

JESUS AND HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILL: JESUS AS A GREAT COMMUNICATOR AND EDIUCATOR

Pdt. Daniel Trihandarkha, S.Sos., M.Th.
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Jemaat Kristus Indonesia
email: daniamdg@sttjki.ac.id

Abstract: *It has been analysed with variety sets of scrutiny that Jesus' way of communicating his message to people were effective and impactful form of communication. Those who engage with Jesus from variety background, from the beggars to the aristocrats showed how thoughtful Jesus had formulated his wording beforehand. Thus, some were challenged, encouraged, and even confronted. The communication in the perspective of Higher Order Thinking demands the listener to engage, self-examine and then decide of what to do. Jesus' communication styles, in the from parables, sermons, exhortations, reprimands, and confrontations left no room for indifference attitude.*

Keywords: *Jesus, Bloom, HOTS, Sermon in the Mount*

INTRODUCTION

Higher Order Thinking (HOTS) which includes synthesis and production of new procedures or new approach in various fields has been prevalent in the scientific and education field. Bloom identified the taxonomy of educational objective, which latter was amended by Krathwohl. The higher order thinking will utilize the ability to obtain the pattern of overarching ideas in writing or concepts and then apply those in discourse or formulating new ideas (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013). Jesus' ability to invite variety of people from the tax collector, fishermen, prostitute, centurion, teacher of the Law, aristocrats, beggars, and high priest to involve to the axiomatic truth directed conversation is intreating to be observed.

Jesus also fully realized how context and culture will influence the effectiveness of his messages being received. Because when an event or interaction is isolated from context and culture, the likelihood of effective communication will be abysmal (Sue et al., 2013). One might suggest that Jesus was operating solely on his divine *omniscience*, however, the listeners, whether those who sought healing, confrontation or relationship were completely caught off guard by the way Jesus responded from the *Judaism* perspective, engaging the Jewish society with strong *Greco-Roman* influence. In brief, Jesus was demonstrating high communication skill and effective HOTS in every interaction he had. This writing will explore several engagements he had through the lenses of HOTS and how the hearer would response in such extraordinary ways.

RESEARCH METHOD

This writing will focus on Jesus' conversation with people in his ministry. The conversation will be observed by the way of engaging with the audience, how he utilized with what is recognized now as HOTS to stimulate thinking process in the audience, and some method of Jesus' delivery like parables to engage people with HOTS.

As Jesus has been recognized to talk with different people, the assessment of his approach to different level of people will be analysed as well. The interaction of compassion, confrontation, and exhortation will be some themes under scrutiny of HOTS assessment.

EXPLANATION AND RESULT

Sermon of the Mount

Jesus' teaching in Sermon of the Mount, is one of the prime examples of Jesus utilizes HOTS to engage the listeners to think and receive the truth. When talked about the beatitudes, Jesus started with a controversial topic to begin with, "blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them," (NET, 2003, Matt 5:2). Jesus started with a controversial topic to ponder with. In HOTS to incite discussion in class, one can start with controversial topic, based on experimental evidence indicates that some disagreements or paradox can develop certain degree of surprise and curiosity, which is fundamental in initiating the learning process (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013).

The controversial and seemingly paradoxical is certainly the word "poor" in the ears of the listeners at the time. The word poor in Greek is *πτωχός* or *pto-khos*, and it is not associated with good moral, but a bad, low degree of morality of a person (Thayer, 1995). Some theologians also argued that the word *ptokhos* has nothing to do with economic poverty. It is a state of morality, which is so bad that one cannot earn merit, or so disgraceful that it is utterly impossible to earn God's favor (Richison, 2008). Therefore, this must have caught the audience by surprise, and inevitably roused enormous curiosity. They must struggle with question then of, "how come a wretched and morally disgraceful man owns kingdom of heaven?" The word "blessed" or *makarios* itself refers not to a certain condition, but it is a state of relationship. Meaning, that feelings, adverse condition cannot take away the blessedness of the one who exists in relationship with God (Clinton, 2002). Therefore, when the rich young ruler, as much as he was thinking he fulfilled the law, was deemed unqualified to inherit eternal life to which the disciples, as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, was in distress. It is grace that enables people to go to heaven to have God's favor, and when they come to the realization of how corrupt and evil, they are before the holy God, they solely need grace, thus, they are blessed.

