

Exploring Sudanese Mainstream Culture versus Subcultures as depicted in SMILE

Book (3) Grade (5) in Enhancing Unity in Diversity

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Sudanese mainstream culture as opposed to other prevailing subcultures as depicted in SMILE book (3) grade (5) in enhancing cultural diversity. The aim of the study is to analyze both mainstream and subcultures based on reading comprehension texts in terms of selected seven aspects of culture that are meant to represent cultural diversity. A checklist is adopted as a tool for data collection containing seven subdimensions of cultures and were subjected to verification to determine their existence within the English syllabus of SMILE, book (3), grade (5). The statistical method SPSS has been used for data processing and the study revealed the following important findings: The syllabus of SMILE book (3), grade (5) concentrates on the mainstream culture more than subcultures which in turn does not support the Sudanese cultural diversity enhancement.

Keywords: checklist, gender equality, CDA and ideology

المستخلص

تناولت هذه الورقة الثقافة السودانية السائدة في قبالة الثقافات السودانية الاخرى كما وردت بمنهج اسمايل للغة الانجليزية الكتاب الثالث - المستوى الخامس ودوره في تعزيز التنوع الثقافي. تهدف هذه الدراسة لتحليل منهج اسمايل فيما يحتويه من عناصر كل من الثقافة السائدة وكذلك أوجه الثقافات الأخرى. تبنت الدراسة قائمة المراجعة كأداة لجمع البيانات الخاصة بالبحث حيث احتوت القائمة على سبعة ابعاد ثقافية مختارة للتأكد من صحة وجودها ضمن منهج اسمايل الكتاب الثالث - المستوى الخامس. استخدمت الحزم الاحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) لمعالجة بيانات البحث وقد اظهرت النتائج ان منهج اسمايل الكتاب الثالث - المستوى الخامس يولي جل اهتمامه على مكونات الثقافة السائدة ويقلل من اهتمامه بعناصر الثقافات الاخرى وهذا لا يعزز التنوع الثقافي السوداني.

Introduction:

Sudan is a multi-cultural society, where diversity of cultures, tribes and ethnic social groups are the characteristic of the whole country. Different cultures are realized and reflected in different cultural elements and wide range of various aspects. Sudanese basic level pupils reflect the diversity of the cultures of the Sudanese society. Teachers benefit from the culturally diversified reading comprehension passages as well, via facilitating comprehension of the passages by adopting cultural responsive methods

of teaching. Adopting culturally diversified reading passages as a part of reading comprehension shall be of great importance for both teachers and learners as stakeholders of the English reading text book. Syllabus designers are also very much concerned in terms of monitoring bias to the sole mainstream culture –based curriculum. Instead a rather multi-cultural syllabus of reading will then emerge and cultural diversity shall there be maintained and strongly enhanced. Sudan is not merely an exception to the phenomenon of diversity of cultures.



Yet the modern world experience diversity of cultures. Humans are diverse everywhere and in all walks of life. There is a trend among the American syllabus designers to design culturally diversified reading comprehension passages to enhance both comprehension of passages as well as building bridges among the different sectors of the American society towards enhancing and strengthening unity in diversity. Sudan and the United States are alike, due to the fact that both countries share the characteristic of multiplicity and diversity of cultures. Multi-cultural literature adopted in the reading comprehension passages serves as a tool for bridging the gap among the different Sudanese cultures and helps raise awareness within classmates on enhancing the value of tolerance, respect and responsibility towards cultural diversity maintenance and diffusion among society. It could be utilized to serve other purpose of developing of reading skills.

Chiamello (2012), Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for Diverse Students, University of California, US, states that: at the core of culturally responsive pedagogy is the idea that education must account for the lives experiences and cultural reference points of the students. Culturally responsive teachers craft the education their particular students deserve – one that acknowledges their voice, validates their concerns and connects to their experiences. In the literacy contexts, this can mean giving students things to read that by or about people with whom they can relate and allowing students to write on topics they care about. We must also challenge our students and not patronize them by merely reenacting whatthey already know. We want students to become what (Jacqueline

Jordan Irvine) calls “cultural bridge builders”. Our jobs to search for ways to relate the less familiar with the more familiar, increasing our students’ vocabulary and knowledge base. As literacy expert (Alfred W. Tatum)writes, young readers should be exposed to texts that connect with multiple identities, have personal and cultural relevance and are as diverse as the students we teach. These are enabling texts. (Tatum) distinguishes them from disabling texts, which ignore the student’s context. An enabling text, he explains, “moves beyond a sole cognitive focus, such as skill and strategy development – to include an academic, cultural, emotional, and social focus that moves students closer to examining issues they find relevant to their lives.”

