

Assignment 4: Purposes of Education

Keenan Morgan

University of Wyoming

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Michael DeNobile

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When teaching English Language Learners (ELs or ELLs) or otherwise disadvantaged, “struggling,” students, we as educators must remain consistently aware of how our interactions with these students, or lack thereof, may be impacting the classroom environment. More importantly, as educators we must be committed to ensuring that these students feel honored and respected so that they can learn more effectively. In turn, modeling such behavior helps to grow togetherness and a feeling of citizenship that respects and honors diversity. Practicing both Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (CSP) and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is essential in accomplishing this goal, such as through practices like actively honoring students’ cultural backgrounds or actively engaging students in class discussions. It is also imperative to avoid a deficit view of students and their struggles; whereby instead of seeing student struggles as something inherently wrong about them or their culture, we recognize that our own attitudes, biases, and institutional structures may play large roles in hindering student success. To ensure student success, it is pertinent to continuously consider whether we as educators are empowering or hindering diverse students’ opportunities to learn. Because our practices directly impact the answer to this question, frequently reevaluating our practices will both make us better teachers and our students better learners.

Traditional Pedagogy is an approach to teaching that prioritizes a “one size fits all” approach (Gay, 2000, as cited in Han & Scull, 2012, p. 24), which usually results in unsatisfactory learning consequences for learners who fit outside of that approach. Keonghee Tao Han & W. Reed Scull (2012, p. 24) note that Traditional Pedagogy focuses on “skill building rather than relationship building (Valenzuela 1999); a tendency to view ELs and diverse learners as ‘problems,’ rather than educational assets (Cummins 1988, 2001); and a

reinforcement of Eurocentric knowledge, cultural values, and assimilationist approaches (Darling-Hammond 2004; Sleeter and Grant 2007; Tate 1999).” Such an approach negatively impacts many students, particularly EL students. Han & Scull (2012) conducted a case study inside the classroom of a Mr. Clark and his interactions with an EL student, Hyun-woo. The aforementioned Traditional Pedagogy approach is seen in how Hyun-woo struggled under the instruction of Mr. Clark. Using a Traditional Pedagogical approach, Mr. Clark interpreted Hyun-woo's performance as a problem to punish. He punished Hyun-woo with time-out and the revoking of certain privileges, and either denied or dismissed signs that Hyun-woo was seeking help in understanding the concepts being taught. Mr. Clark did not attempt to build a relationship with Hyun-woo and dismissed his struggles as a consequence of his existing in a White-dominant environment, rather than a reflection of his Traditional Pedagogical instruction.

Traditional Pedagogy has the capacity to discriminate because of the priority it places on skills over relationships and inclusive teaching approaches over differentiated instruction. This type of teaching excludes learners who do not fit certain boxes or stereotypes of learning. This can lead to situations like Hyun-woo's, where cultural differences are not recognized and a student falls behind in performance due to a fundamental disconnect between both the teacher and their instruction and the student receiving that instruction. Such failure in performance, which can be the result of discrimination due to a Traditional Pedagogical approach, does not have to be intentional to occur. Discrimination can be subconsciously performed and can create a negative impact on student success. As Han & Scull (2012, p. 27) note, “the capacity of the teacher to do right or wrong by her or his students can occur unconsciously as well as consciously.”

Hyun-woo's response to Mr. Clark's style of teaching left him both confused and less confident in his own success. For example, Hyun-woo struggled with grasping the concepts Mr. Clark was conveying. Brainstorming was a concept Hyun-woo was unfamiliar with as it was not often practiced in Korean schools. When Han gave him differentiated and culturally sensitive instruction more tailored towards his needs and culture, he performed better. Han & Scull (2012, p. 26) quote Hyun-woo as saying, "Mrs. Han...gave me specific information showing what these words mean, how they are used in sentences in writing. Then I know what to do. Mr. Clark uses difficult words once or twice and tells me, 'just write.' When Mr. Clark tells me like that, I do not get the picture in my head." Han & Scull continued to note Hyun-woo's improvement and boost of self confidence by recounting a conversation between herself and Hyun-woo's mother. When Han complimented Hyun-woo's performance as a "good student" he chimed in to say, "See Mom, I am a good student" (Han & Scull, 2012, p. 26).

