but more importantly, to explore the feasibility of applying HLT to educational practices internationally. It is anticipated that the overall effect of applying HLT pedagogies will be positive, though elements of it will be more effective in different contexts and its effectiveness will be difficult to predict without further studies.

It is possible that educational institutions and systems could benefit from encouraging teachers to conduct teacher research into the effects of HLT pedagogy on learning outcomes and student satisfaction. Action research studies, for example could be conducted in different contexts to document the effects of systematically applying HLT pedagogy in ELT classrooms. In this way, TESOL researchers and practitioners alike could effectively evaluate a more complete picture of HLT's viability as an emerging educational paradigm.

While it may be contentious to suggest that a TESOL-based methodology could be 'transplanted' to other subject areas and other disciplines, it is quite probable that the humanistic philosophies underlying HLT pedagogy would be well received by students in all types of education – wherever learning was taking place. Feeling like a respected and autonomous individual can only enhance the level of enjoyment experienced by learners in educational programs. This level of satisfaction is quite likely to be accompanied by a marked improvement in achievement on the part of students (and their teachers). The fundamental principles underpinning the HLT model actually have less to do with language learning per se, than they are associated with celebrating the individuality, creativity and basic humanity of learners as people who matter profoundly.



## 5.5 Conclusion

This study set out to discover the extent to which teachers in the Foundations Program at Fujairah Men's and Women's Colleges incorporated humanistic language teaching in their institutional practices. It also sought to interrogate language teachers' perspectives as to whether or not the application of humanistic language teaching methodologies might help language students in the Foundations Program to learn English more effectively. It was anticipated that the teachers who participated in the study would be able to illuminate this important subject and help to initiate future studies on applications for HLT in UAE higher education and TESOL.

The data revealed that many of the methodologies associated with HLT pedagogy were already familiar to the participants and had been incorporated in their own repertoires of professional practice. Things like addressing students by name, using humor in the classroom, and keeping a positive outlook when considering students, regardless of the circumstances, were common practices among the interviewees. Although the participants did not frame these activities as aspects of HLT, they had adopted these methodologies intuitively, as commonsense solutions to the problem of learning anxiety and low student engagement.

Interestingly, however, the informants did not tend to allow their students the levels of autonomy that HLT pedagogies generally involve. The teachers interviewed indicated that they felt the students would have difficulty in managing the demands of the curriculum independently – they would tend to veer off task and act out in a way that would interfere with the learning process should the teacher allow them the freedom to work without much direct supervision. In some cases, the interviewees indicated that cultural factors made it difficult for students to responsibly manage independent learning and the general feeling was that too much freedom would not work in the case of language learning in the research context. In fact, the informants generally took the position that it was difficult to act as a facilitator of learning when students needed to be led by the teacher, who was expected (by the students) to explain concepts and language items in very explicit terms.

Overall, the informants felt that incorporating HLT pedagogy in their teaching practice was beneficial to their students, but they were reluctant to fully apply methodologies that are officially recognized by the HLT model as likely to foster growth and development among

students. This was, in part, due to local concerns, but also perhaps to institutional issues, such as large class sizes and perhaps busy schedules that did not permit the interviewees sufficient time in which to plan activities (such as inviting guest speakers and making oral presentations) and work out strategies for successfully managing the transition to HLT in UAE higher education.

It is hoped that this study will help to draw attention to the importance of HLT pedagogy in UAE higher education. Researchers looking at this issue might examine ways in which to overcome the perception that UAE students cannot learn independently and that they must be under constant supervision in order to study English. The study should be replicated in the UAE and beyond to look at this problem and continue to work to find a solution/solutions to it and help UAE students to truly enjoy the full benefits of HLT in practice.

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## Appendix A. Teachers' Online Survey - results

Dear teacher,

I am Baha Eddin Hussain Abu Khait, an English faculty at HCT- Fujairah Women's College. I am currently doing my Master's Degree in education MEd in the British University in Dubai. I am conducting this survey to explore the extent to which humanistic language teaching is incorporated in the Foundation teachers' instructional practices and I would greatly appreciate your participation in my research. Please give your answers sincerely as only this will guarantee the success of the survey. Please note that your feedback is completely anonymous and will not be used for any other purposes. You are welcome to comment on any part of the survey by writing additional notes. Please feel free to contact me for further clarification or details. My email is babukhait@hct.ac.ae

Kindly respond to this survey within a week. Your help is much appreciated.

Thank you.

### To What Extent is Humanistic Language Teaching Incorporated in the Instructional Practices of the Foundation Teachers in HCT – Fujairah? A Case Study

Please complete the following survey. Tick the appropriate response for statements 1–30. You may use the lines below for additional comments.