Dodson (2016), Reading Passages from Diverse Cultures, Ohio Resource Center, 2008 US, advocates that students should have many opportunities to read the literature of our countries and cultures. Students who are familiar with the customs and life styles of many cultures are better able to understand the literature of those cultures. The researcher goes so far to state that he often thinks about reading passages in terms of the benchmark that’s addressed or the way the item is written. He has considered differences in the passages by thinking about literary text and informational text or by considering difficulty of reading. But he hasn’t paid a lot of attention to the culture, ethnicity, or diversity of the writers of the passage that seem to pose particular difficulty for the students. The researcher designs a syllabus as a model that set comprehension passage that reflects diversity and investigates the difficulties encountered by students.



Banks (1988), an Introduction to Multicultural Education, Boston, US, illustrates the philosophical and definitional issues related to pluralistic education, and design and implement effective teaching strategies that reflect ethnic diversity, and prepare sound guidelines for multi ethnic programs and practices. It describes actions that educators can take to institutionalize educational programs and practices related ethnic and cultural diversity. Conceptual issues and problems related to education. He emphasizes the role of multi-cultural reading skills, thus focus his main interest in multicultural education curriculum. The major research and programmatic paradigms related to ethnicity and education, curriculum has to be reformed to reflect the ethnic and cultural characteristics of the students. Reducing prejudice in students' language, diversity, and curriculum guidelines.

Putnam (1993), cooperative Learning and Strategies for inclusion: Celebrating Diversity in the Classroom – Socio cultural perspective, Baltimore investigates assisting educators to meet the needs of a diverse population of students with varying cognitive abilities; developmental and learning disabilities sensory impairments; and different cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study based on the premise that students of differing abilities and backgrounds will benefit both academically and socially from cooperative learning. Maintaining several academic and educational aspects of cultural inclusions, techniques of teaching-learning and instructions.

Robertson (2015), connect Students' Background Knowledge to Content in EFL Classroom, Colorrin Colorado, WETA Public Broadcasting, highlights

visualization that takes place as we read that the pictures in our minds reflect our own experiences. We connect what we read to our context, and we comprehended new ideas more deeply if we can relate to them. In 1979 study on cross-cultural comprehension, subjects from the US and India read letters about an American and Indian wedding and recalled them following interpolated tasks. When subjects read the passage about the wedding from their own culture (the native passage), researchers observed the following behaviors: subjects read the passage more rapidly, recalled a larger amount of information, and produced more culturally appropriate elaborations of the content. When the subjects read the "foreign passage" about other culture's wedding, they read the passage more slowly, recalled much less information, the results indicated that cultural context influences comprehension, and that this phenomenon occurs regardless of an individual's background.

Elfreda (2009), using Curriculum - Based Measurements to Asses Reading: The Cultural Connections of Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities, Hafstra University, US, reading performance of cultural diverse students indicates improved reading performance for culturally diversified students when text matches students' cultural prospective. This experimental research investigates whether Caucasian and African American students with learning disabilities read diverse text differently. Curriculum based measures (fluency level, comprehension score, and meaning- changing deviations) were used to assess reading performance by ethnicity and reading ability.



Two- way MANOVA tests yielded interactions for reading ability x passage and reading ability x ethnicity. Results indicates that low achieving readers comprehended more and had fewer meaning- changing deviations when cultural cues were embedded in text. Results of this study indicates that further consideration must be given to the cultural prospective of readers and text used in reading assessment. Generalization about students reading ability must be contextualized in discussions about the presence or absence of cultural in text to be read. Using curriculum – based measurements to assess reading: the cultural connections of diverse students with hearing disabilities in classroom context, many students with learning disabilities face reading challenges.

