

STUDENTS' CULTURAL COMPETENCE THROUGH A CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION SUBJECT IN INDONESIA: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Cross-Cultural Communication can be defined simply as a comprehensive way to examine similarities and differences between L1 culture and the target culture. It is a basic skill that the students need for developing an intellectual and emotional appreciation of cultures other than their own. Cross Cultural Communication can develop student's cultural competencies as they experience lifelong learning. For specific cases, they can practice in stimulated exercises in order to develop their cultural competencies by bringing cultural exposure into the classroom for the specific purpose of teaching the target language culture. Since cultural competence enhancement is not static, the students' interaction in multicultural life, their roles as English teacher candidates, and their life learning experiences will help them become more mature and will lead them to the level of cultural competence proficiency.

Keywords: Students, Cultural Competence, Cross Cultural Communication

INTRODUCTION

It is already known that English has been taught either as a foreign or second language in many countries throughout the world. It is also acknowledged that language cannot be taught without culture and that culture is a necessary context of language use (Singhal, 1998). In other words, learning a foreign language includes learning the culture of that language. Furthermore Brown (1994, p.25) says that language and culture are intricately intertwined. Anytime you successfully learn a language you will also learn something regarding the culture of the speakers of that language. To have a better understanding when communicating with another, someone should know about the culture of the person with whom he/she communicates.

English in Indonesia has a status as the first foreign language taught from elementary school until university. Indonesia is a multicultural country composed of hundreds of various cultural tribes, races and languages. Thus, we come up

with the motto, “Unity in diversity” which means that even though we come from various different cultural backgrounds we are one as a nation.

Indonesian students usually have cross-cultural experiences every day when they study and socialize with the students from different ethnic groups. They encounter different accents and mannerisms, different lifestyles and backgrounds, and likes or dislikes, and lifestyles among Indonesian ethnic groups. Thus, they need to learn from and appreciate one another, respect and enjoy differences, and negotiate and work through cultural (mis)understandings. They have already encountered cross-cultural experiences that may help them become more flexible in encountering cultural differences. Even though cultural differences may cause cultural barriers, those barriers can help them to be more cognizant of the need for understanding other cultures.

In most Indonesian classrooms, the student has been exposed to the nuances of English culture as it pertains to English language. For example, in greeting, English native speakers address someone with surname like Mr. Smith and simply greet someone first whenever they meet. This leads to a need for English teachers and also English teachers candidates to develop their competence in all aspects of language competence, particularly cultural competence. To fulfill the need to help English learners understand the cultures of English-speaking countries, a Cross-Cultural Communication subject has been developed. It is expected that by implementing this subject, the students will develop their cultural competence gradually, since this course focuses on improving the students’ cultural awareness, knowledge and cultural skills.

METHODS

The method for writing this scientific article is qualitative methods and literature study or library research. Examining theories and reviewing literature books that are in accordance with the theory discussed are sourced from Google Scholar. One of the main reasons for conducting qualitative research is that the research is exploratory in nature (Ali & Limakrisna, 2013). In the next stage it will be discussed in depth in the section entitled "Related Literature" or "Literature Review", as a basis for formulating hypotheses and in the final stage these two pieces of literature will become the basis for making comparisons with the results and findings. -findings revealed in research (H. Ali & Limakrisna, 2013).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Culture

The term culture encompasses a large number of definitions which show its richness, dynamics and breadth. Robinson (1988) points to the three categories of culture as follows: ideas (belief, values, institution) behaviors (language, gesture, custom/habit, foods) and products (literature, folklore, art, music, artifacts). The categories of behaviors and products reflect a notion of culture as an observable phenomenon. On the other hand, the category of ideas reflects a notion of culture that is not observable but rather something which is internal yet can also be explicitly described.

The underlying concepts used to define culture, are firstly, the system of cultural pattern. Each society has its own cultural pattern that can be learned and shared with its members (Hiebert, 1983; Luzbetak, 1967; Levine & Alderman, 1993; Spradley, 1975). The second concept is the way of life of a society. It is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others (Luzbetak, 1967). Thirdly, it is the categories of behavior and ideas that reflect observable and unobservable behaviors including customs, beliefs, attitudes, values in which a society lives (Robinson, 1988; Spradley, 1975; Levine & Alderman, 1993).

Cultural Differences and Communication

Culture is different from society to society or from one ethnic group to another. Cultural differences exist because people who live in different places see the world, time and space in different ways. They eat different foods, build different kinds of houses, speak different languages or dialects, and greet each other in different ways (Hiebert, 1983). Cultural differences can lead to misunderstanding, as people move from one culture to another, particularly when the same behavior has a different meaning in the new setting (Hiebert, 1983). In other words, cultural differences can cause conflict when two cultures come into contact. Conflict is often caused by a clash of values. Furthermore, cultural differences can be barriers to communication (Nida, 1976).

Communication is an element of culture. It derived from the Latin word “communicare”, meaning to share with or to make common, as in giving to another part or sharing your thoughts, hopes, and knowledge (Jandt, 1998). Intercultural or cross-cultural communication are often used interchangeably, which is an interdisciplinary field of research that studies how people understand each other across group boundaries of various sorts: national, geographical, ethnic, occupational, class or gender.

Intercultural communication can be defined as face-to-face interaction or communication between members of different cultures (Samovar, 1980; Jandt, 1998). While cross-cultural communication is defined as communication (verbal and non-verbal) between people from different cultures and is influenced by cultural values, attitudes and behavior, and the influence of culture on people’s reaction and responses to each other (Levine & Adelman, 1993:xvii-xviii).

