

Teaching as a Subversive Activity – Revisited

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April 6, 2012

Anguished English

- ☞ **Dear Dr. Brown:** I just bought your book. I will waste no time reading it.
- ☞ **Overheard:** I think gay marriage is something that should happen between a man and a woman.
- ☞ **SF Chronicle headline:** For molesting kids, man is sentenced to English lessons.

...Careful of that wet floo 😊



...The importance of one letter

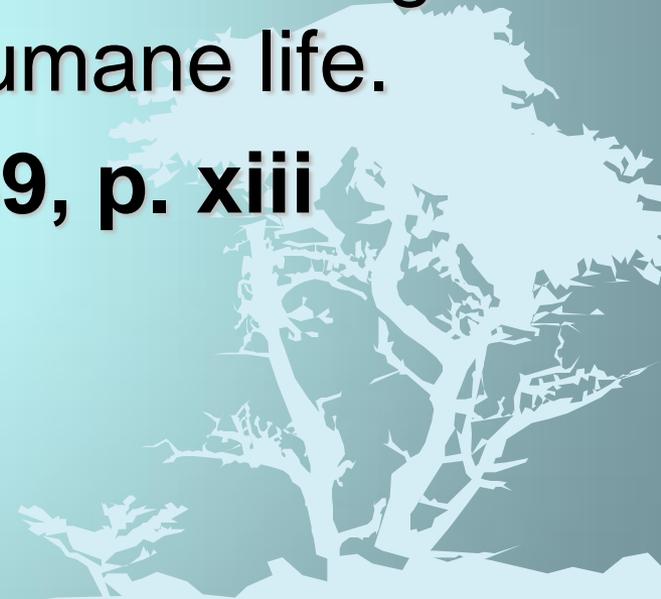


ESL student: The Washington Monument
is the highest erection in the city.



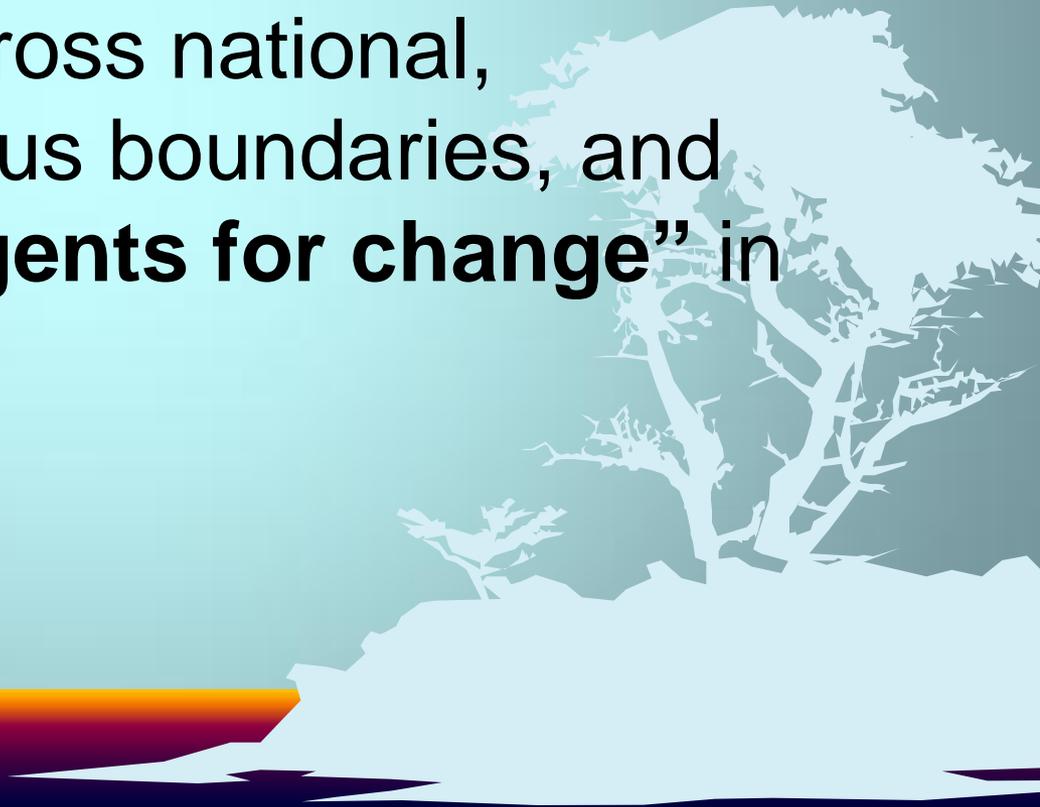
Critical Pedagogy – “Subversive Teaching”?