Theoretical background

The main concern of CDA is discourse and the way it manifest unfair practices within society. VanDijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak are authorities of CDA. According to Van Dijk (1993), the dominated, which represent the Sudanese subcultures, are usually made to feel they are in control of their destiny while the dominant group representing the Sudanese mainstream culture is actually in charge. In essence, the dominant ideology makes the dominated to see as correct the order of things in their society and thereby help to sustain this order. Ideology has to do with a system of ideas that people share as the principle guiding their lives. It often directs the actions they take. Jones (2001) emphasizes that ideology works “at the institutional, subjective and text levels to position people in particular ways”. Making reference to Van Dijk, Dellinger (1995) opines that ideologies provide the cognitive base for attitudes of various groups in the

societies, which eventually furthers their particular interests and objectives. Van Dijk (1993) argues that the ideological posture results from a particular form of social cognition.

Seeking to deliberately and consciously include these syncretic and/or supra-cultural modalities of diversity that stem from contemporary youth cultures, in the modes of interaction acknowledged in the school sphere, however, would evidently mean to “revolutionize” not only the current conceptions of intercultural education, but the institution of school itself. Thus, finally, the true problem posed by the recognition, treatment and/or “management” of diversity becomes evident: the main obstacle that any strategy directed towards interculturalizing and/or diversifying education will have to face is the institution of school and how deeply rooted it is not only in nationalizing pedagogy, but in the nation-state itself. The debate on cultural diversity, analyzed in this paper starting from its roots as social movement in multiculturalism and its process of institutionalization through academic and public education, through affirmative action and diversity management schemes, currently seems to face a prototypical watershed situation: either cultural diversity is superficially and periodically instrumentalized as a “fire brigade approach” in order to “solve” particular and punctual “problems” arising in specific and conflictive daily classroom interactions resulting from lifeworld diversity clashing with the school’s monocultural habitus, or it definitively leaves these supplementary and still compensatory niche activities by mainstreaming diversity and intersectionality throughout the school and its environment.



Through this option, moving beyond its all too partial conceptualization and vindication as a “problem”, as a “resource” or as a “right”, cultural diversity will in the future have to be perceived, analyzed and applied as an empirical research tool as well as a cross-cutting, underlying key feature of daily educational and social processes. Situated neither on the surface of intercultural interaction patterns nor in the content of collective ethnic identity discourses, cultural diversity must be localized in the structure of contemporary society, as a contextual and case specific translation of a shared, underlying and maybe even universalizable “grammar of diversities”. Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke and Curran (2004) developed a five-part concept of CRCM derived from the literature. According to them “The five point concepts were: culturally responsible pedagogy, multicultural counseling and caring: recognition of one’s own cultural lens and biases, knowledge of students’ cultural backgrounds, awareness of the broader social, economic and political context, ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies, and commitment to building caring classroom communities. In turn, the goal of classroom management was to create an environment in which students would behave appropriately from a sense of personal responsibility, not from a fear of punishment or desire for a reward. As such the environment must acknowledge and be responsive to who were the students (cognitively, socially and emotionally), and create a safety net that equitably responds to what teachers knew about their students”. Students should have many opportunities to read the

literature of other countries and cultures. Students who are familiar with the customs and life – styles of many cultures are better able to understand the images and needs portrayed by the literature of those cultures. They should also become immersed in literature by and about both men and women, including those with disabilities and other differences. At the core of culturally responsive pedagogy is the idea that education must account for the lived experiences and cultural reference points of students. Culturally responsive teachers craft the education their particular students deserve one that acknowledges their voice, validates their concerns and connects to their experiences. In the literacy context, this can mean giving students things to read that are by or about people with whom they can relate and allowing students to write on topics they care about. We must also challenge our students and not patronize them by merely reenacting what they already know. We want to become what Jacqueline Jordan I roine calls " Cultural bridge builders." our with the more familiar, increasing our students' vocabulary and knowledge base. As literacy expert Alfred W. Tatum writes, young readers should be exposed to texts that connect with multiple identities, have personal and cultural relevance and are as diverse as the students we teach. These are enabling texts. Tatum distinguishes them from disabling texts. Which ignore the students" context. An enabling text, he explains, " moves beyond a sole cognitive focus – such as skill and strategy development – to include an academic, cultural, emotional, and social focus that moves students closer to examining issues they find relevant to their lives.