No.	Item	Very often 5	Often 4	Sometimes 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	I maintain a warm and trusting classroom environment.	48.0% 12	36.0% 9	16.0% 4	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
2	I address every student by their names.	76.9% 20	76.9% 5	76.9% 1	76.9% 0	76.9% 0
3	I bring in and encourage a sense of humor in my classroom.	50.0% 13	34.6% 9	15.4% 4	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
4	I view my students with an unconditional positive regard.	19.2% 5	65.4% 17	15.4% 4	0.0% 0	0.0% 0



5	I invite senior students or alumni to talk to my class about their positive experiences.	30.8% 8	42.3% 11	26.9% 7	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
6	I discuss with my students their problems in learning English.	7.7% 2	3.8% 1	30.8% 8	42.3% 11	15.4% 4
7	I talk to my students about their individual academic goals.	19.2% 5	19.2% 5	53.8% 14	7.7% 2	0.0% 0
8	I explain to my students that failure is often the result of not trying rather than not having the ability.	46.2% 12	46.2% 4	46.2% 7	46.2% 3	46.2% 0
9	I assign activities that suit my students' linguistic abilities.	57.7% 15	30.8% 8	11.5% 3	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
10	I assign activities that suit my students' interests.	15.4% 4	65.4% 17	19.2% 5	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
11	I assign activities that suit my students' linguistic needs.	52.0% 13	32.0% 8	16.0% 4	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
12	I personalize my teaching activities (make them relevant to learners' personal experiences).	34.6% 9	46.2% 12	19.2% 5	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
13	I assign power point presentations as an element of my teaching practices.	50.0% 13	42.3% 11	7.7% 2	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
14	I briefly explain to my students the aim of the activity they are involved in.	3.8% 1	26.9% 7	53.8% 14	11.5% 3	3.8% 1
15	I use class debates as an element of my teaching practices.	0.0% 0	7.7% 2	26.9% 7	57.7% 15	7.7% 2
16	I use the Internet as a teaching resource.	69.2% 18	30.8% 8	0.0% 0	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
17	I vary my teaching activities.	36.0% 9	36.0% 12	36.0% 4	36.0% 0	36.0% 0
18	I assign tasks in which teams of learners are asked to work together towards the same goal.	26.9% 7	50.0% 13	23.1% 6	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
19	I use pair work as an element of my teaching practices.	61.5% 16	61.5% 8	61.5% 2	61.5% 0	61.5% 0

20	I use group work as an element of my teaching practices.	57.7% 15	23.1% 6	15.4% 4	3.8% 1	0.0% 0
21	I use role playing as an element of my teaching practices.	7.7% 2	7.7% 3	7.7% 9	7.7% 11	7.7% 1
22	I try to ensure that my students' encounters with English language learning are positive.	46.2% 12	46.2% 12	46.2% 2	46.2% 0	46.2% 0
23	I use exciting and fun activities in end-of-the-day classes.	11.5% 3	26.9% 7	53.8% 14	7.7% 2	0.0% 0
24	I use different standards to judge my students' academic achievement, so that different levels of ability are taken into account.	3.8% 1	3.8% 12	3.8% 9	3.8% 4	3.8% 0
25	I monitor each student's progress.	40.0% 10	48.0% 12	12.0% 3	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
26	I teach students independent learning strategies to facilitate the intake of new material.	34.6% 9	34.6% 8	34.6% 8	34.6% 1	34.6% 0
27	I allow my students to choose the level of difficulty in the tasks I assign to them.	3.8% 1	3.8% 2	3.8% 11	3.8% 11	3.8% 1
28	I praise my students for their achievements.	73.1% 19	23.1% 6	3.8% 1	0.0% 0	0.0% 0
29	I assign tasks that involve the public display of my students' skills as an element of my teaching practices.	3.8% 1	3.8% 5	3.8% 13	3.8% 7	3.8% 0
30	I place weaker and stronger students in the same group in group work activities.	24.0% 6	36.0% 9	36.0% 9	4.0% 1	0.0% 0

Additional comments

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## Appendix B. Survey outcomes