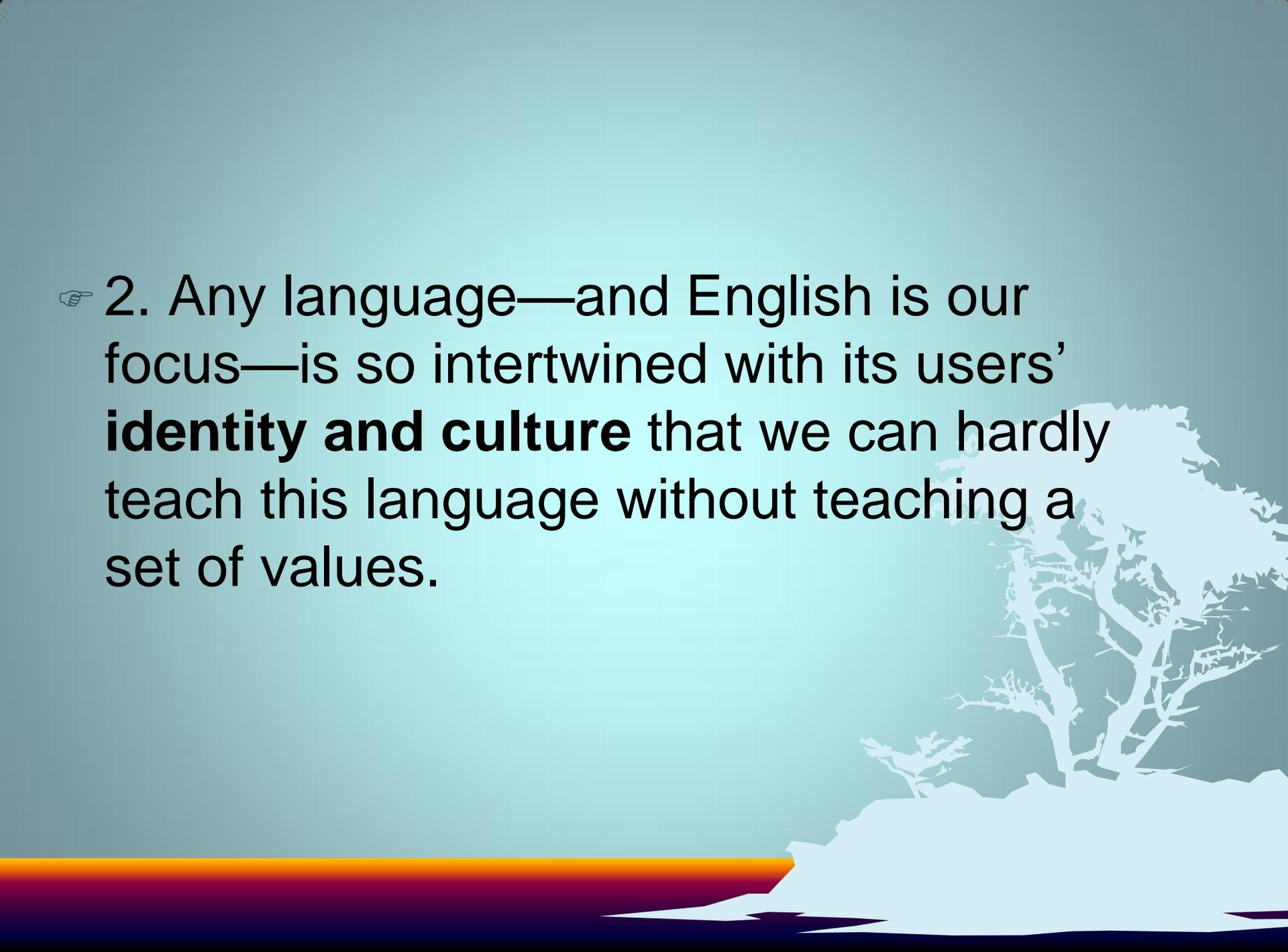
- ☞ Teachers should embody in our teaching a vision of a better and more humane life.
- ☞ – **Giroux and McLaren, 1989, p. xiii**