The whole set of the beatitudes especially in the verse three was taken by Jesus from the Book of Isaiah. In the first verse of chapter 61, the prophet talked about prophetic message of preaching the good news to the poor, and idea of the kingdoms. Paul House said that God told the prophet to declare their sins to people,

but Judahites were hardened, and they were humiliated and finally the Kingdom of Judah was destroyed by Babylonians. They were poor spiritually because of the sin of pseudo-religions and outward worship of God. The remnant, the people who were in exiles, the destroyed and destitute, were given the promise of good news to the spiritually poor, to suffering people (House, 1998). The promise which people in Jesus' era still held at the time of the Sermon of the Mount. Jesus knew the context of the people. The religious, cultural and historical background of the listeners. Jewish people were an oppressed community under Roman Empire at the time. Jesus knew how depressed and desperate they were. In engaging students with various spiritual and cultural background, a teacher must understand different cultures and stressors that might affect the performance of the students, and the effectiveness of learnings. Native American have long history of oppression and the reservation have sacred bound with the Indian students, and how they operate and study (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013). Jesus responded differently when he engaged with the Centurion, a Roman (Matt 8: 5-13), Nikodemus, a Pharisee (John 3:1-21), Zakeus, a hated Jewish tax collector (Luke 19:1-10), and of course, Peter, a high tempered fisherman.

Jesus also engaged their prior-knowledge and experience of the promise in the book of prophets. Jesus believed that learning is obtained from deep insight and reflections on underlying principles and assumptions. In order to have life-changing knowledge, solely declaring the truth is not enough, one must absolutely believe that learning is a changing process in attitude, behaviour and mindset. Part of this process is to learn to unlearn. When people are being confronted with the truth, they must learn to unlearn the old principle or old frameworks (Lee, 2006). The people, especially the Pharisees who were fixated with the obsession of earning God's favor with their performance, were confronted with truth that they could not do anything to do so. The process of unlearn also mean to disconfirm the person's belief system, subsequently change occurs when people re-examine the cherished prior learning and be willing to unlearn it to receive the new learning (Lewin, 1958; as cited in Lee, 2006). In HOTS this process is categorized in evaluation where learners are given space to come to conclusion about something based on criteria or standard (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013). The Jewish people need examined the assumptions they have hold on, especially from the Pharisees who exhorted the outward performance but miniscule in practice. Subsequently, they need to unlearn it and embrace new learning they heard from Jesus.

Jesus' engagement with Parables

Jesus knew his hearers, in discovery learning, the learning moment could occur anytime. Time when the emotional response of learning is invoked. The teachable moment will be identified when learners are eager to answer question, and cope with their situations. Jesus spoke with many parables in delivering the truth he wanted to convey. This was deliberate because the hearers would be confronted with many uncertainties and ambiguities (Lee, 2006). Jesus' parables arguably enhance the effectiveness of teaching. Jesus' parables encompassed the usage of *semantic feature of comparison model*, where in cognitive method of

psychology it is attributed to a process of comparing of two unrelated objects and visualized those in the story to evoke emotion and imagination about the message being delivered (Chia, 2020). Thus, the hearers not only receive information but also inevitably involve in the visualizing process and retain the knowledge in their memory as it brings impact in the emotions. Cognitive and affective domains are engaged in such approach in teaching.

Deliberate emotion engagement is also part of imagination, which is distinct from abstract reasoning and perception. Imagination will involve objects, events, and actions in their particularity. Yet, imagination will operate outside human's direct sensory, like, nose, eyes, and ears. Thus, it will preserve the functional properties of actual experience (Hogan, 2016). Compared to direct sensory experience, imagination will likely keep the experience for very long of time, because imagination will free people from unnecessary direct sensory disturbance or consequences. For instance, one can imagine hugging a person but devoid the bad breath, or the sweat.

Jesus often used *hypo catastasis* as a form of figure of speech involving comparison which compares the likeness by a direct naming. For example, Jesus used the words "you brood of viper" (Matt 12:34), he did not say "you are viper" which was a *simile* and nor "you are like brood of viper" which is known as the form of *metaphor* (Zuck, 1991). This direct naming is intended to emphasize the inherent quality of intended object (Lee, 2006). The listener at the time would certainly understand that Jesus was very intentional and angry in condemning the legalistic Pharisees, especially when Jesus, in the context, was accused as using power of Beelzebub because he healed a person in the Sabbath day.

Jesus' Engagement with Pharisees and Those who Opposed him

Jesus knew well the teaching and tradition in Judaism. Especially when facing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the teacher of the Law. In John 8, when the woman who committed adultery was caught red handed, and was about to be stoned, Jesus stated the truth which inevitably struck the chords of all people. He said, "Anyone here who has never sinned can throw the first stone to her." (NET, 2003, John 8:7). Jesus formulated a statement that hits hard to the people's reality.

