

On Viewing Learners as Spiritual Beings: Implications for Language Educators

have included tutoring, remedial instruction to fill in missing concepts, making connections with the student's interests, giving him a better self-image as a math learner, reassuring him of his ability to succeed, and so on. Almost all have focused on building cognitive capacity or helping the student to feel better about learning. Here's Jim's account of what actually happened:

I replied, 'Brian ...How did you ever get through elementary school and high school with this many gaps in your understanding?' He thought for a long moment and replied, 'When I was in first grade,

predictable range of social and cultural settings, and the learner as a cluster of identity traces—gender, race, social

their interpenetration

higher than two. Now imagine this, I continue. You are at home with your parents and there is a knock at the door. On the doorstep you find a family

technology that can guarantee predictable changes in students. I am starting, after all, from the premise that they are not machines, not docile information-processing mechanisms, but living images, shaping, misshaping and reshaping themselves. My dream is to find enough ways over the year of making linguistic and spiritually formative learning interwoven parts of the same experience that each student finds challenge and growth by the time we are done. And then a new group of students comes, and it all works a little differently.

I will close with some words of Bruner (1996):

Any choice of pedagogical practice implies a conception of the learner and may, in time, be adopted by him or her as the appropriate way of thinking about the learning process. For a choice of pedagogy inevitably communicates a conception of the learning process and the learner. Pedagogy is never innocent. It is a medium that carries its own message. (p. 63)

Bruner says two things here. You can't teach without assuming some vision of what a person is. And it matters what vision you assume, because your learners learn what they are as learners by the ways that you teach them. That is the mystery and responsibility of being a teacher. I suggest that our responsibility as Christian teachers is to find the courage and the insight needed to live not as those who add devotional decorations to otherwise unmodified teaching processes, but as those who