

Draft Research Proposal

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EDFN 508

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I. Introduction

Research Question:

What happens if I incorporate culturally responsive teaching in Learning Support Program of Kaohsiung Municipal Oil Refinery Elementary School?

Sub Questions:

1. What is the impact of culturally responsive teaching on students' academic performance? (narratives)
2. What is the impact of culturally responsive teaching on students' behavior management? (teacher journaling)
3. What is the impact of culturally responsive teaching on students' social emotional learning? (interviews/a focus group)

Rationale for the Study:

As a teacher researcher, I have always thought about the problem I encountered and the solutions to it. However, teaching at the elementary level, it is difficult to conduct research in my tight daily schedule. With the pressure of content delivery under the limited class time and the stress of correcting a large number of assignments and practice exam papers, I hardly survived through the tough time. After learning different methodology in class, I felt that as a teacher, I have the responsibility to make my class inclusive and further make this world a better place so that students can learn, grow, and thrive in this safe, welcoming environment. Therefore, I came up with my research question.

Significance of the Study:

My research question is “What happens if I incorporate culturally responsive teaching in Learning Support Program of Kaohsiung Municipal Oil Refinery Elementary School?” I wanted to become a teacher since I was a little girl. When I was in junior high school, I struggled and had strong resistance to learning in such a rigid Taiwanese educational system. The traditional educational system is teacher-centered, lecture-based, and test-oriented. We had quizzes after quizzes, exams after exams, and

finally, there was a senior high school entrance exam waiting for us. Honestly speaking, I hated the boring learning environment I had. I was diagnosed with School Refusal Syndrome. Now, I become a teacher who teaches in this traditional educational system. I am empathetic about my students' situation and especially they are the disadvantaged ones.

Since I realized that as a classroom teacher, it is impossible for me to subvert the traditional system, I have cast all my efforts to twist the classroom environment and classroom culture. I hope that even if I cannot offer students a well-developed inquiry learning space like most of the international schools do, I can at least take action under the current teaching framework based on the existing curriculum. Thus, I hope that I can incorporate culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in my class and look forward to seeing its impact and change of it.

Further, I am not anti-standardized tests all the time, but I feel that students should be given a more flexible, inclusive, and comfortable learning environment. In addition, students who come from low socioeconomic families should have equal access to good quality education. Therefore, I hope that as a teacher, I can help students who need learning support (LS) in their learning journey and walk them through a learning journey with a positive experience of learning English.

II. Personal Context:

I currently work at Yonglin Foundation in Taiwan which runs a learning support project with Ministry of Education, Taiwan. In the early years, the foundation hired experienced elementary teachers to develop its own educational system including curriculum, teaching materials, textbooks, practice papers, and monthly exam papers. The purpose of this is to help and support students who have low academic performance (below 50 percentile), come from low-income households, receive grandparenting, and children with working-class foreign parent(s). The fact is that these students have

insufficient resources physically, mentally, cognitively, and financially, so they are defined as those “who need extra support”. Most students here are referred by their schools and homeroom teachers indicating that they need LS. Thus, the foundation works cooperatively with universities throughout Taiwan on teacher recruitment, teacher training, professional development, and other support in cooperation with administrators and social workers.

I am a teacher who works in this program located at Kaohsiung Municipal Oil Refinery Elementary School. We implement this program in subjects of Mandarin, English, and math. I am one of the homeroom teachers who teach English. I teach four days per week from 4 pm to 6:30 pm. There are 7 students in my class. They range from grade three to grade six; their English levels are various from beginner to lower intermediate. Therefore, I conduct group differentiated instruction and allow them to work on their homework when I teach other groups. Students who finish their assignments have the freedom to play English games or play limited English games with learning purposes on the tablets.