Some Observations...

- 1. Our motives for teaching language are rooted in our desire to help people to communicate across national, political, and religious boundaries, and our desire to be “**agents for change**” in this world.



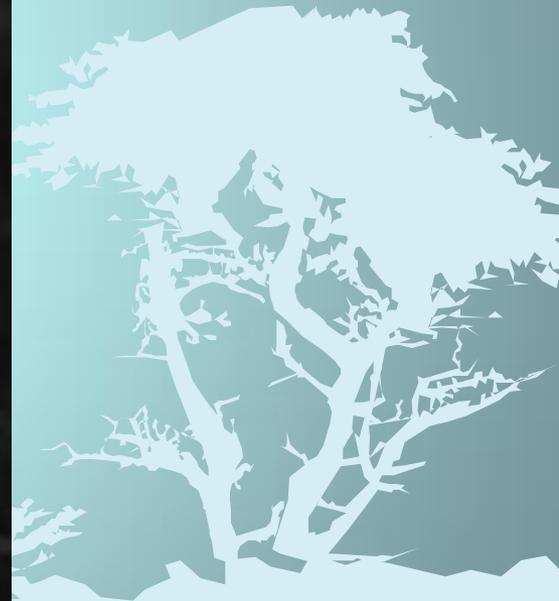
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- 2. Any language—and English is our focus—is so intertwined with its users' **identity and culture** that we can hardly teach this language without teaching a set of values.

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- 3. Our discussions, debates, group work activities, essays, and other classroom techniques offer opportunities for us to engage students in debate over **controversial issues.**

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4. In our curricular materials and activities, our choices of topics and issues present us with opportunities to stimulate **critical thinking** – to examine all sides of issues.
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"For every complicated problem there is an answer that is short, simple, and wrong."

–H.L. Mencken

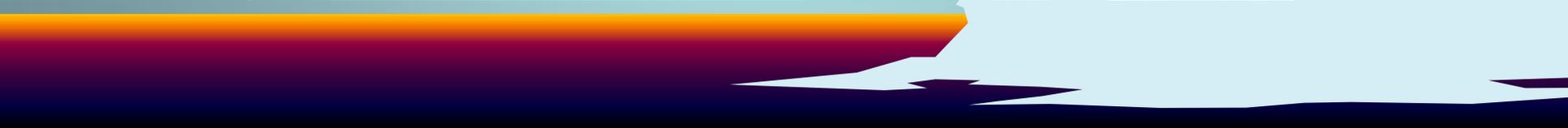


Some Questions...

