



How common is the Common Core for Deaf students? The Common Core and Culturally Sustaining Deaf Pedagogy



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Theoretical Framework

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In 1995, Ladson-Billings presented a theory of “culturally relevant pedagogy” (CRP) based on research of highly successful minority student classrooms. This theory proposed that for students from underserved populations to truly succeed in schools, they must be expected to succeed in three criteria:

1. Academic Success. “Intellectual growth that students experience as a result of classroom instruction”.
2. Cultural Competence. “Appreciate and celebrate their cultures of origin while gaining knowledge and fluency” in the dominant culture.
3. Sociopolitical Consciousness. “Take learning beyond... the classroom... to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems”.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

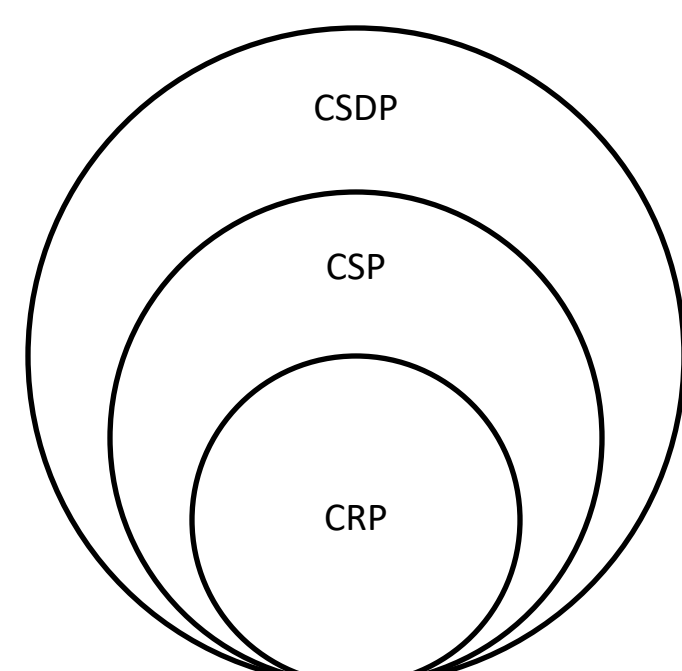
In 2012, Paris noted that Ladson-Billings’ original ideas had been oft-misinterpreted to create more of a culturally *superficial* pedagogy that did not create the successes of a culturally *relevant* pedagogy. He proposed that the theory be revised to become culturally *sustaining* pedagogy (CSP). This kept the three criteria, but he revised the definition of each criterion. Ladson-Billings (2014) endorsed this change:

1. Academic Success. Students need fluency in the dominant American English (DAE) used as the language of education, business, and opportunity.
2. Cultural Competence. Having an understanding of their own culture, the dominant American culture, and allowing for cross-cultural learning among peers.
3. Sociopolitical Consciousness. Paris noted this was the most overlooked portion of CRP, thus he proposes that teachers actually apply students’ learning to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems, especially those they face as a result of their background.

Culturally Sustaining Deaf Pedagogy

Using culturally sustaining pedagogy, I created a theory of Culturally Sustaining *Deaf* Pedagogy (CSDP) based on the three criteria molded to fit the needs of Deaf Education schools and programs:

1. Academic Success. Achieve fluency in dominant American English (DAE) in appropriate modes of communication as well as other content areas, connecting to a meaningful transition plan for D/HH students.
2. Cultural Competence. Understanding and navigability in dominant hearing American culture, Deaf culture, their own culture, and cross-cultural understandings with peers and adults.
3. Sociopolitical Consciousness. Students learn to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems that D/HH students from both a broad perspective and a D/HH perspective.



Findings

General Pedagogy of the Common Core

- The Common Core does *not* tell teachers how to teach or what texts must be used in a classroom.
- The Common Core is meant for *all* students, regardless of language, disability, placement, or other factors.
- The Common Core is meant to be an adaptive work that can change to meet to the new and ever-developing needs of children and society.

Academic Success

- The Common Core seeks a shift from rote memorization to deep understanding of the “processes and proficiencies” used in English and mathematics. The word often used to describe this shift is intellectual “rigor”.
- All students are expected to reach grade level proficiency in English, regardless of potential obstacles in their backgrounds.
- The purpose of the Common Core is to enable all students to be “career and college ready” regardless of inequitable circumstances.

Cultural Competence

- Mathematics standards do not necessarily encourage cultural competence, although there is *not* language suggesting that it discourages this kind of learning.
- For reading materials, the Common Core does not have a set list of required readings, although it has suggestions. It encourages students to read a wide variety of fiction and non-fiction works from a variety of sources to “gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge”.
- ELL students are expected to fully engage in learning the standard curriculum while their native cultural knowledge is to be celebrated and used in the classroom.

Sociopolitical Consciousness

- There are many standards, especially in English, that encourage students to think critically about people’s arguments, reasoning used in justifying positions, evidence based persuasion. Mathematics encourages real-life data to be used in discussing current events.
- English begins looking for causality, reasoning, and motivation in characters and situations beginning as early as Kindergarten.

Discussion

In looking at the findings from the perspective of CSDP, it becomes clear that the Common Core is tacitly supportive of the three criteria mentioned. It is the interpretation, then, of the Common Core that follows the potential for culturally sustaining Deaf pedagogy, a relevant but superficial pedagogy, or a lesser pedagogy. Therefore, I encourage the field of Deaf Education to adopt, adapt, and co-opt the Common Core.

Adopt

The Common Core is not going anywhere soon. Even states that do not use the standards are highly influenced by them. Additionally, competency in English has long been a central issue in Deaf Education and it continues to be an issue. As a field, we need to acknowledge and accept the expectations of the Common Core for our students. We also, as a field, need to revisit and renew our theories and pedagogies on how to teach English to D/HH students.

Adapt

There is a singular reference to sign language in the Common Core referring to the *speaking* and *listening* standard strands. Many students use ASL as either their primary or secondary language of instruction. As a field, we need to open a national discussion on creating a Common Core endorsed set of standards for ASL. We also need to keep in mind the varying language uses of our students in how they access, create, and express learning within their curriculums.

Co-Opt

As it is often used, the Common Core is something that is done to Deaf Education programs and schools rather than something that is owned, shaped, and molded by Deaf Education schools and programs. Where are Deaf authors on our literature lists? Where is Deaf history in our social studies classes? Where are Deaf issues and data in our math classrooms? The Common Core is open to the idea of cultural and sociopolitical learning, thus we can *use* the Common Core to further D/HH children’s self-identity growth and self-advocacy while still fulfilling all the expectations of the Common Core.

The Common Core

The Common Core State Standards (2010) is an initiative that created sets of standards covering English language arts (both for ELA courses and to be integrated in other content areas) and mathematics. These standards were created by the National Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governor’s Association to create expectations of success that could meet today’s challenges in preparing students to be ready for college and careers.



Methods

This study sought to see if the Common Core State Standards (2010) meet the ideals of Culturally Sustaining Deaf Pedagogy, the theoretical framework of this study. All standards, guiding documents, and information published by the Common Core itself, rather than interpretations of the standards by other groups, were analyzed using qualitative document analysis methods using hypothesis-driven coding using codes developed from the theoretical framework.

Selected References

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