

Theory of Practice Memo: Linguistic Concepts

Words, accents, and language have always fascinated me, but I am not sure that I have ever really considered them in the context of how I can effectively serve students in the classroom. I feel these four weeks have patched many holes in my personal understanding of both specific practices that are effective and how to treat language, but I also feel that I need to shift my views to be more functional.

One of the central themes that has emerged to me thus far is the attitude of the teacher towards the student's prior use of language, and how it can have drastic effects. Generally, attempts to incorporate or otherwise take advantage of students' preexisting language skills can lead to much higher levels of engagement and more universally effective educational strategies. Disregarding these skills can leave students at best, below their potential, and at worst, without the language foundation to effectively start learning their target concept.

I fear that in the classroom I may struggle with incorporating some of the concepts covered, especially in the translanguaging strategy guide (as I am a math ed focus). Two that nevertheless stuck out as being practical were home language surveys and incorporating the home language of students in secondary ways around the classroom. The home language survey was something I was entirely unfamiliar with—but I hope that it is something that I interact with in the future as it seems invaluable for determining how best to differentiate instructional materials.

Tangentially related to differentiation; I also found the guides on how to interact with parents outside of the classroom (something I had not given any consideration to), both interesting and informative about some particulars of other cultures, but also reflective of the fact that putting in extra work as a teacher can be critical to serving certain students individual needs.

The only way you will be able to determine what those needs are is having a meeting with the whole family unit.

I think the family and its perspective influence has overall become more forward in my considerations. Semantically I've been aware of the split between collectivism and individualism for a long time, but I feel that after *Tongue Tied*, and the Fairbairn reading I better understand how to work to serve and respect both perspectives through observation and compromise. At the time of me writing and (hopefully) you reading it is black history month. I have spent much time dissonantly disregarding race and identity for a few years (to mixed affect), but few ideas have encouraged me to reconsider this disengagement like those brought in classroom discussion and in the "Do you Speak American?" film compilation. As opposed to pretending my roles have no influence, I need to instead work on having an awareness of the responsibility of a prospective educator, acting as an "educated human being" (along with the other four functions listed in *What Teachers Need to Know About Language*), and crossing barriers with conscious effort. I hope to gain that out of this class, then employ for the rest of my time teaching and in my interactions with people. To do that though, I will need to preserve and "update" my awareness and that is a long-term process.

References

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