- ➔ 1. But can we be agents for change and at the same time refrain from revealing **our own beliefs and convictions?**



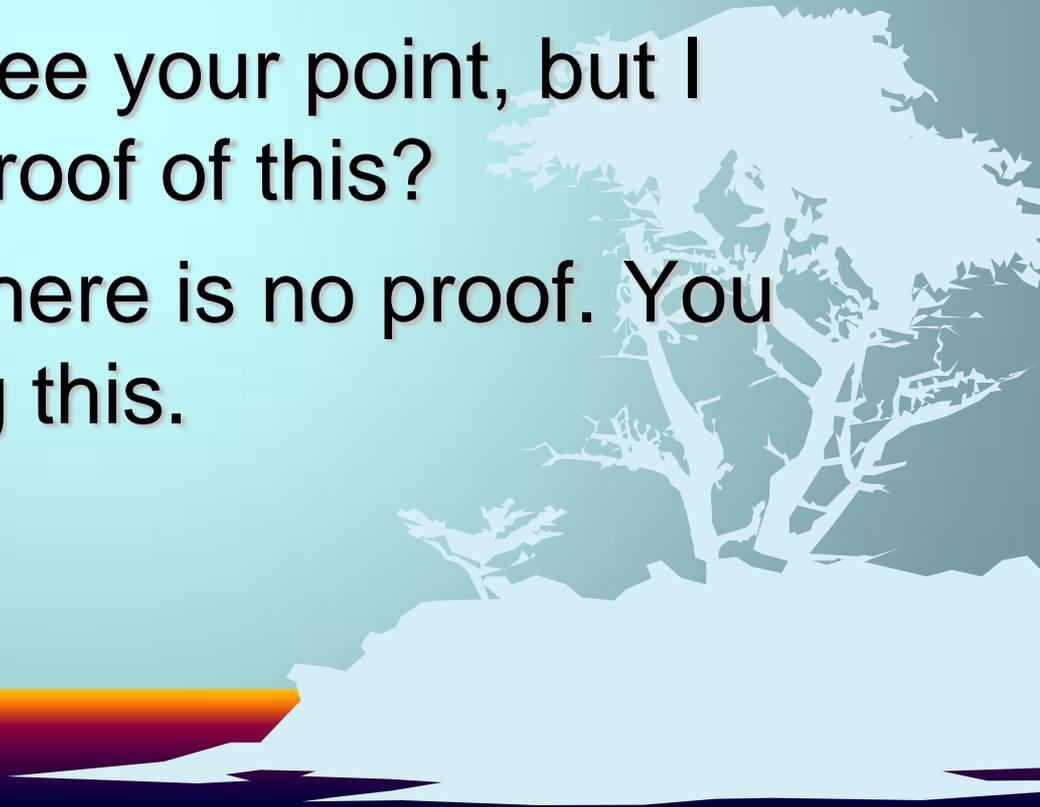




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2. What sets of **values** are we teaching when we teach conventions of oral and written communication, as well as strategies for listening and reading?
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In a small group discussion:

- ➡ Student A: I believe capital punishment is necessary. It prevents more crimes.
- ➡ Student B: Well, I see your point, but I wonder if there is proof of this?
- ➡ Student C (to A): There is no proof. You are wrong in saying this.



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3. Does our zeal for realizing our own vision of a better world stand in the way of truly equal, **balanced treatment** of all sides of controversial issues?
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From an ESL textbook:

☞ A: Why do you smoke?

☞ B: Because I like it.

☞ A: You shouldn't smoke.

☞ B: Well, it makes me less nervous.

☞ A: But it's not good for your health.

☞ B: I don't care.

☞ A: Well, you will die young.



- 4. However, might we also run the risk of **offending and polarizing students?**



JUL 26 2003

Daddy's Roommate



by Michael Willhoite



1990

Universal Values?

- Equality of all human beings, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, or gender.
- Freedom of individuals to speak and write their opinions without censorship.



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- A culture of open-mindedness & acceptance of diverse points of view.
 - Non-violent resolution of conflict.
 - Responsibility as stewards of the earth for the preservation of the planet.

Education or Indoctrination? What some are saying...

