

Students' Perspective on the Role of Reading Comprehension Passages in Enhancing Sudanese Cultural Diversity

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Abstract

This paper investigates students' perspective on the role of the reading comprehension passages in enhancing the Sudanese students' cultural diversity and reinforcing Sudan's national unity in diversity. Sudanese university students of English are of various diversified cultural backgrounds. English reading comprehension curriculum has to be based on the accumulated aspects of Sudanese cultures to assist the enhancement of the students' cultural diversity. The study adopts the analytical descriptive method by employing a questionnaire administered to 80 4th year students of English, College of Languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology and the data obtained was analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Results demonstrate a significant positive statistical relationship between the reinforcement of Sudanese cultural diversity and the reading comprehension passages. Adopting diverse elements of Sudanese cultures as that of physical appearance, regional variations, Nomads and Bedouins, indigenous languages, types of clothing and integrating them into the English reading comprehension syllabus in order to enhance cultural diversity among undergraduates.. The paper comes up with a number of recommendations such as that: various aspects of the Sudanese diversified cultures have to be integrated within the reading comprehension passages in order to enhance Sudanese cultural diversity. Suggestions for further studies have to be carried out on English language skills as that of listening, speaking and writing skills.

Keywords critical analysis, classroom management, pedagogy, awareness

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الورقة منظور الطلاب للدور الذي تلعبه النصوص الانجليزية للقراءة في تعزيز التنوع الثقافي السوداني. تهدف الدراسة لتبيان دور نصوص القراءة في تعزيز التنوع الثقافي السوداني لما تتضمنه من الأوجه الثقافية السودانية المختلفة ودورها في تعزيز الوحدة الوطنية وسط طلاب الجامعة بمختلف اعراقهم وهوياتهم الثقافية. تبنت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي في تحليل البيانات التي جمعت عبر الاستبانة باستخدام الحزم الإحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS) والتي وزعت على عدد (80) من طلاب اللغة الانجليزية الفرقة الرابعة بكلية اللغات جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا. وأوضحت النتائج وجود علاقة ذات دلالة إحصائية ايجابية بين تعزيز التنوع الثقافي السوداني ونصوص القراءة. توصلت الورقة إلى عدة نتائج والتي من أهمها أن تبني الأوجه والمكونات الثقافية السودانية المختلفة مثل الفروقات الإقليمية والملامح البشرية والبدو والرحل واللغات الأصلية وأنواع الملابس وتضمينها في منهج القراءة الانجليزية يلعب دوراً هاماً في تعزيز التنوع الثقافي لطلاب الجامعات ، كما توصل البحث إلى العديد من التوصيات نلخصها في الآتي: ضرورة دمج المكونات والخصائص الثقافية المختلفة للثقافات السودانية كمكون أساسي ضمن منهج القراءة الانجليزية بالجامعة. وأوصت الدراسة بضرورة إجراء مزيد من البحوث على المهارات اللغوية الأخرى مثل مهارات السمع والمخاطبة والكتابة.

Introduction

Cultural diversity, or multiculturalism, is based on the idea that cultural identities should not be discarded or ignored but rather maintained and valued. Based on the above statement, the researcher investigates the roles played by both students and teachers of English in administrating this culturally diversified classroom setting in terms of the context of teaching English reading comprehension and tries to measure the extended impact upon students of multicultural various backgrounds. The researcher observes several situational contexts of which cultural diversity among Sudanese university classrooms were poorly treated. This has an influential impact upon students in terms of knowledge construction process and the negative consequences extended to dominate the entire teaching learning educational operation. Gunther Dietz (2007) advocates cultural diversity as a key word tailoring "A Guide Through the Debate", whereby he states that diversity approaches were encountered the European education systems in a rather late and recent stage of their contemporary development. As a strictly controlled and successfully defended core domain of the nation- state, even at the beginning of the 21st century, public education remains hierarchically and institutionally rooted in the disciplinary apparatus of 19th century "nationalizing nationalisms" (Brubaker 1996). Consequently, in a wide range of European nation-state and throughout rather different majority- minorities relations as well as native-migrant configurations. Diversity wasn't a challenge to the European educational institutional system within the European nation - state (Groux 1994 McLaren 1997). yet, in the continental European arena of

the debate, on the other hand, the need for interculturality in education generally is not demanded in the ground of minorities' identity necessities, but rather the socio-cultural complexity of diversity as a key feature of future European so cities (Gogolin 2004 Kruger- Potratz 2005). The researcher, Gunther (2007), recommends the necessity to revolutionize not only the current conceptions of intercultural education, but also the deeply rooted institution of school by the recognition, treatment and \or "management" of cultural diversity classroom and he develops abroad concept of cultural diversity management that includes intercultural interaction patterns of the content of collective ethnic identity discourses, maintaining that cultural diversity must be localized in the structure of contemporary society, as a contextual and case specific strangulation of a shared underling and may be even universalizable "grammar of diversities".