The fact of my class is that the students come from different original classes during school hours. Although they have gotten along with each other for at least two years, the class atmosphere is indifferent. Peer interaction is limited. Students sometimes made jokes about each other. Some of my students were labeled because they have foreign parents. For example, one of the parents comes from Vietnam. My students’ attitudes towards their identities and origins seem ashamed and resistant. No matter how I taught them to embrace the differences, it seems invalid. As a teacher, I firmly believe that every individual has his/her background and different identities. We should affirm identities, know the discrepancy, and respect the differences. Thus, as a teacher, I am wondering if there is any method that I can change my students’ mindsets and stereotypes of the foreign working family, such as Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, and

Cambodia. I would like to twist the prejudice and educate my students that all cultures are equal and should be valued. I think students' attitudes towards different cultures are important because they are twenty-first-century global citizens. They should not have such a narrow mind and perception.

Previously, I have tried to invite students to share one authentic food of their origins. The food they shared could relate to personal race/ethnicity, class/socioeconomic status, religion, family history, geography, lifestyles, habits, customs, and traditions. However, my students were too excited and they brought their favorite food, such as fried rice, hamburgers, pizza, and so on. I think they did not fully understand the meanings of food that represent their origins. They need more cultural stimulation. It is my responsibility to broaden their scopes and lift their horizon that not just popular culture can be acceptable. There are multiple cultures which need us to learn and understand deeply.

III. Literature Review (annotated bibliography):

The Literature review contains five selected academic journal articles focused on culturally responsive teaching (CRT) from Google Scholar. The first article examined CRT from an overall perspective and top-down oriented. The second article indicated the key and practical action for CRT is to lift students' horizons and engaged them to be part of the global community. The third article proposed that "encouragement instead of management" is a critical change under CRT. The fourth article mentioned the drawbacks and limitations, such as time constraints, restriction of the scope, educational emphasis on high-stakes and biased assessment, and standardized curriculum. Finally, the emphasis of the fifth article laid on its research method and the circumstance of the participants. The main takeaway from these articles is that CRT is necessary because it not only makes the classroom a more inclusive environment but also awakes students' awareness of their difference and brings them some cultural

stimulation. The influence of CRT is comprehensive and holistic including social-emotional, academic, physical, and cognitive aspects.

Resource 1: Vavrus, M. (2008). Culturally responsive teaching. *21st century education: A reference handbook*, 2, 49-57.

In this article, Vavrus took a systematic scrutinize of culturally responsive teaching (CRT). He declared that CRT is a response to educational reform which values and incorporates students' cultures into instruction and curriculum (Vavrus, 2008). First, Vavrus (2008) claimed that education is a form of cultural expression, and CRT provided opportunities for supporting cultural identities to struggling students and meanwhile, encouraged them to improve their academic achievements. The functions of CRT are not only to build an inclusive classroom but also to establish a caring school culture. CRT is definite a student-centered strategy that roots in equity and justice for students to affirm their diverse backgrounds. Therefore, CRT is considered as a potential solution to racial issues. Second, CRT is similar to John Dewey's idea that multiple cultural perspectives are valued and honored in a democratic way. Third, the goal of the CRT is to include low-status students so that their rights to have equal access to education would not change due to economic reasons and/or racial discrimination. Finally, CRT is laid as the foundation of critical pedagogy. It highly values the conversation between teachers and students rather than the direct transmission of information and knowledge to students. It also offers the opportunity to examine the root problem of educational inequalities.

When I read through the article, I recapped the gist and assured myself that CRT indeed can help students with academic learning and boost teacher-student relationships due to the nature of its student-centered focus. Also, CRT is a driving force for social justice. It not only fights again inequality on education opportunity but also promotes students to seek self-identities. The research findings are coherent with

my initial assumption and as same as what I have learned from the theory. I think that the author applied a holistic and comprehensive view to examine the functions and the benefits of the CRT. This made me intrigued and am very eager to try CRT in my real classroom setting.

Resource 2: Bassey, M. O. (2016). Culturally responsive teaching: Implications for educational justice. *Education Sciences*, 6(4), 35.