CRP calls on teachers to recognize their students' diversity of culture and identity, as well as to help legitimate their students' experiences as part of classroom curriculum (Han, n.d., slide. 4). Dr. Django Paris and Dr. H. Samy Alim (2014, p. 88) explain that CSP has, "as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism..." and, "...seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change." Han utilized aspects of CRP and CSP in order to help Hyun-woo learn better. In particular, she differentiated her instruction in order to target Hyun-woo's specific needs, something Mr. Clark was not willing to do. Han recognized that Hyun-woo came from a Confucian Culture, so she approached her instruction towards him with a Confucian-influenced pedagogy. Han & Scull (2012, p. 26) stated that Han, "learned to take time to establish relationships with Hyun-woo and his mother, Mrs.

Kwon...” and, “discovered the cultural roots of his challenges in understanding classroom instruction and the interactions between himself, his teacher, and his fellow students.” In this way, Han began to practice CRP by recognizing the relevant cultural differences impacting Hyun-woo’s learning, but also CSP by recognizing and honoring this diversity as fluid, rather than static.

In practicing CRP and CSP, after building a caring relationship with Hyun-woo, Han & Scull (2012, p. 26) said, “my [Han] tutoring started out with explicit definitions of concepts followed by repeated, guided examples. I modeled not only oral instructions but also writing examples to Hyun-woo.” Han & Scull (2012, p. 26) continued to note that, “A caring relationship between teacher and student, direct vocabulary teaching, and specific oral and written examples are consistent with CHC [(Confucian heritage culture)] schooling practices.” Han used CRP in targeting her pedagogical practice to focus on CHC in order to best address Hyun-woo’s needs as a student. Han used CSP by evolving this practice as necessary and supporting Hyun-woo’s growth as a Korean student, not by forced assimilation, but by sustaining his culture within a White and American-dominant environment.

For students like Hyun-woo, both CRP and CSP resonate in helping these students learn better and more effectively. They promote respect for the learner and respect for the culture of which they originate while sustaining that culture within a wider educational and social context. It is important that students maintain identity and comfortability in their educational environments. It is equally important that educators be intentional about respecting cultural differences without singling students out. As Han & Scull (2012, p. 24) note, Hyun-woo’s mother, Mrs. Kwon, pleaded that Han be “sensitive to Hyun-woo’s ‘identity crisis’ as both Korean and American and his desire to avoid being ‘singled out’ in the classroom.” Han obliged

and remained silent and out of the way during classroom instruction in an effort to help Hyun-woo grow comfortable with her presence. As previously noted, Hyun-woo responded positively to Han's CRP and CSP approach, especially when compared to Mr. Clark's traditional pedagogical approach.

Of the Stages Second Language of Acquisition Hyun-woo was likely operating at the Speech Emergence stage. This can be inferred from Han & Scull's (2012, p. 24) comments that, "[Hyun-woo] had no accent and showed proficiency in basic English oral and narrative writing skills. During literacy periods, he was reticent to speak, yet talkative during math instruction and on the playground with peers."

Han & Scull's (2012) comments suggest that Hyun-woo's literacy problem is a Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) issue rather than a Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) issue. If Hyun-woo is talking on the playground and can interact with classmates playfully, then it is not likely that he is struggling with BICS. Whenever the class works on CALP skills, however, Hyun-woo struggles. This is evidenced by Han & Scull's (2012, p. 25) comment that, "From exclusively oral instruction on writing, Hyun-woo did not understand the concept of brainstorming and descriptive writing instruction. Interviews with Mr. Clark revealed that he was aware that Hyun-woo was not mastering the relevant writing concepts."

Han & Scull (2012, p. 27) notes a few ways that teachers can work successfully with diverse learners, particularly CHC students. Han & Scull (2012, p. 27) suggests that teachers should learn "to appreciate how their own cultural context frames their approaches to teaching." Han continues, "they need to understand the diversity of the cultural contexts of their students" in order to see the world through their student's eyes and "incorporate alternative cultural materials into their curriculum." This is important because it furthers the impact of CRP on

student learning with specific examples of culturally relevant materials. Han & Scull (2012, p. 27) further suggests that teachers can practice “consciously talking with students and their families about their learning processes.” Doing so helps both to build rapport with students and families and establish trusting relationships. This is immensely important because close relationships between teachers and students creates a safer learning environment in which learning is more likely to occur. Additionally, if a teacher learns about how a student’s cultural background impacts their learning style, they can better tailor their instruction to more effectively reach their students. Han & Scull (2012, p. 27) continues to suggest that teachers “can gauge the students’ progress, provide feedback, and adjust their teaching practices.” In doing this, teachers can slow down their speech and repeat instructions in multiple modes to better differentiate for students. This is important because it allows diverse and EL students more ways of learning, which improves their educational experience. Additionally, by constantly reevaluating and adjusting their practice, a teacher makes it more likely that their students will succeed.