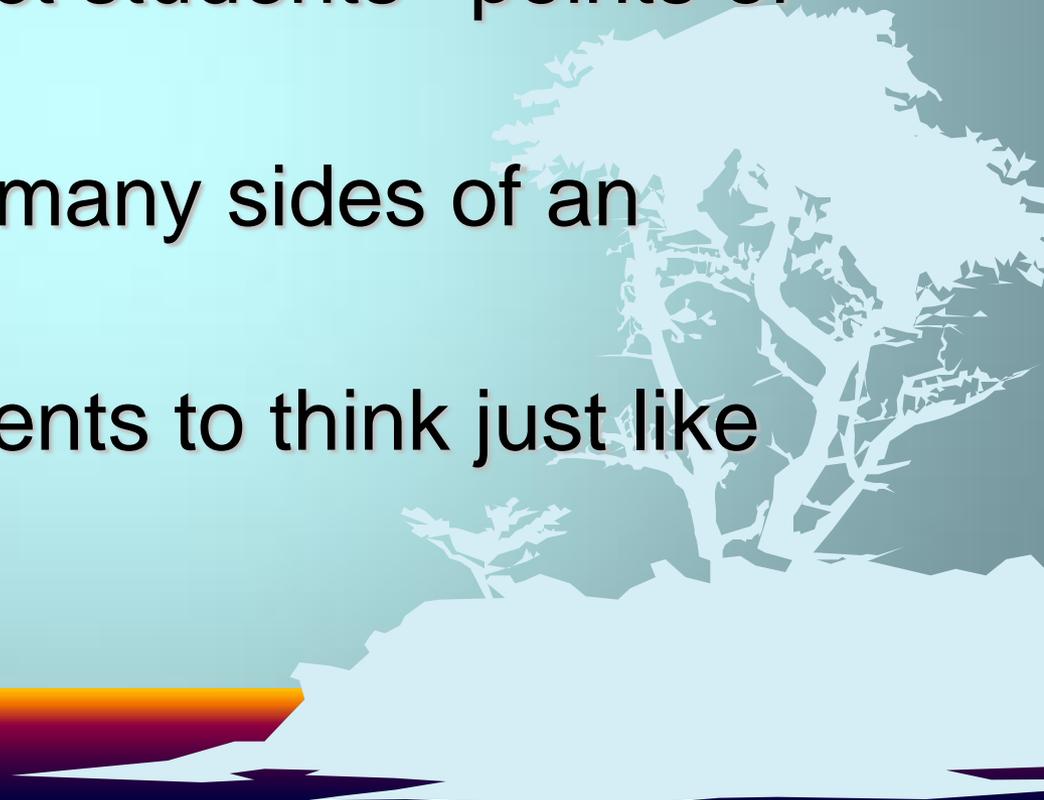
- **1. Your charge is to teach English, not morality.**
- **2. Teachers should emphasize unity, not difference.**
- **3. The teacher is the authority figure. Students will believe whatever you believe in order to please you. So, you should steer clear of sensitive issues.**
- **4. Teachers will inevitably and subconsciously push their own beliefs and “agendas.”**

TABOO TOPICS?

- AIDS
- Narcotics/drugs
- Politics
- Pornography
- Capital punishment
- Religion
- Racism
- Homosexuality
- Sex



Guidelines for “subversive teaching:

- ➡ 1. Allow students to express themselves openly.
 - ➡ 2. Genuinely respect students’ points of view.
 - ➡ 3. Encourage both/many sides of an issue.
 - ➡ 4. Don’ t force students to think just like you.
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TESOL' s Social Responsibility Interest Section

- ☞ comprises TESOL members who are actively engaged in integrating language teaching with social responsibility, world citizenship, and an awareness of global issues such as peace, human rights, and the environment. The Interest Section aims to promote social responsibility within the TESOL profession and to advance social equality, respect for differences, and multicultural understanding through education.

“You must BE the change you want to see in the world.” – Gandhi

