How Does It Feel To Be You

English 1A

Roger Porter

1/27/2024

After reading "How it feels to be colored me" by Zora Neale Hurston, I reflected on my identity and how it feels to be living in a foreign country. Just like Zora remembered vividly the very day she became colored, I remember the moment I realized many people in the world recognize Taiwan as part of China's territory, and believe that there are no differences between Chinese and Taiwanese. Growing up in a very homogenous society where my friends and family are all proud Taiwanese, I have never questioned my Taiwanese identity and my country's validity in the world. It wasn't until I went abroad for college and met people from all around the world with different beliefs and opinions that I understood the way I perceive the world can be very different from others, and the fluid nature of our identity.

My perception of my country and identity started to waver at the international student orientation in college. It was my first encounter with people from so many different countries, and I was ready and excited to share my culture with the world. To my surprise, most people were more interested in Taiwan's political situation instead in hearing about food and traditional culture. I was repeatedly asked about whether Taiwan belongs to China or whether Taiwanese people are the same as Chinese people. These unexpected questions prompted me to rethink my identity from perspectives outside of my origin country. In Taiwan, the distinction between Taiwanese and Chinese seemed clear, so these inquiries seemed to hint at something deeper. I started to search and research the historical events often overlooked in Taiwanese education and exploring diverse narratives of Taiwan's history, I realized that while Taiwan and China share a history and culture, they diverged significantly. About a century ago, the civil war marked a pivotal shift. Since then, Taiwan has embraced democracy, free speech, and developed distinct industries and

legal systems. While we share roots with China, including language and culture, Taiwan today is fundamentally different.

I now grasp why many view Taiwan as part of China or see Taiwanese and Chinese as identical. This stems from global perceptions shaped by limited historical knowledge and China's significant global influence. I once thought I would never admit that Taiwanese share any common ground with the Chinese. However, this journey of self-discovery and understanding has led me to a more nuanced view. Just as Hurston navigates the complexities of her race in a society that seeks to define her, I too have come to understand that identity is not a rigid construct but a mix of experiences, history, and personal interpretation. The questions about Taiwan's political status and its relationship with China forced me to delve deeper into my own understanding of what it means to be Taiwanese.

Summary of Martinez, M. (1998). What is problem solving? The Phi Delta Kappan, 79(8), 605-609.

Problem solving is the process of achieving uncertain goals and is a fundamental aspect of human functioning. It involves navigating through complex situations and adapting to changing circumstances. In today's rapidly evolving society, being a proficient problem solver is essential. Problem solving relies on heuristics, which are general rules of thumb, rather than guaranteed algorithms. Algorithms are specific, step-by-step procedures that always work, while heuristics provide flexible strategies for progress toward a goal. Developing problem-solving skills is vital for navigating the uncertainties of the future.

Problem solving is a dynamic process that varies for each person and depends on the task's demands and their experience. Once a skill is mastered, it no longer involves problem solving unless novel elements or challenges are introduced. Some problems can't be reduced to algorithms, making them profound and rewarding human activities. Problem solving is essential for people of all ages, with young children being natural problem solvers who embrace setbacks. Encouraging problem-solving skills in children involves letting them find their own solutions with appropriate guidance. Problem solving relies on heuristics, guiding us through uncertainty incrementally, like navigating a maze. Monitoring progress and adapting strategies as needed are essential due to the possibility of false moves.

The power of heuristics in problem solving is crucial. Heuristics are general and specific cognitive strategies that help in tackling various problems. **"Means-ends analysis"** is a powerful general heuristic that involves setting subgoals to reduce the gap between your current state and your ultimate goal. It allows for incremental progress toward a goal, although it's not foolproof. Overcoming complex problems often involves breaking them down into manageable steps. Starting a task can make it self-sustaining as momentum builds.

Heuristics are typically learned incidentally rather than explicitly taught, but effective problem-solving curricula should include explicit instruction on heuristics. "Working backward" is another useful heuristic where you start with your ultimate goal and work backward to identify logical steps to achieve it. This approach is efficient and effective, as illustrated with examples like the Tower of Hanoi problem and career planning.

Another useful heuristic for problem solving is **"successive approximation."** This approach acknowledges that initial attempts at solving a problem may be imperfect or rough. For example, in writing, authors don't create perfect prose from the start but instead begin with a rough draft, gradually refining it over time. This heuristic applies to various creative works, inventions, theories, recipes, and personal identities. It allows for the development of ideas and solutions through a series of improvements and refinements.

Additionally, the heuristic of **"external representation"** involves depicting a problem using lists, descriptions, diagrams, or other forms of representation. This approach aids problem solvers in handling complex problems by offloading the cognitive burden and directing their processing capacity toward finding solutions. External representations can lead to clearer problem understanding and may even reveal new perspectives. They can also facilitate communication and consensus-building within a group by making the problem's nature and potential solutions more visible.

Metacognition, which involves self-monitoring and awareness of one's thoughts, is crucial in problem-solving. It helps manage goals, subgoals, and strategies effectively. Teachers should explicitly teach metacognition as an integral part of problem solving. Problem solvers need both vigilant monitoring and flexibility as goals and strategies change during problem solving. Flexibility means adjusting to new circumstances rather than sticking rigidly to a chosen strategy.

Ultimately, problem solving involves **error and uncertainty**. **Imperfections and deviations** from the ideal path are inherent. The willingness to embrace uncertainty and suspend judgment is vital in problem solving. It is a key aspect of reflective thinking and courageously pursuing challenging goals.

Improving problem-solving ability involves recognizing the natural, stepwise process guided by heuristics. Anxiety can hinder problem-solving, so it's essential to accept uncertainty as part of the process. **Errors** are an integral part of problem solving and should be tolerated and not ridiculed. The current emphasis on fixed knowledge and algorithms in education needs to shift towards a better understanding of problem-solving processes. Changing the culture of schooling and the workplace to accept errors is challenging but necessary to prepare for future challenges. Embracing problem-solving skills is essential for the next generation to tackle unprecedented problems effectively. Combining knowledge and heuristics is the key to making progress in problem solving.

Kacper