In constructivist paradigm Jesus utilized the explanation phase where one of the features is to direct the hearers to reveal the contents surrounding the concept they have been exploring (previous phase). In this phase the learners will identify their behaviour in accordance with the content they have explored, or primary sources materials and content knowledge they previously studied is applied and integrated (Robertson, 2008). For example, the Jewish people are already familiar with law and scriptures in Old Testament, part of it is the sacrificial system as atonement of sin. The burn offering is conducted every day, gave them realization that the sins are incurable and imperfect sacrifice will not be able to abolish their sins. People, young and old, priests or ordinary, witnessed the years long sacrifice everyday knowing this detestable sin they must live with and huge chasm separate themselves from the Holy God (Wenham, 2008). Therefore, the words "never sinned" Jesus uttered in defence of the adulterous woman, was an absolute truth

which they must examine their behaviour upon. Jesus powerfully thrust the reality into their knowledge of the law and stipulations into their mind. Having connected the ideal with their own attitudes, the people synthesized that they were also below the par. Robertson (2008) called this as part of HOTS where the hearers analyzed what Jesus said, and then integrated through reflection on their own life, and then concluded with new set of action, which was completely opposite with what they intended to do in the first place. The condemning people changed their mind, which is known in HOTS as ethical decision making (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013) after their moral reasoning being confronted by their own standard which they cannot fulfil.

Jesus' engagement with those who sought him

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman in the well, Jesus knew exactly the context and background of this woman, thus relate accordingly and appropriately (John 4: 4-42). Jesus knew that the Samaritan woman was considered impure and had strong apprehension toward Jewish people, moreover an adult, male and a Rabbi (v.9). This woman experienced stereotype and rejections, that was why she came by herself at the sixth hour (v.6). Jesus destroyed the barrier and talked comfortably with this woman despite the cultural and religious norm forbid him to do so. A Rabbi will not speak to a woman in public, especially a harlot, but Jesus was willing to put his reputation in line to talk with her (Richison, 2008). In active learning class, if certain student with have experience racial discrimination history, the imposter syndrome might occur, while other students might have difficulty to learn intensively because impossible detachment from their nuclear or extended family (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013).

McKeachi and Svinicki (2013) suggested that a teacher must tailor different methods in his or her teaching in engaging with different students with different cultural background. A teacher also must collaborate or engaging with the family or significant others of students. In doing so, the teacher does not detach the student from their culture or families but to make adjustment and give reality check to the family that their member of the family who is the first generation who attends university is struggling with his academic achievement. When the families adjusted, they all see the success of the student in graduation (McKeachi & Svinicki, 2013). That was what Jesus exactly did with the Samaritan woman, understanding the oppressed status of the woman, he earned trust from the woman by defying all the norms and sacrificing his reputations (v.27). Using his omniscience knowledge about her marital status (v.18), Jesus then invited the woman to receive the truth of himself as Messiah (v.21, 26), whom the woman had been yearning to meet (v.25). She rushed home and talked to the people in her town to come and meet Jesus (v.28). The despised, isolated, and immoral woman became the first successful evangelist who brought many to believe in Jesus as Messiah, the Saviour of the World (v.39-40). This active learning strategy Jesus used enabled the woman to interact, synthesize and spread it out in multiplication to her towns people.

CONCLUSION

Jesus possessed remarkable communication skills when delivering his messages. The discourse not only in the form of preaching and teaching, but also in the interaction and response to the questions from those who hate him, in the term of confrontation he asserted the specific truth through symbols or figure of speech, like “brood of viper” for the Pharisees and expert of the Law. He also cared about the thinking process of those who believe in him, so the truth will be a by-product of the owning process which includes shocking treatments, evaluation and finally decision to respond to the truth. This process is known in modern education field as *Higher Order Thinking Skill*, an advance concept of summarizing, synthesizing, and producing new behaviour or action.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Chia, P. S. (2020). Analysis of the effectiveness of jesus’ parable: A cognitive psychology approach. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 29(3), 272–284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656219.2020.1835593>
- Clinton, E. A. (2002). *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary, Volume 1: Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Zondervan Academics.
- Hogan, P. C. (2016). Jesus’s parables: Simulation, stories, and narrative idiolect. *Narrative*, 24(2), 113–133. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2016.0011>
- House, P. R. (1998). *Old Testament Theology* (1st ed.). InterVarsity Press. <https://www.ivpress.com/old-testament-theology>
- Lee, H. (2006). Jesus Teaching Through Discovery. *International Christian Community of Teacher*, 1(2).
- McKeachi, W., & Svinicki, M. (2013). *McKeachie’s teaching tips 14th edition* (14th (ed.)). Cengage Learning.
- Richison, G. (2008). *Matthew 5:3b | Bible Exposition Commentary*. Verse by Verse Commentary. <https://versebyversecommentary.com/2008/03/24/matthew-53b/>
- Robertson, W. H. (2008). The Greatest Constructivist Educator Ever : The Pedagogy of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew in the Context of the 5Es. *Journal of Christian Perspectives in Education*, 1(2).
- Sue, D. W., Gallado, M. E., & Neviille, H. A. (2013). *Case Studies in Multicultural Counseling and Therapy 1st Edition* (1st ed.). Willey.
- Thayer, J. (1995). *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Coded with Strong’s Concordance Numbers*. Tyndale House Publisher.
- Wenham, G. (2008). *Exploring the Old Testament: A Guide to Pentateuch*. InterVarsity Press.
- Zuck, R. (1991). *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*. Victor Books.