Bassey (2016) first cited Geneva Gay's definition of CRT as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for [students]" (p. 31). Then he further expressed CRT is based on pedagogical practices, teaching conceptions, and social relationships to enhance social justice so teachers who implemented CRT needed to consider students' backgrounds, establish connections with families, understand students' cultural experiences, build connections with local communities, create shared learning experiences, and recognize cultural differences as strengths to initiate programs. CRT impacts students on intellectual, social, emotional, and political perspectives due to cultural referents it imparts knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In addition, the successful incorporation of CRT is based on parents' involvement and connecting the home environment with the school community so that teachers were empowered by the supportive school culture and students' scopes had been broadened and they had become part of the global community. Thus, they had very few discipline problems in their classrooms and maintained very high attendance rates. Moreover, CRT encouraged students to be active participants in the fight for social change and social justice through social activism by volunteering, doing charity work, engaging in civic duties and civic values (Bassey, 2016).

I can't agree with this article more because of its three main points. First, CRT has lifted students' horizons and engaged them to be part of the global community. Second,

because of the enhancement of esteem, self-identity, and confidence, students' behavior has positive change including fewer discipline problems and improvement of the attendance rate. Third, I agree that through implementing CRT, students have the opportunity to engage in volunteering work and charity duties to arouse their awareness of social justice. In this way, they can develop empathy and encourage each other instead of making jokes and teasing each other's situation and environment. I think it is a great way to cultivate students' health attitudes towards relationships, academic learning, and behavior change.

Resource 3: De Pry, R. & Cheesman, E. (2010). Reflections on culturally responsive teaching: Embedding theory into practices of instructional and behavioral support. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 5(1), 7.

According to Klingner and Edwards (2006), CRT is “a systems approach to reform that entails looking across multiple layers of the home, community, school, and society at large”. Therefore, schools across the United States have adopted Response to Intervention (RtI) and School-wide Positive Behavior Support (SW-PBS) programs over the past decade. These schools were engaging in systemic reform adopted scientifically validated instructional and behavioral support practices according to data analysis. “Data-based instructional practices allow the teachers to have frequent contact with relevant data to more fully understand the learning meet the diverse needs of all learners” (Bushell & Baer, 1994). Thus, the schools' roles have been changed from “manage” to support”. For instance, teaching on a daily basis required the combined use of instructional and behavioral supports to ensure success. Particularly, prompting appropriate responses and strategic use of positive reinforcement when the student responded correctly and guided and independent practice opportunities to build fluency and continued learning (De Pry & Cheesman, 2010). More importantly, under the theme of CRT, modeling caring is the priority, and thus, Taylor-Green et al. (1997)

reported a 42% reduction in office discipline referrals. Last, schools began to develop the capacity to meet the diverse academic and social/behavioral needs of all learners through implementation of CRT with support.

As a classroom teacher, I firmly believe that encouragement is more powerful than discipline. Therefore, with the condition that my students are those who are disadvantaged and need LS, I tend to give positive reinforcement rather than just blame on their fault. I am aware that they need extra help, guidance, and companion to walk through their individual learning journeys. Therefore, I offer differentiated instruction and give different expectations. I think that I serve as a facilitator and helper for learning. In order to offer a student-centered learning environment, I need to pay more attention to students' behavior, physical and mental condition, and academic progress. I always prefer supporting rather than managing. Although sometimes I was demanding, I think it is a way to stimulate students' motivation and spark their potential. After reading this article, I am more than willing to incorporate CRT into my class. I think it fits my teaching style in some way.

Resource 4: Bonner, P. J., Warren, S. R., & Jiang, Y. H. (2018). Voices from urban classrooms: Teachers' perceptions on instructing diverse students and using culturally responsive teaching. *Education and Urban Society*, 50(8), 697-726.