Bogum Yoon (2007) examined how two teachers, Mr. Brown and Mrs. Young, approached ELLs in their classrooms. Between Mr. Brown and Mrs. Young, it is clear that Mrs. Young is a culturally relevant pedagogue where Mr. Brown is an ‘All-American’ teacher in terms of how they interacted with ELL students. Mrs. Young applied culturally relevant pedagogy in the ways she interacted with and empowered ELL students to be active members of the classroom community. She encouraged ELLs to share their experiences, expressed interest in other cultures, and discussed culturally relevant topics. Mr. Brown, on the other hand, approached ELLs passively and did not explicitly support them in their learning. He focused on American-dominant cultural topics and did not provide opportunities for ELLs to share their

culturally different experiences. This created a difference in classroom culture, whereby ELL students felt isolated from the American peers in Mr. Brown's class, or felt empowered and accepted by their American peers in Mrs. Young's class.

In many ways, mainstream practices, curricula, and pedagogies can create a privileged environment for mainstream students and disadvantage students from different backgrounds. For example, in Mr. Brown's pedagogical mainstream class, ELL students felt disconnected and unaccepted due to their inability to relate to their American peers, especially when they discussed American cultural references. On page 220, Yoon (2007) notes "The unintentional consequence of using American cultural references was that it disengaged students from the lessons... The non-ELLs positioned them as unacceptable members of the classroom community... [ELLs] were not confident enough to overcome some of their mainstream peers' resistance."

Mr. Brown's approach created a classroom culture that made ELLs feel excluded rather than included. Yoon (2007) notes how one ELL student expressed feeling uncomfortable in Mr. Brown's classroom. When comparing Mr. Brown's class to a separate ESL class, the student said "I don't want to talk in this [Mr. Brown's] class... In ESL, I talk a lot... I feel more comfortable there, but not in this class. Not in this class" (p. 220).

According to Lori Patton Davis of Ohio State University and Samuel D. Museus (2019) of the University of California, San Diego, deficit views, "holds students from historically oppressed populations responsible for the challenges and inequalities that they face." In Mr. Brown's classroom, it is clear he is unaware of his own deficit views when interacting with his ELL students. His approach results in a feeling of fault on the student for their struggles in learning. He does not seem to acknowledge or recognize that his approach is influenced by

historic inequities, and his approach perpetuates those inequities. This is particularly evident in Mr. Brown's tendency to focus on American cultural topics, his focus on American students at the (likely unintentional) expense of his ELL students, and his inactive role in ensuring that his ELL students had full access to group participation. On the last point, there were multiple instances where Mr. Brown's ELL students felt isolated in group discussions because the other students felt like they could not work together. The other students felt this way because they had observed, from Mr. Brown's passiveness, a lack of attention or interest for ELL students. They then adopted this passiveness which oftentimes manifested in exclusion of ELL students.

There are some commonalities between Mr. Brown's approach to teaching ELL students, highlighted in Yoon (2007) and Mr. Clark's approach, highlighted in Han (2012). Both teachers took, at best, passive methods of teaching their ELL students. Mr. Clark, however, was more dismissive of his ELL student, Hyun-woo. As previously stated, Han (2012) explains how Mr. Clark interpreted Hyun-woo's performance as a problem to punish. He punished Hyun-woo with time-out and the revoking of certain privileges, and either denied or dismissed signs that Hyun-woo was seeking help in understanding the concepts being taught. Similarly to Mr. Brown, Mr. Clark did not attempt to build a relationship with Hyun-woo and focused on American-dominant cultural topics. Additionally, Mr. Clark dismissed Hyun-woo's struggles as a consequence of his existence in a White-dominant environment, rather than a reflection of his Traditional Pedagogical instruction and deficit views.

Yoon (2007) explains the importance of a teacher including ELL students in activities as a way to set both the expectation and model of acceptance. By accepting, taking an interest in, and actively involving ELL students and their culture in lessons and group activities, the teacher creates a classroom environment in which ELL students feel comfortable. When they feel

comfortable, they are more likely to share and participate. Most importantly, though, by modeling acceptance and involvement of ELL students, the teacher shows the rest of the class the importance of involving ELLs. On page 221, Yoon (2007) notes how Mrs. Young, in contrast to Mr. Brown, “demonstrated a strong responsibility for teaching ELLs” and, “modeled through her teaching how the mainstream students should position ELLs as important members of the learning community.”