#	Category	Item	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	CV	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Sum
1	Fostering rapport	I maintain a warm and trusting classroom environment.	4.3	4	5	0.73	0.17	0.0%	0.0%	16.0%	36.0%	48.0%	100.0%
2	Fostering rapport	I address every student by their names.	4.7	5	5	0.52	0.11	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	19.2%	76.9%	100.0%
3	Fostering rapport	I bring in and encourage a sense of humor in my classroom.	4.3	4.5	5	0.73	0.17	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	34.6%	50.0%	100.0%
4	Fostering rapport	I view my students with an unconditional positive regard.	4.0	4	4	0.59	0.15	0.0%	0.0%	15.4%	65.4%	19.2%	100.0%
5	Fostering self-actualization	I discuss with my students their problems in learning English.	4.0	4	4	0.76	0.19	0.0%	0.0%	26.9%	42.3%	30.8%	100.0%
6	Fostering self-actualization	I invite senior students or alumni to talk to my class about their experiences.	2.5	2	2	1.05	0.43	15.4%	42.3%	30.8%	3.8%	7.7%	100.0%
7	Fostering self-actualization	I talk to my students about their individual academic goals.	3.5	3	3	0.89	0.25	0.0%	7.7%	53.8%	19.2%	19.2%	100.0%
8	Fostering self-actualization	I explain to my students that failure is the result of not trying hard enough.	4.0	4	5	1.09	0.28	0.0%	11.5%	26.9%	15.4%	46.2%	100.0%
9	Fostering meaningful engagement	I assign activities that suit my students' linguistic abilities.	4.5	5	5	0.69	0.16	0.0%	0.0%	11.5%	30.8%	57.7%	100.0%
10	Fostering meaningful engagement	I assign activities that suit my students' interests.	4.0	4	4	0.59	0.15	0.0%	0.0%	19.2%	65.4%	15.4%	100.0%
11	Fostering meaningful engagement	I assign activities that suit my students' linguistic needs.	4.4	5	5	0.74	0.17	0.0%	0.0%	16.0%	32.0%	52.0%	100.0%
12	Fostering meaningful engagement	I personalize my teaching activities (make them relevant to students).	4.2	4	4	0.72	0.17	0.0%	0.0%	19.2%	46.2%	34.6%	100.0%
13	Catering for different learning styles	I assign power point presentations as an element of my teaching practices.	3.2	3	3	0.82	0.26	3.8%	11.5%	53.8%	26.9%	3.8%	100.0%
14	Fostering meaningful engagement	I briefly explain to my students the aim of the activity they are doing.	4.4	4.5	5	0.63	0.14	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	42.3%	50.0%	100.0%
15	Catering for different learning styles	I use class debates as an element of my teaching practices.	2.3	2	2	0.73	0.31	7.7%	57.7%	26.9%	7.7%	0.0%	100.0%
16	Catering for different learning styles	I use the Internet as a teaching resource.	4.7	5	5	0.46	0.10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%
17	Catering for different learning styles	I vary my teaching activities.	4.2	4	4	0.69	0.16	0.0%	0.0%	16.0%	48.0%	36.0%	100.0%
18	Fostering cooperative language learning	I assign tasks in which teams of learners are asked to work together.	4.0	4	4	0.71	0.17	0.0%	0.0%	23.1%	50.0%	26.9%	100.0%
19	Fostering cooperative language learning	I use pair work as an element of my teaching practices.	4.5	5	5	0.63	0.14	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	30.8%	61.5%	100.0%
20	Fostering cooperative language learning	I use group work as an element of my teaching practices.	4.3	5	5	0.87	0.20	0.0%	3.8%	15.4%	23.1%	57.7%	100.0%
21	Fostering cooperative language learning	I use role plays as an element of my teaching practices.	2.8	3	2	0.97	0.35	3.8%	42.3%	34.6%	11.5%	7.7%	100.0%
22	Affective side of learning	I try to ensure that my students' encounters with English language are enjoyable.	4.4	4	5	0.62	0.14	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	46.2%	46.2%	100.0%
23	Affective side of learning	I use exciting and fun activities in end-of-the-day classes.	3.4	3	3	0.79	0.23	0.0%	7.7%	53.8%	26.9%	11.5%	100.0%
24	Catering for individual differences	I use different standards to judge my students' academic achievements.	3.4	3.5	4	0.79	0.23	0.0%	15.4%	34.6%	46.2%	3.8%	100.0%
25	Catering for individual differences	I monitor each student's progress.	4.3	4	4	0.66	0.16	0.0%	0.0%	12.0%	48.0%	40.0%	100.0%
26	Fostering the development of learning strategies	I teach students independent learning strategies to facilitate their learning.	4.0	4	5	0.90	0.23	0.0%	3.8%	30.8%	30.8%	34.6%	100.0%
27	Fostering the development of learning strategies	I allow my students to choose the level of difficulty in the tasks I assign.	2.7	3	2	0.83	0.31	3.8%	42.3%	42.3%	7.7%	3.8%	100.0%
28	Promoting self-esteem & raising motivation	I praise my students for their achievements.	4.7	5	5	0.54	0.11	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	23.1%	73.1%	100.0%
29	Promoting self-esteem & raising motivation	I assign tasks that involve the public display of my students' work.	3.0	3	3	0.78	0.26	0.0%	26.9%	50.0%	19.2%	3.8%	100.0%
30	Anti-humanistic technique	I place weaker and stronger students in the same group in order to help them.	3.8	4	4	0.85	0.22	0.0%	4.0%	36.0%	36.0%	24.0%	100.0%

