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Analysis essay

In “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education,” Paulo Freire argues that teachers compel their students to memorize facts instead of forming a relationship with students in which both students and the teacher learn, creating an oppressive hierarchy in which teachers look down upon their students. Freire uses parallelism and in-text emphasis to support these claims, where the actual text of his writing mirrors the problematic qualities about “the banking concept of education” (319) he is trying to convey, directly linking his argument to these rhetorical devices. Freire warns that although some are aware of how bad the banking concept of education is, they foolishly attempt to use the means of the banking concept of education to attempt to liberate themselves and others from it. Freire proves this using argument by analogy and irony, where his analogy utilizes a political interpretation of the irony in his argument to put the situation in perspective for his readers. The concept that Freire proposes—that those who underestimate the influence of the banking concept of education use the means of the banking concept of education to seek liberation from those same means—is itself ironic, making the analogy a good fit. Freire also claims that the banking concept of education is dehumanizing students and indiscriminately filling them with “narrated content” (318) and instead advocates a “problem-posing education” (324) which acknowledges that students are different from one another and teachers are cognizant and evaluate their own considerations and opinions regarding a topic. For this

claim, Freire uses repetition to reiterate students' individualities under the problem-posing education and emphasize their possession of knowledge and skill that they would not have under the banking concept of education.

Freire begins by arguing through the use of parallelism that the nature of learning in the banking concept of education is monotonous. He lists ten facts regarding the banking concept of education:

a. The teacher teaches and the students are taught; b. the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing; c. the teacher thinks and the students are thought about; d. the teacher talks and the students listen — meekly; e. the teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined; f. the teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply; g. the teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher; h. the teacher chooses the program content; and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it; i. the teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students; j. the teacher is the Subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects. (319)

Freire begins each item with “the teacher,” showing the reader how high up on the hierarchy the teacher is in the banking concept of education. Through this repetition, the reader is repeatedly reading “the teacher” for each item. Freire does this to discreetly have the reader inherit the perspective of a student in class memorizing and repeating facts that he or she is

“filled” with. This occurs through the bland, unoriginal style of teaching that the teacher employs via the banking concept of education.

Freire also claims that the banking concept of education is necrophilic and oppressive by using in-text emphasis. He begins by describing how the banking concept of education objectifies students: “Because banking education begins with a false understanding of men and women as objects, it cannot promote the development of what Fromm calls ‘biophily,’ but instead produces its opposite: ‘necrophily’” (322). Following an excerpt from Eric Fromm, Freire continues his dialogue, but shortens the lengths of his sentences considerably in the next paragraph—almost like his sentences are “dying” earlier than before: “Oppression — overwhelming control — is necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death; not life. The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects” (322). While before the excerpt Freire wrote one thirty-word sentence in three lines, after the excerpt he wrote four sentences in six lines—roughly sixteen words per sentence. The shortened sentences reaffirm his claim that the banking concept of education is necrophilic.

Freire continues by using argument by analogy and irony to claim that those who are foolish use the methods of the banking concept of education to liberate themselves from those same methods. Freire relates this claim to “the elite” putting down workers on strike: “The dominant elites consider the remedy to be more domination and repression, carried out in the name of freedom, order, and social peace (that is, the peace of the elite). Thus they can condemn — logically, from their point of view — ‘the violence of a strike by workers and [can] call upon the state in the same breath to use violence in putting down the strike’” (323). Freire uses this

example to emphasize the fact that “Those who espouse the cause of liberation are themselves surrounded and influenced by the climate which generates the banking concept, and often do not perceive its true significance of its dehumanizing power. Paradoxically, then, they utilize this same instrument of alienation in what they consider an effort to liberate” (323). In other words, those who seek liberation from the banking concept of education are using the same means that enslave them to it—an instance of irony which is reflected in his comparison involving the elite and the workers on strike. By including this negative view of the elite, Freire also establishes his *pathos* by appealing to the reader’s emotions regarding the elite class in his or her time period and society.

Finally, Freire asserts that the problem-posing education, in stark contrast to the banking concept of education, treats students as unique human beings. Freire writes that the humanization “cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity” (328). Freire uses repetition while discussing the originality of students under the problem-posing education: “Attempting *to be more* human, individualistically, leads to *having more*, egotistically, a form of dehumanization. Not that it is not fundamental *to have* in order *to be* human. Precisely because it *is* necessary, some men’s *having* must not be allowed to constitute an obstacle to others’ *having*, must not consolidate the power of the former to crush the latter” (328). Freire repeats and italicizes the various forms of both “to be” and “to have.” This relates to the problem-posing education in which students are treated as humans, instead of objects (322), and Freire subtly but frequently notes what students under the problem-posing education are and what they have. In this case, they are themselves, each with their own personality and unique characteristics, instead of machines and automations as under the banking concept of education.

They have knowledge of ideas and the ability to be “critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (329) and influence and reflect with their teacher on course material, instead of the ability to memorize and regurgitate facts: “The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own” (324). Freire also utilizes repetition to emphasize his initial point regarding the fellowship and solidarity among those seeking full humanization; the different forms of “to be” and “to have” are somewhat in “fellowship” and “solidarity” with one another having the same root, compared to “isolated” or “individualized” words.