Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Pedagogies

Developing the Mindsets, Valuing the Assets and Getting the Outcomes You Want

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Mindsets, Assets and Outcomes

- Mindsets are related to how we “think” about a range of things including:
  - What constitutes learning?
  - What’s necessary for academic success?
  - Who can be successful?
  - What is the value of cultural and linguistic difference?
  - How do we see the other?
Mindsets, **Assets** and Outcomes

- Assets refer to those resources that children bring to school.
- Often viewed as “deficits.”
- Framing of “assets” shapes pedagogical approach.
- EdTPA emphasizes an asset-based approach
Assets: Academic Language vs. Home Language

By embracing Latinx students’ cultural and linguistic practices only insofar as they contribute to the learning of “academic language,” asset-based pedagogies are often rooted in the notion that “home languages” and “academic languages” are empirically discrete categories rather than ideological constructions.

Challenging Assets as “Respectable”

We stand in solidarity with the view that deficit-based approaches to language diversity are stigmatizing and contribute to the reproduction of educational inequality. However, we question some of the underlying assumptions in many asset-based approaches—specifically, the discourses of “appropriateness” that lie at their core, and the ways that such discourses devalue Latinx students’ linguistic practices. Discourses of appropriateness are tied to respectability politics. For people of color, respectability politics often frame racial inequality as the product of individual behaviors rather than structural processes (Harris, 2014).

Mindsets, Assets and Outcomes

- Culturally relevant, culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies - a connection between these practices and the success of students of color.
- What Gloria Ladson Billings refers to as “Just Good Teaching!”
- Good teaching gets good results.
Culture and Language in the Classroom: A Historical Perspective

- Eugenics as a Frame for Understanding Intelligence
  - Lack of achievement as indication of low intelligence
- Non-European/Western culture misunderstood and historically pathologized in school
  - Some cultures as antithetical to school
- Bilingualism as a Deficit to be erased
Assimilation as the Key to Success in School

“The purpose of state-sanctioned schooling has been to forward the largely assimilationist and often violent White imperial project, with students and families being asked to lose or deny their languages, literacies, cultures, and histories in order to achieve in schools. In the United States and beyond, this saga of cultural and linguistic assault has had and continues to have devastating effects on the access, achievement, and well-being of students of color in public schools.”

Assimilation as the “Key to Success”

- A “requirement” for success
- Teacher as dispenser of dominant cultural values and norms
- Achievement is determined by the degree to which children can appropriately access the culture of power
- Degree of Anglo-linguistic (standard English) facility and skill is required
- Yet, Standard English and Academic Language are not explicitly taught
Sleeter (2011) on Ethnic Studies

Ethnic studies includes units of study, courses, or programs that are centered on the knowledge and perspectives of an ethnic or racial group, reflecting narratives and points of view rooted in that group’s lived experiences and intellectual scholarship. Ethnic studies arose as a counter to the traditional mainstream curriculum. Numerous content analyses of textbooks have found an ongoing marginalization of scholarship by and about African Americans, Latino/as, Native Americans, and Asian Americans. In acknowledgement of the dominance of Euro-American perspectives in mainstream curricula, such curricula can be viewed as ‘Euro-American ethnic studies.’

Christine Sleeter (2011). The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies. NEA.
Sleeter on Ethnic Studies, cont’

As students of color proceed through the school system, research finds that the overwhelming dominance of Euro-American perspectives leads many such students to disengage from academic learning. Ethnic studies curricula exist in part because students of color have demanded an education that is relevant, meaningful, and affirming of their identities. This review analyzes published studies and reviews of research that systematically document the impact of ethnic studies curricula, Pre-K through higher education, on students, academically as well as socially.

Christine Sleeter (2011). The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies. NEA.
Ethnic Studies and Multicultural Education

- Ethnic Studies borne out of the need for communities of color to tell their own stories about their history and culture
  - Asset-based: Focusing on the unique histories, cultures and languages of African American, Latinx, Indigenous and Asian American populations in the US
  - A direct contrast to the majoritarian/dominant narrative that pathologizes communities of color
Multicultural Education

- Drew on Ethnic Studies as a tool to strengthen school curriculum and teaching practices to incorporate information about the history and culture of peoples of color.
- Focused on developing a set of tools (including strategies and historically factual content) to enhance the curriculum.
- CRT, CRP and CSP extend from Multicultural Education.
What’s in a name?

- Culturally Relevant Teaching focuses on the development of curriculum and teaching practices that are “relevant” to the lives and experience of students of color.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching focuses on the development of teaching practices that are responsive to the needs of culturally diverse learners.
- Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy attempts to be more holistic in its approach.
Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

“CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation. CSP positions dynamic cultural dexterity as a necessary good, and sees the outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken, as critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. Culturally sustaining pedagogy exists wherever education sustains the lifeways of communities who have been and continue to be damaged and erased through schooling.”

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

- Allows for multiple cultural and linguistic practices to exist simultaneously.
- Views students as knowledge builders
- Less focus on behavior and more attention to knowledge attainment and development of communication and leadership skills
Jason Irizarry’s Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

...the Action Research and Social Change class, and the larger collaborative research project in which we engaged, created an alternative space where students could use multiple languages. The students saw the classroom space as a reprieve from harsh restrictions on using their “native” languages—that is, languages emerging from their communities that students engaged in which can include but are not limited to heritage languages connected to their cultures. Interestingly, the students did not solely speak one language or another during class meetings but, rather, moved fluidly between multiple languages within one conversation, intermingling minoritized dialects and World Englishes with Dominant American English.

.This [class] works better because in here we like talk how we talk out there (pointing to the window). This is like real talk. I know how [teachers] want us to sound, and if I go to a job [interview] I know what they want me to sound like. That’s fine. I can do that. No problem. But sometimes you just want to relax and be you[rself] in school. I learn more this way, you know using the languages I know. You feel me? It is not just English, or just Spanish, or just Ebonics, it is like a mix of them with some other stuff ... like Spangbonics. (Classmates start to laugh and several chime in to the conversation.) That’s what’s up. Spangbonics.

According to the participants, the spontaneous code-meshing (Young & Martinez, 2011), creatively labeled as Spangbonics, allowed for them to engage more deeply in classroom conversations and enhanced their learning experience. As Taina notes above, students understand the centrality of Dominant American English and its relationship to the “codes of power,” ways of speaking that carry cultural capital in particular contexts (Delpit, 1995). Nevertheless, when empowered to shape the linguistic texture of the classroom, students seemed to move effortlessly within and across languages, often drawing from multiple languages to maximize meaning-making.