Michiko Hikida (2018) observed students who were labeled as “struggling” and analyzed how these students were taught by their teacher, Mr. Peterson. On page 218, Hikida (2018) explains how “struggling” students can be defined differently by different people because, “[cultural] contexts, on various levels, mediate when and how students are perceived as ‘struggling.’” Hikida (2018, p. 218) continues to note, “Students’ academic strengths can be obscured when teachers view them through discourses and ideologies of deficit that circulate in broader social and cultural contexts.” These characteristics impact how the “struggling identity” gets construed.

In this case, Hikida focused on three students who were labeled as “struggling.” Hikida (2018, p. 222) says that the students’ “institutional biographies of “struggle” were entextualized in collections of HST scores and IEPs and embodied by pullout reading instruction.” Two of the students, Raymond and Jay, were formally given special education support by way of daily specialized reading instruction time. The third student, Camilo, “received general education reading support through pullout instruction by a reading specialist” (Hikida, 2018, p. 222).

In Hikida’s study, it is clear that the students are not inherently lacking something that is causing them to “struggle.” Rather, the contexts within which they exist, and the framing of schooling practices generally, have impacted their confidence and inclusion.

Hikida (2018) is correct to note how, oftentimes, identity trajectories “emerge in individual moments and accumulate social meaning across occurrences where students are similarly positioned” (p. 220). Identities of “struggle” can emerge consistently in literacy activities where students are expected to interact with texts in certain ways. In discussions, students can be shut out of feeling empowered and engaged, which impacts their self-identified abilities regarding the subject matter. This then makes it less likely for them to participate in the future, further fueling a perception of “struggle.”

Throughout the study, Hikida (2018) notes how Mr. Peterson used the “Read-Prompt-Tumult-Revoice” strategy for engaging the entire class, and a “Read-Prompt-Tumult-Hold Space” strategy to engage the students who were identified as “struggling.” For the latter, Mr. Peterson would read a prompt or text, then engage the students in a “tumult” in which everyone would voice responses. When a “struggling” student would voice a response, Mr. Peterson would “Hold” the students by stopping the tumult and engaging the “struggling” student specifically. Mr. Peterson would indicate interest in the student by asking them to repeat what they said, and then Mr. Peterson would “revoice” what they said and direct the class to pay attention to the point raised by the student.

Following a CRP and CSP model and the example set by Mr. Peterson, teachers could do many things to include “struggling” readers in classroom participation. For example, they could have struggling readers engage in turn reading in small groups. Teachers could engage them in similar ways to Mr. Peterson, perhaps by simply giving them space and time to answer questions directed to them, as well as by modeling for the class what it looks like to give “struggling” students proper attention, patience, and respect. Finally, they could practice training peers to

eventually pair with “struggling” readers, both by modeling what such pairings would look like and by fostering encouragement and indicating interest.

Hikida’s (2018) study focused on the relationship between a teacher’s conscious engagement with students and that student’s engagement with their work at-large. In addition, the study highlighted the importance of certain practices designed to engage students in participation in ways that both highlight student value and respect student input. In turn, these practices help create a classroom environment that empowers all students, “struggling” or not, to feel honored as learners. Both Han & Scull (2012) and Yoon (2007) also highlighted similar ideas, focusing on how teachers directly impact how students view themselves and each other. In particular, they explained the importance of teacher interest and engagement with students who fall outside of the mainstream. This interest and direct engagement, especially when rooted in CSP, CRP, and awareness of combatting deficit views, helped to build strong classroom learning environments that boost student confidence.

Utilizing the lessons and strategies demonstrated by Han & Scull (2012), Yoon (2007), and Hikida (2018) will serve to create beneficial comradery between students. In doing so, this can help foster classroom environments that manifest the important skill sets and attitudes necessary for good citizenship. In particular, respect for those who are different from us, listening skills, direct engagement, honoring of other cultures, attention and interest towards our peers, and more are essential pieces for building a lasting citizenry capable of meeting challenges. The studies conducted by Han & Scull (2012), Yoon (2007), and Hikida (2018) are highly beneficial because they show how these skills and attitudes can be created. The strategies used by teachers like Mrs. Young and Mr. Peterson serve as great examples to follow when teachers need to make sure ELLs or “struggling” students are being valued in the classroom.

Conversely, Mr. Clark and Mr. Brown serve as fantastic examples of what not to do and what to avoid in order to ensure all students feel welcome and respected in my future classroom.

Additionally, life experiences should help motivate teachers to be continuously committed to making students of different backgrounds feel as respected and included as possible. In doing this, teachers can model good citizenship and, in turn, grow good citizens.

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