This study investigated urban teachers' perceptions regarding the instruction of diverse students using CRT. This is a qualitative research in which the author explored teachers' thoughts, beliefs, and experiences of conducting CRT. "There is evidence that the dispositions or beliefs of educators as well as their ability to use effective pedagogical practices can greatly affect their teaching, particularly with diverse students" (Bonner, Warren, & Jiang, 2018). The research findings are as follows. First, teachers have a strong sense of efficacy, competence, and growing expertise in CRT. Second, outcomes of CRT were higher achievement, greater acceptance and tolerance,

increased confidence, higher motivation, better future, and societal benefits, such as academic success, psychological benefits, motivation and engagement, and societal benefits. CRT contained abundant advantages, but there were challenges and concerns. Frustration with the challenges inherent in addressing a multitude of cultures and languages in daily classroom instruction was conveyed by teachers. Limitations included lack of time, the scope of the need, educational emphasis on high-stakes and biased assessment, and standardized curriculum.

When I read the article, I tried my best to stay objective. With sufficient evidence recognized by the researchers and classroom teachers, I was wondering about the shortcomings of CRT. Before reading this article, I assumed that I will not have much time to introduce students the concepts of equity and justice. Although I have built rapport with students and my own teacher-student relationship is positive, I think if I do not intendedly bring CRT as part of my class, the focus of the teaching and learning will stay the same. In other words, the emphasis of the class should be shifted from purely academic to more inclusive of equality and justice and I am expecting the ongoing dynamic nature of CRT bringing into my class. In terms of time constraints, I think that after accumulating different teaching experiences in both local traditional system and international curriculum, I will apply Approaches to learning (ATL) skills to teach students “learning how to learn” so that I will not be trapped into a pitfall of covering all the content superficially in a limited time. All I have to do is to teach students learning skills with key content with necessary practice under the theme of CRT and gradually they will become caring independent learners.

Resource 5: Bui, Y. N., & Fagan, Y. M. (2013). The effects of an integrated reading comprehension strategy: A culturally responsive teaching approach for fifth-grade students’ reading comprehension. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 57(2), 59-69.

In this article, Bui & Fagan (2013) stated that CRT is related to cooperative learning to enhance reading comprehension. The finding showed cooperative learning for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and English learners are effective because of the social context and opportunities to practice oral language skills. Besides, working together in a supportive manner to accomplish daily tasks was a common phenomenon of everyday life in some countries which have a collective consciousness. Therefore, cooperative learning provided students the opportunity to see parts of their home culture reflected at school, which may increase the likelihood of their success (Putnam, 1998). Next, the other critical point in this research is mythology. The authors adopted a quasi-experimental nonequivalent group, pretest-posttest design. They applied a popular children's picture book and four stories selected from the school district's mandated fifth-grade reading textbook to measure elementary pupils' background knowledge, word recognition, reading comprehension, and story retell. There were two major findings. The first finding was the students from both groups made statistically significant gains from pretest to posttest for word recognition, reading comprehension, and story retelling. The medium to large effect sizes indicated that the combination of strategies had a positive and moderately strong effect on the students' mean reading scores. Second, for reading comprehension, both groups made statistically significant mean score gains from pretest to posttest. On the other hand, the limitations of this study are three major points as follows. First, the length and intensity of the treatment were limited. Second, there was no control group. Last, the small sample size was too small to have a random assignment.

The reason that I chose to review this study is because it is related to reading instruction in elementary school and I would like to learn more about the methodology from the existing research. I felt quantitative research with pretest and posttest is a cost-effective way to present the learning outcomes of the participants. However, the

difficulty I have to consider is that it is hard to find a control group in the similar setting as I am not a grade lead teacher or program coordinator. Therefore, after consideration of the feasibility and validity, the research methodology of my study is probably still either interview or case study.

IV. Methodology:

Participants

The participants will be my students in Learning Support Program of Kaohsiung Municipal Oil Refinery Elementary School. There are seven students. Three boys and four girls. Their grade levels are four third graders, one fourth grader, one fifth grader, and one sixth grader. All the participants are referred by their homeroom teachers and/or school to join the LS program due to reasons including low academic performance (below 50 percentile), low-income households, grandparenting, and children with working-class foreign parent(s).

