

Decide For Yourself: An Author's Overview of the Controversial Global Issues Textbook

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Abstract: This paper is a review of, and dissemination of, controversial content that was developed into material for an intermediate level and above adult textbook published by Cengage (2012). Designed to raise awareness of global issues and to foster discernment, the activities culminate in a debate exercise which can easily be adapted into a poster or powerpoint presentation. Some of the content will be analysed, which mainstream media chiefly ignores and yet is easily accessible via alternative media. The objective of the material is twofold: firstly, to raise students' linguistic competencies across the four skills and to help them gain greater confidence in their beliefs about their language ability and practical English usage. The second aim is to raise awareness of the issues surrounding the New World Order (NWO) whilst developing their critical thinking abilities. By providing information that is otherwise suppressed or censored, it is hoped that students will be empowered. Learners will also take direct action in improving their proficiency, thus impacting their lives in a beneficial and practical sense.

Keywords: *global issues, debate, discernment*

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide a review of, and information on, controversial content that was developed into material for an intermediate level and above adult textbook published by Cengage (2012) entitled *Decide For Yourself*. Designed to raise awareness of global issues and to foster discernment, the activities culminate in a debate exercise which can easily be adapted into a poster or powerpoint presentation. Some of the content will be analysed, which is largely ignored by mainstream media, but easily accessible on many Internet avenues. Furthermore, some key concepts will be introduced, such as the Teachability Index, which is a motivational gauge, and the 4 steps to learning process. Firstly, however, we focus on the objectives of the material at hand.

Course Objectives

The goal of *Decide For Yourself* is twofold: firstly, to raise students' linguistic competencies across the four skills and to help them be more confident in their beliefs about their

language ability and practical English usage. Secondly, to raise awareness of the issues surrounding the New World Order (NWO), which has been likened to a controlling global elite class, whilst developing students' critical thinking abilities; that is, it is hoped the material will open learners' minds and eyes to the reality of the NWO and their one world government plans, whilst simultaneously allowing them to look at the world in a new and critical light.

The subsidiary goals are self-evident: By elevating people's notions of the world and reality, and by fostering in learners the necessary skills for fluent communication, the positive implications will be profound in that it is a step toward creating harmony in the world by generating compassion, and by empowering people with an alternative version of the truth by providing information that is otherwise suppressed or censored. Learners will also take direct action in improving their proficiency, thus impacting their lives in a beneficial and practical sense. But how can we measure whether students will be motivated to learn such material? How can we help students reflect on and measure their motivation levels?

Teachability Index

Before looking at the controversial material students are introduced to in the book, consideration of a few points is required. Firstly, the spirit or attitude with which one approaches these units, and this applies to both instructors and learners, and secondly, what has been termed as students' 'teachability index.' Everyone has this rating or index, and it shows how easily we can be taught anything. It has two variables:

1. Willingness to learn
2. Willingness to accept change

You measure each variable on a scale of 0 to 10. To get the overall rating, you multiply these two variables together so that the score can be anywhere from 0 to 100. When people invest time and money in books, they are very willing to learn. So the person gets a 10 for willingness to learn.

However, what is the person's willingness to accept change? All of the material presented in this textbook is quite controversial, and may be new information. If the person is willing to accept new possibilities and ideas, then the willingness to change is 10, and as such the teachability index is closer to 100. If the person is unwilling to change or approach new ideas with an open mind, then your score would be 0, and zero multiplied by 10 equals zero ($0 \times 10 = 0$). So, even if the person got 10 on the willingness to learn, if the willingness to change scale is zero, the person ends up with zero. Willingness to change also applies to what the person is prepared to give up. If a person loves golf, for example, how willing is the person to put the clubs in the closet for a year in order to learn a new language? If one loves TV, can that person live without TV so as to achieve their goal, whatever it may be? This is also part of one's willingness to accept change.

Some of the material may well be new and different, but if learners keep open minds and are positive, then their overall teachability index should be high. This concept is essentially a tool to help learners monitor their motivation levels, and reflects in part what Albert Einstein said that “*condemnation without investigation is the height of ignorance.*” In other words, students are encouraged to use discernment when approaching the content.

The ideas presented in this book can be likened to Neo in the movie ‘The Matrix’ when he took the red pill and ‘woke up’ so to speak. If that happens to your learners, then they may enjoy the ride. It must be said though that if learners are to grasp any new aspect or undertaking, it is hoped that they maintain high teachability levels. Again, this notion is applicable to any area of life or endeavor, whether it be learning a new language, a musical instrument, cooking, a new sport or any other kind of mental or physical pursuit. So, how does one actually learn anything anyway?