Methodology

This paper adopts the descriptive analytical methodology by employing a checklist as a tool for gathering data. The checklist is made up of seven subcultural dimensions analyzed against two cultural aspects as that of the mainstream culture and subcultures. The checklist is intended to check whether the sample textbook, SMILE book (3), grade (5), contains the cultural elements that favour either the mainstream or the Sudanese subcultures. Nonverbal features are also examined in terms of the two aspects i.e. mainstream and subcultures. the researcher then adopts content analysis to unmask the embedded ideological expressions in the text whether they are in favour of the two aspects contained in the checklist.

Analysis:

This section aims at analyzing the elements of Sudanese mainstream culture versus subcultures that are included in the SMILE book (3) grade (5) of English for basic level education. The analysis is meant to give a hint on how the objectives of the book are met along with discussing the hypotheses.

For measuring how the Sudanese curriculum cope with the cultural diversity, the researcher chooses SMILE book (3) grade (5) to analyze its content against seven aspects (elements) that believed to cover the cultural diversity in Sudan. This paper adopts a checklist for the data analysis where a scale is used of triple (*in favor, not in favor or does not exist*) so that it can give an accurate weight for each element.

Checklist

Sudanese Mainstream Culture versus Subcultures as Depicted in SMILE Book (3) Grade (5)

Aspects	Sudanese Mainstream Culture			Sudanese Subcultures		
	In favor	Not In favor	Does not exist	In favor	Not In favor	Does not exist
1	Types of clothing	√			√	
2	Names of people (taken from indigenous Languages)	√			√	
3	Types of food	√			√	
4	Gender equality			√		√
5	Ethnicity & tribes			√		√
6	Nomads & Beduin	√		√		
7	Religious festivals	√			√	
	totals					

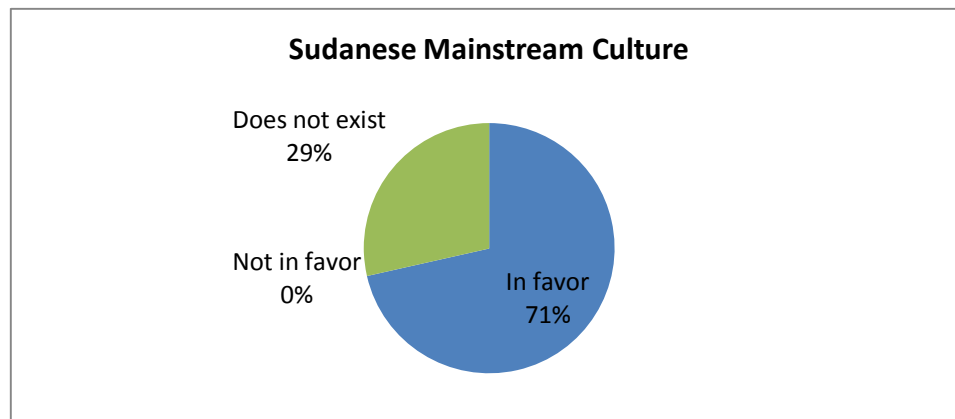
Sudanese Mainstream Culture

	Frequency	Percentage
In favor	5	71.4%
Not in favor	0	0%
Does not exist	2	28.6%
Total	7	100%

The above table shows the percentage of the cultural dimension aspects of the Sudanese mainstream culture. The frequency of the aspects in favor of the mainstream culture is 5 which are (types of clothing, names of people, types of food, nomads and festivals) with

percentage (71.4%). While the aspects that do not exist in Sudanese mainstream culture are 2 (gender equality and ethnicity and tribes) with associated percentage (28.6%).

The below chart demonstrates that clearly.