Procedure

I plan to conduct a CRT project called “My Family Item”. It is a class activity of asking students to bring and share an item which represents their family with the whole class and write a short narrative to describe the item they choose. As a teacher researcher, I will correct the narrative for each student and see how CRT impacts on their academic performance. During these two days of project implementation, as I teacher researcher, I will observe and do journaling to keep a record of students’ behavior change. After the sharing, students will be asked to express their feelings as feedback. Therefore, I plan to conduct interviews to have an in-depth understanding of participants’ feelings, perceptions, and attitudes about sharing the items. To accommodate those who have limited English proficiency, I will hold a focus group, so students with low-academic performance are able to discuss and express their thoughts.

Data Collection

The row data, the narratives of the items which students choose to represent their family, will be collected from the class activity. In addition, teacher journaling will be applied to keep record. Moreover, I will embark on drafting my interview questions after hearing students' sharing. I will record all the processes and type a transcription. As to the consent form, I will need to communicate with my supervisor and inform parents by the student communication booklet.

Data Analysis

The row data of narratives will be collected for analyzing students' common errors and their progress on academic performance. Next, during these two days of project implementation, as I teacher researcher, I will observe and do journaling to keep a record of students' behavior changes. Furthermore, in order to have an in-depth understanding of participants' feelings, perceptions, and attitudes about sharing, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. The reasons I choose to conduct semi-structured interviews are to lower students' affective filter and release their stress and nervousness. Besides, as an investigator, I will have some flexibility with my participants. They are still young, so the interviews will be special experiences to them which need some time and patience to accommodate. Finally, the transcription will be produced after interviews to have an in-depth understanding for the research purpose. As to those participants with limited English proficiency, instead of interviews, a focus group will be conducted.

What I hope to learn from my research

As a teacher researcher, I hope to acquire how students feel after I incorporate the CRT project in class. I hope I could gain some results of CRT impacts on students' academic performance, behavior management, and social emotional learning. I hope my students feel the change and flexibility. Through the ongoing change, students are able to understand that all cultures are equal and should be respected. In addition, I hope

this continuous change can shift my class atmosphere to a more inclusive, welcoming, and comfortable place for students to learn and explore in their learning journeys.

V. Reference

1. Bassegy, M. O. (2016). Culturally responsive teaching: Implications for educational justice. *Education Sciences*, 6(4), 35.
2. Bonner, P. J., Warren, S. R., & Jiang, Y. H. (2018). Voices from urban classrooms: Teachers' perceptions on instructing diverse students and using culturally responsive teaching. *Education and Urban Society*, 50(8), 697-726.
3. Bui, Y. N., & Fagan, Y. M. (2013). The effects of an integrated reading comprehension strategy: A culturally responsive teaching approach for fifth-grade students' reading comprehension. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 57(2), 59-69.
4. De Pry, R. & Cheesman, E. (2010). Reflections on culturally responsive teaching: Embedding theory into practices of instructional and behavioral support. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 5(1), 7.
5. Vavrus, M. (2008). Culturally responsive teaching. *21st century education: A reference handbook*, 2, 49-57.

VI. Supplemental materials

Consent form

2022/02/14

Dear parents of Class B in Oil Refinery Elementary School,

Congratulations, your son/daughter has been offered the opportunity to participate in action research investigated by their homeroom teacher, Tr. Pei-Hsuan Lin. The research is about the feedback of incorporating culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in the classroom. We ask for your consent and hope your child will enjoy the following research progress with his/her teacher.

To confirm your child's participation, please sign the following reply slip and have your child return it to Tr. Pei-Hsuan. If you need further information, please feel free to contact Tr. Pei-Hsuan at:

E-mail: peihsuan.lin2@gmail.com

Phone: (07) 525-1001

Yours Sincerely

Gabi Yeh
Director

Pei-Hsuan Lin
Homeroom of Class B, Oil Refinery Elementary School

Reply slip: Teacher Action Research to Tr. Pei-Hsuan by Friday, Feb. 18

Student Chinese Name: _____ English Name: _____

I understand that my child will participate in the teacher action research project which holds by Yonglin Foundation.

Parent signature: _____ Phone number: _____

Date: _____