The 4 Steps to Learning

Another important point to consider is that information is really only useful when it has been truly internalized. There is a phrase that ‘knowledge is power,’ but that is only half true. In fact, knowledge is only power if it is remembered and used. The four stages that anyone goes through when learning any new type of information, such as some of the material presented here, are as follow:

1. Unconscious incompetence: this is the phase where you know that you don’t know. For example, a child who does not even know about shoelaces is at the unconscious incompetence level when it comes to tying their shoes. They do not know what shoelaces are and so they do not know what they do not know.
2. Conscious incompetence: this is the stage that you know that you do not know. For example, the same child again now knows what shoelaces are but knows they cannot tie them up.
3. Conscious competence: this is the stage where you know that you know, but you have to consciously think about it whilst doing it. For example, that child again is now making a conscious effort to tie their shoelaces, and they are practicing and thinking about it while performing the task. They are mentally applying the process. And the old saying that ‘practice makes perfect’ is actually incomplete. The correct saying should be ‘perfect practice makes perfect’. This is because if you are practicing something incorrectly, you will never perfect it.
4. Unconscious competence: this is the final phase when the activity or whatever it is, has become second nature. The information has been internalized and is a part of your inner being and core. For example, that young boy or girl who had been tying their shoelaces for so long can now do it without even thinking about it (just as we all do as adults). It is

like knowing your own name. That process has become automatic. This is the stage that we want our students to arrive at with regards to acquiring new words, new grammar points and ultimately any new data. When it has been assimilated and integrated, one is unconsciously competent.

These steps are the learning process of any new activity, be it tying your shoes, playing the piano or learning a new language or any kind of new information. The philosophy mirrors the idea of ‘monkey see, monkey do.’ Babies learn to crawl and then walk by observing others do it, and then by trying it themselves. It is how we learn everything in life. The content and set up of this material is designed to help students develop their English speaking, reading and debating skills whilst introducing them to some new information. When they (and teachers possibly) work with this textbook, they will go through the first three stages, and only after they have finished will they have to implement the information for some time before they can reach the fourth stage of unconscious competence.

Distinctive Features

For the reading course, cultural and language notes support a variety of reading skills and extensive reading strategies that ultimately develop confidence and fluency, whilst the nature of the contemporary and controversial topics captures the students’ interest and ensures motivation. Seemingly, there is a tangible and huge gap in the EFL/ESL market for this material since this is an original idea that no one has yet pursued. As such, it creates and meets new needs and demands. Sophisticated learners demand alternative information, and this material provides unique value, skills and knowledge to that end. In terms of content, a whole separate course could be devoted to false flag operations and in particular to the 911 Truth movement. However, the current paper reviews the material that encompasses a range of topics spanning the NWO spectrum.

Structure of the Material

Each unit is structured in the following way: Lessons start with freer production type activities to activate schema and with vocabulary tasks in order to prepare for the reading passage. The reading text itself may appear didactic, in that it is often based from the perspective of the alternative media on the topic of the New World Order. This is done intentionally so as to provoke thought, whether it be in agreement or disagreement of the passage. We learn new information by evaluating it for ourselves. When we regurgitate that information and make it our own through the creative process, we are then in a position to say we know it. These readings call for discernment, which is a key element in any form of learning.

The reading passage is followed by comprehension tasks which leads onto a pairwork dictation and reading/listening activity based on the unit’s content. This paired

activity usually focuses on opposing sides of the topic and sets up language to be used for the final debate activity. This debate project can be used as in-depth as you like. It is felt that having students research the topic for themselves (even in their native language first) followed by practicing the language points at home will allow for a much more effective and worthwhile debate and/or discussion. Our goal is twofold: firstly, to raise students' linguistic competencies and to help them gain greater confidence in their beliefs about their language ability and practical English usage. Secondly, this course aims to raise awareness of the issues surrounding the New World Order (NWO) whilst developing their critical thinking abilities. Topics covered include 911 Truth, big pharma, aspartame, Vaccinations, Monsanto and Codex alimentarius, the man-made global warming myth, the AIDS hoax, chemtrails, the Bilderberg Group, the economic fraud method known as fractional reserve banking, and the Law of Attraction and quantum physics.

So, essentially, the content for these books will be based on some of the so-called 'conspiracy theories' that are gaining momentum in mainstream society and independent and alternative media outlets, but which are largely ignored by the powerful mass media. Following a path of pragmatic eclecticism is the best road to travel along. That is, by combining the elements of notional, structural, task-based and communicative approaches to name but some, students will be exposed to a variety of proven methodologies. Alone, these approaches remain isolated and incomplete, but integrated they offer a comprehensive curriculum.

The content for the units would encompass all the main issues confronting humanity's plight/fight against the globalization agenda: The Federal Reserve and its Act of 1913, Fractional Reserve Banking and world Debt, Carbon Tax Fraud and the Man-made Global Warming/Climate Change Myth, 9/11 Truth and 7/7 Truth, The Right/Left Paradigm, GMF (Genetically Modified Food and Monsanto), FDA (Food and Drug Administration) and FTC (Federal Trade Commission), and The Bilderberg Group to name but some. Moreover, the units are modular based, that is, it is not necessary to follow the order of chapters as suggested on the index page, but can be done in any order of preference. Having said that, it would, nonetheless, be more logical to study them in a chronological order. The topics can move into other interesting areas of debate. For example, with regards to the man-made global warming myth unit, the discussion could also involve the debate of *Climategate* (2010) and the scandal surrounding the University of East Anglia. Another branch of dissemination with reference to the Codex alimentarius and genetically modified food subject could be how microwaves are actually detrimental to one's health and how the Russian government (2011) has banned the use of them.