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence refers to a set of congruent attitudes, practices, policies, and structures that come together in a system or agency to enable professionals to work effectively with members of culturally distinct groups in a manner that values and respects the culture and worldview of those groups (Hanley, 1999). The attainment of cultural competence is an important prerequisite for effective teaching. One approach to promote cultural competence is through training and education. Hanley (1999) defined cultural competency as the ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person or organization being served (p. 10).

The cultural competence discussed is based on and adapted from Pedersen's Conceptual Framework for Developing Cultural and Cross Cultural Competence (1994) and Cross Cultural Competence Model (1989). This model is called a Tripartite Developmental Model (Pedersen, 1994) to promote cultural and multicultural understanding among practitioners. These competencies include the domains of: awareness, knowledge and skills. In addition, Cross (1989) emphasized three critical elements in the model of cultural competence: 1) self-awareness; 2) culture-specific knowledge; and 3) skills promoting socio-cultural interactions by individuals. Each domain builds successfully on the previous one; mastery of an earlier domain is necessary before proceeding to subsequent domain.

The awareness domain competency involves recognition of one's own biases as well as awareness of the socio-political issues that confront culturally different youngsters. Competencies in the knowledge domain involve the acquisition of factual information about different cultural groups. Finally, competencies in the skills domain involve integrating competencies in the previous awareness and knowledge domains in an effort to positively impact culturally distinct children.

Cross-Cultural Communication

Maletzke (1978), defines cross-cultural communication as a process of change seeking and finding meaning between people of different cultures. Cross-cultural communication is the sending of messages from someone who comes from a different culture to the person receiving the message. If simplified, cross-cultural communication places emphasis on aspects of cultural differences as a determining factor for the continuity of the communication process. Even though this cross-cultural communication study discusses similarities and differences in cultural characteristics between communication actors, the main point of attention is the communication process between individuals or groups from different cultures, who are trying to interact with each other. Thus, the most important concept in this study concerns the existence of "contact" and "communication" between communication actors.

Communication in all contexts is the same in terms of the basic elements and processes of human communication (transmitting, receiving, processing), but the influence of culture included in the background of individual experiences shapes patterns of perception, thinking, and use of verbal messages. /nonverbal and its basic relationships. So contextual variation is an additional dimension that influences the cross-cultural communication process. Cross-cultural communication occurs when the sender of the message is a member of one culture and the recipient of the message is a member of another culture. Thus, the delivery of messages from communication sources must be encoded so that the recipient of the message as a member of a different culture can re-encode the information they receive.

Tirtawinata (2014) mentions four cross-cultural characters as follows:

1. Cultural sensitivity

One must know the habits of other people across cultures. According to Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Montoya in Samovar (2010), sensitivity includes being flexible, patient, empathetic, curious about other cultures, open to differences, and feeling comfortable with other people.

2. Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence is how a person interprets foreign culture possessed by people from other regions. This is intended so that someone can understand the meaning behind other people's behavior so that they can understand the characteristics of the area where they learn something.

3. Respect differences

A person must respect other people from different regions with whom he works. Cultural and linguistic differences do not make someone hate each other, but they must respect and uphold these differences. Trust in other people must also be increased to maintain conducive work dynamics. This kind of attitude must continue to be developed to avoid suspicion and prejudice.

4. Cultural fluency

Cultural fluency is closely related to knowledge related to other regional cultures and their communication systems. It is hoped that someone can know the national language of another country (if across countries) in the process of transferring information. At least, someone passively understands what people from other areas say.

Cross-Cultural Communication can be defined simply as a comprehensive way to examine similarities and differences between L1 culture and the target culture. It is a basic skill that the students need for developing an intellectual and emotional appreciation of cultures other than their own. This subject is designed to introduce and help the students understand some basic concepts dealing with their own culture and the culture of the target language. Since the students mostly have communication with the people from these countries, the popular cultures discussed in Cross-Cultural Communication are those from England, United States and Australia. Many books used in Indonesia are categorically oriented towards these countries.

Kramsch (in Singhal, 1998) states that in order for learners to understand a foreign culture it has to be compared with their own culture. Interactions they have with native speakers, or texts for that matter, will require them to construct their own meanings. Rather than having teachers simply transfer information about people and their culture, non-native speakers should have opportunities to make their own meanings and reflect both the target culture and their own.

The students' understanding of culture and cross-cultural communication subject were based on the theories that culture embraces a large number of definitions which shows its richness, dynamics and breadth as a concept. Robinson (1988) points to three categories of culture as follows: ideas (belief,

values, institution) behaviors (language, gesture, custom/ habit, foods) and products (literature, folklore, art, music, artifacts). The categories of behaviors and products reflect a notion of culture as an observable phenomenon. On the other hand, the category of ideas reflects a notion of culture that is not observable; something which is internal but can also be explicitly described.

Since Indonesians are multicultural people, learning other cultures and comparing them with their own culture has helped the students understand the target language culture (Kramsch in Singhal, 1998). Moreover, the interactions with the Australian native English speaker helped them construct their own meanings. This has been a good opportunity for the students to make their own meanings and reflect both the target culture and their own.

CONCLUSION

Cross Cultural Communication can develop student's cultural competencies as they experience lifelong learning. For specific cases, they can practice in stimulated exercises in order to develop their cultural competencies by bringing cultural exposure into the classroom for the specific purpose of teaching the target language culture. Since cultural competence enhancement is not static, the students' interaction in multicultural life, their roles as English teacher candidates, and their life learning experiences will help them become more mature and will lead them to the level of cultural competence proficiency.

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