Visible Pedagogy: A summary of concepts

Visible pedagogy

- Learning outcomes, expectations, and teacher decisions are explicitly communicated to students.
- Teachers intervene in learning processes to ensure student achievement.
- Involves a 'master-apprentice' relationship (de Silva Joyce & Feez, 2012, p. 50) between teacher and students; the teacher takes on an authoritative role.
- Students achieve beyond their entry level.

Invisible pedagogy

- Discovery, exploration.
- Knowledge and skills are gained through trial and error.

Classification

- How clearly categories and contexts are defined and separated.
- Strong classification: purposes and language skills are signalled clearly, activities are labelled with particular purposes and skills.
- Weak classification: various purposes and language skills are dealt with simultaneously, not clearly labelled.

Framing

- Expectations about behavior, classroom relationships, and the choice, order and pacing of learning activities.
- Strong framing: expectations are made explicit to students, and students are supported in engaging with these expectations.

Basil Bernstein

- A British sociologist who investigated why learners from different backgrounds experience education differently.
- Developed the concepts of 'classification' and 'framing'.
- Also developed the concepts 'restricted code' and 'elaborated code' - 'elaborated' language is explicit and less dependent on context.

Visible pedagogy: Debates

The case for visible pedagogy:

- Advocates argue invisible pedagogies are less effective and disadvantage students whose backgrounds have not prepared them for educational contexts.
- Communicative approaches may not be transparent and may lack apparent purpose, especially for learners used to defined classroom roles and teacher-student heirarchy, a focus on grammar rather than communication and language use, focusing on

macroskills separately, and 'lock-step' materials and activities (Burns & de Silva Joyce, 2008, p. 4).

- Learners may not be used to taking responsibility for their own learning, and may not know how to navigate this responsibility.

Concerns and issues:

- Do we risk ignoring learners' contexts and own language use, and the ways of thinking and the meanings that are important to them (Malcolm, 2002, p. 17)?
- What if learners do not share our goals? An authoritative relationship with learners could be counter-productive if they do not share teacher or institutional goals (Harkins, 1994, pp. 195-196).
- Bernstein's approach may have been deterministic (i.e. he found what he looked for) and influenced by pre-existing prejudices about middle class and working class people, rather than dealing with the full complexities of people's lives and language use (Harkins, 1994, pp. 109-118).
- What if language development takes its own course and teacher-predetermined 'intervention' is not really feasible or helpful (Thornbury, 2017)?

Sources and Resources

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