If one dismisses and condemns these ideas without investigation, one is, according to Einstein, being the height of ignorance. Thus, it is worth bearing in mind what the former Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover (1956), said about the possibility of some of these so-called conspiracies:

The individual is handicapped by coming face to face with a conspiracy so monstrous he cannot believe it exists.

The data is presented and groups or pairs are asked to share their opinions on said topics. Critical thinking skills and strategies that promote reading and speaking competency are developed through support with vocabulary comprehension and various discussion and writing activities. The approach of the textbook has been tried and tested. The content of this textbook is different. It is unique. It is a first. It is hoped that students will gain much more than just linguistic and rhetorical competency skills from this book. It is hoped that they are inspired to keep learning more and to aim for their dreams, whatever they may be. As Napoleon Hill (1937) said, ‘whatever the mind of man can conceive and bring itself to believe, it can achieve’. This is a truism which if fully integrated, empowers the individual beyond compare. We must follow Ed Foreman’s dictum ‘to take the word ‘impossible’ out of our vocabulary’. We can prove anything is possible.

Debating Ethics

All debate is about expressing opinions, and opinions are largely subjective. We can support views and opinions with lots of data and facts, but even these can be subjective. As such, we should treat debate not as a competition but more of a game. It is important to use discernment and to always respect the opinion of the other side. When integrity and honesty are employed, everyone wins. A fundamental step is to remember the following adage: ‘I may disagree with what you have to say, but I shall defend, to the death, your right to say it’. Ultimately, debating is about sharing information. If the other team agrees or disagrees with you, either way it is perfectly acceptable. This is because perception is reality and we are each unique and individual perspectives with our own internal filters. For example, chemtrails (unit 12), which is euphemistically known as geo-engineering by mainstream media (The Daily Mail (2010)), (The Guardian (2012)), has several sides to the issue: pro /against, believe / disbelieve and all parts view their side as being one of truth. When we accept that everyone’s truth is true to them, and respect their right to express their ideas, then there is no argument to be lost. Dale Carnegie encapsulated the idea most succinctly by suggesting that no argument is worth entering into:

You can’t win an argument. You can’t because if you lose it, you lose it; and if you win it, you lose it. Why? Well, suppose you triumph over the other man and shoot his argument full of holes and prove that he is *non compos mentis*. Then what? You will feel fine. But what about him? You have made him feel inferior. You have hurt his pride. He will resent your triumph. (Carnegie, 1981)

Thus, it is palpable that although the controversial nature of this material will cause strong emotions and deep passions on both sides of the debate, and although it lends itself to argumentative stances, it would be wise to heed the advice that ‘there is only one way ... to get the best of an argument-and that is to avoid it. Avoid it as you would avoid rattlesnakes and earthquakes’ (Carnegie, 1981: 116).

Conclusion

There are a number of theories which are becoming increasingly reported upon, and they are indeed very controversial and will evoke passionate feelings and emotions on both sides of the argument. It is the students' job to determine for themselves what they consider to be the most accurate. In order to achieve this, they will be required to resort to an array of critical thinking applications, to skilfully conceptualize, analyse, evaluate, reflect and reason. They must, ultimately and literally, decide for themselves. The chief objective then of this 'critical thinking' textbook is to show students a different or controversial idea about an issue so that they will be more motivated to participate in the debate following the "sensational" and somewhat didactic reading section. In other words, it is hoped the passage and other activities will work as a trigger to give students an opportunity to consider an issue closely, carefully, and independently.

The primary purpose of this 'critical-thinking' textbook is not to learn what the fact or idea is regarding a topic in each unit, but to look at this often radically alternative new data through critical glasses, observe it and evaluate it, and through a process of synthesis and discernment to either reject it or accept it. The twin goal is firstly, to raise students' linguistic competencies and secondly, this course aims to raise awareness of the issues surrounding the New World Order whilst developing their critical thinking abilities, teachability index and ultimately empower them by fostering in them the confidence and belief that they can be, do or have anything and everything they want. The content presented in this textbook is radical and can be either dismissed as nonsense or embraced as life changing depending on your perspective. When the student is ready, the teacher will appear.

Either way, it is beneficial to note what Schopenhauer said about truth when confronting the material in this textbook:

All truth goes through three stages. First it is ridiculed. Then it is violently opposed. Finally, it is accepted as self-evident.

If you are ready to look at the world from another reality, please step onward. The rabbit hole is deep indeed. So sit back, buckle in and enjoy the ride.

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