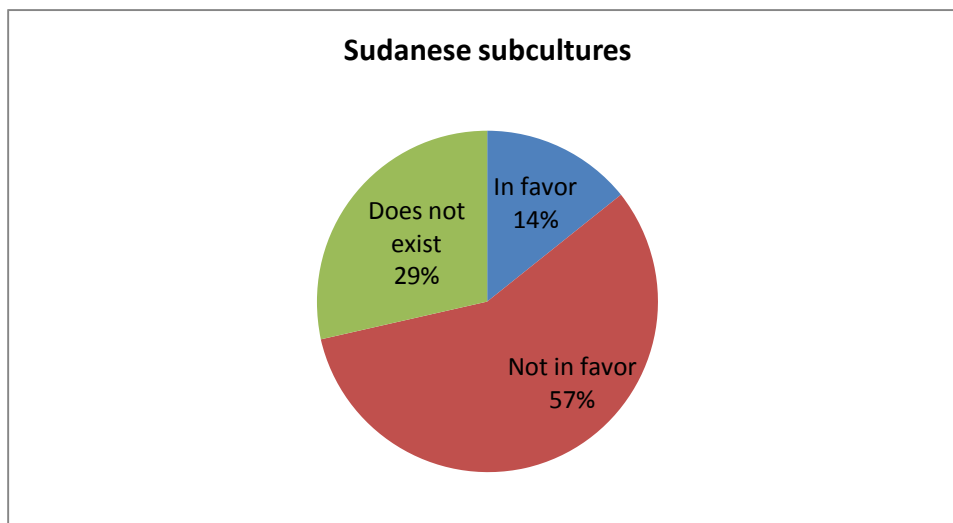


	Frequency	Percentage
In favor	1	14%
Not in favor	4	57%
Does not exist	2	29%
Total	7	100%

Sudanese subcultures:

The table above shows the frequencies and percentages of aspects of the Sudanese subcultures. As it is shown in the table only one aspect of the cultural dimension is discussed within the curriculum (*nomads*) with percentage (14%). Four of the aspects (*types of clothing, names of people, types of*

food and festivals) discussed in curriculum are not in favor of the Sudanese subcultures with percentage (57%) and two (*gender equality and ethnicity and tribes*) do not exist with percentage (29%).



Variations:

As it is shown in the two tables and their associated graphs, the curriculum (SMILE - book (3) grade (5)) concentrates on the mainstream culture more than the subcultures which in turn does not support the Sudanese cultural diversity enhancement.

Results and Discussion

1- Types of clothing & ethnicity

The cover of the SMILE (3) Grade (5) features clearly the dominance of the mainstream culture in terms of the realization of two subdimensions as the type of clothing and ethnicity. The type of clothing expresses also a certain ideologies beliefs wearing the headcover is indicative of ideological expression. Types of clothing worn by both male and female pupils do not reflect the notion of Sudanese unity in diversity.

In unit (1) lesson (8) page (8), a woman wears a white toub which represent the national dress and this could favour both mainstream and subcultures in Sudan community.

2- Names of people & gender

In units (2), page (1), all the featured names represent the main stream culture such as (Hassan, Salah, Osama, Sara, Mona, and Ilham). It is clear that there is gender equality representation but the names are exclusively drawn from the mainstream culture.

3- Nomads and Bedouins are portrayed to reflect the mainstream culture rather than the Sudanese other subcultures.

4- Types of food stuff depicted in unit (5), lesson (3) are typically mainstream types of food such as bread, tomatoes and bananas and they are not a staple food of other Sudanese subcultures.

5- Gender equality is absent throughout all units and all the lessons of Book (3) Grade (5) of SMILE. On the contrary all dialogues undertaken throughout the book are gender-biased and tend to be either male students conversing other male students or female students addressing other female students counterpart. This reflects an ideological stance adopted by the former political regime of an Islamic orientation and indicates the already established schooling trend ideologically oriented towards male dominance over the educational scene. This is indicative of the interplay between the syllabus designers of SMILE series and the Islamic oriented government.

In Unit (11), lesson (4), page (84), boys and girls exercise different types of sports, the boys play football meanwhile girls play basketball. Both girls and boys play separately from each other. This is indicative of gender bias in terms of the type of sports played, and other aspect is realized in that each team is gender oriented, boys play against boys and girls against girls, and no boys play against girls or vice versa.

6- In Unit (10), lesson (7), page (79), the expression “Eid Mubarak!” and the expression “Eid ElFitr” in page (80), lesson (8), unit (10), both expressions indicate the orientation to Islam with negligence of other religions and traditional beliefs that make up Sudan. Thus mainstream culture is realized in the religious aspect of Islam and this doesn't reflect the reality of Sudanese diverse religions.

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