## **Appendix C. Interview and group discussion questions**

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me with regard to my research study. The aim of this interview is to examine the potential contribution of humanistic language teaching to more effective language teaching and learning in the Foundation program. The information you will provide me with will be valuable for the success of this research project. The interview will be tape-recorded and is expected to take 40-50 minutes. Please rest assured that your name will not be revealed and all what you say will be restricted to this research.

### **1.**

- a) From your daily teaching practices, have you noticed that your students enjoy working in pairs and groups?
- b) Do they feel more comfortable working in pairs or groups? Are they engaged more in learning when they work collaboratively? Why/not?
- c) How do you make sure they are on task?
- d) How big can the groups be? Does this lead to any classroom management issues?

### **2.**

- a) What kind of effect do games have on your students?
- b) Do they enjoy playing educational games?
- c) Do you think that the element of fun and breaking monotony can help your students refresh and recharge their readiness for learning?

### **3.**

- a) Many teachers in the Foundation program find it rather difficult to enhance autonomy and independent learning in their students; are you facing this problem?
- b) What do you think the cause of students' excess of dependence on teachers?
- c) What do you do to help your students transform into independent learners?
- d) Do you think this is important for your students? Why/not?
- e) To what extent do you think the Foundation students can be involved in making their own choices about the course materials, types of assignments and their level of difficulty?

**4.** From your experience in the Foundation program, have you felt that a lesson that is closer to your students' personal experience and background is more meaningful to them and can enhance their

engagement in the lesson? Or it just doesn't make a big difference for your students? Can you give examples, please?

**5.**

a) How often do you share your personal life experiences with your students? And what about your students, do they share theirs with you?

b) Do you often encourage them to do this?

c) Do they share their personal life experiences with each other as part of classroom activities?

d) Do you think there is room for this in the Foundation context?

**6.** What is your standpoint when it comes to how students think or feel? What is more important in your opinion, how they think or how they feel about an activity?

**7.** What kind of activities which you noticed can effectively lower your students' learning anxiety and raise their engagement and motivation? Increase responsibility? Self-actualization?

**8.**

a) What do you think are some of the students' ways of showing the teacher that they are bored of the lesson? Have your students done that before?

b) Did you change the activity? Did that help?

**9.** Do you think that community language learning and the silent way would be effective in the Foundation context? Why/not?

**10.** Can you think of a metaphor that best describes your relationship with your students?

**Following up on the survey results:**

(self-actualization)

**1.** Do you think that inviting a senior student or alumni to talk to students about their achievements is a good idea? Why/not? Have you ever done that?

**2.** Do you think discussing the academic goals would benefit your students? Why/not?

(Catering for different learning styles)

**3.** How do you value assigning power point presentations as a learning assignment? Do you think that this kind of assignment has a special value for your students? Why/not?

**4.** And what about debates? Would they prove effective in the foundation program? Why/not?

**5.** Role plays? Why/not?

Thank you

## Appendix D. Informed consent

Student Researcher: **Baha Eddin Hussein Abu Khait**

Title of the research: **To What Extent is Humanistic Language Teaching Incorporated in Instructional Practices of the Foundation Teachers in Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT)-Fujairah, UAE? A Case Study**

I am asking for your voluntary participation in the research which I am conducting to explore the incorporation of humanistic language teaching (HLT) in the Foundation program in Higher Colleges of Technology – Fujairah campus. If you would like to participate, please sign in the appropriate space below.

This study contains no risk for the participants. If you have any inquiries, feel free to contact the student researcher at

Mobile phone: 0556057804 email: [babukhait@hct.ac.ae](mailto:babukhait@hct.ac.ae)

All the names and personal information will be kept strictly confidential. The raw data gained from the survey, the interviews and group discussion will be maintained in a secure place.

Voluntary participation: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will not be any negative consequences. Please be aware that if you decide to participate, you may stop your participation at any time and you have the right not to answer any specific question.

By signing this from, I am attesting that I have read and understood the information above and I agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant

Date

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of researcher

Date

Signature

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