Patriciakly (2004), University of Idaho and Larry Rogrien (2004), Boise State University advocate classroom management in terms of suggested supportive strategies in which they state that classroom management requires an orchestration of effective teaching, proactive preventive strategies, practical corrective strategies, and positive supportive techniques. This approach helps teachers motivate students through active involvement in their own learning and discipline process with goals of acquiring learning, self- management, and repertoire behaviors. When these components are integrated in your classroom, effective teaching, management, and discipline complement each other to facilitate learning via the employment of supportive strategies in comprehensive classroom management.

The supportive component of classroom focuses on promoting and teaching responsible behavior. When students are acting responsibly, it directly affects teaching: students are more responsive, there are fewer distractions, and there is more cooperation. The supportive strategies focus on positive behavior, resulting in less need for corrective interventions.

Carol S. Weinstein, Sandra Tom Linson-Clarke and Mary Curran, from Rutgers University, illustrate that: Given the increasing diversity of our classroom, a lack of multicultural competence can exacerbate the difficulties that novice teachers have with classroom management. Definitions and expectations of appropriate behavior are culturally influenced and conflicts likely to occur when teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds. The purpose of this research is to stimulate discussion of culturally responsive classroom management. The researchers come up with results of the following set of five essential components: (a) recognition of one's own ethnocentrism; (b) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; (c) understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context; (d) ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies; and (e) commitment to building and caring classrooms.

Theoretical Background

Dalglish (2002), Edinel, Mexico, conducted a research paper entitled: Promoting Effective Learning in a Multicultural Classroom. This paper outlines part of a one year project which will draw on the literature, interviews with teaching staff and focus groups of "best practice" teachers, to present some practical strategies for the effective

teaching of business disciplines. Assumptions underpin the research and the development of this paper are as follows:

- Australian classes use western teaching and learning strategies that focus on critical analysis, oral discussions, problem solving and the possibility of multiple solutions.
- The classes are made up of students from a wide number of cultures, including English speaking Australians.
- Many of the students have language other than English as their mother tongue.
- Organizations around the world, and therefore students, work in increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse work places and many will operate internationally. The capacity to work with people who are different is important for all students to learn.
- Teaching practices that assist the learning of international students will in fact be of benefit to all students. This paper identifies a number of issues related to effective teaching in multicultural business classroom at universities, it addresses the potential barriers to effective learning, the challenges to teachers and offers a range of strategies that have been demonstrated to improve teaching learning in this context and outlines the processes for building on current knowledge to improve the quality of teaching in multicultural classrooms. Australia is extremely culturally diverse community, yet Australian higher education remains mono-cultural in form and Anglo American in content. This status suggests teaching and learning implications. Pierre du Plessis and Tom Bisschoff (2007), University of Johannesburg, South Africa, advocate a research under the title: Diversity and Complexity in the Classrooms: valuing racial and cultural diversity.



• They state that from a diversity perspective, all students shall receive an education that continuously affirms human diversity- one that embraces the history and culture of all racial groups and that teaches people of diverse cultures to take charge of their own destinies. With regard to teaching, a diversity perspective assumes that teachers will hold high expectations for all students and that they will challenge these students who are trapped in the cycle of poverty and despair to raise above it. Individual teachers in individual classrooms play an important role in providing equity of opportunity to learn and in ameliorating racism, but more comprehensive conceptions of diversity education capture the school's crucial role as well. Results of research findings are: culture is the main issue of classroom management, instructors need to balance between holding high expectations for all the students, and lecturers have to attempt to create and implement diversity pedagogy to reflect the variety of learning styles of students. In spite of the growing linguistic diversity U.S classroom, many teachers are not being adequately prepared to work with English language learners (ELLs). One area of particular concern for teachers is how to manage today's linguistically diverse classrooms. This article, linguistic diversity and classroom management, conducted by Mary Elizabeth Curran (2003), the Ohio State University, USA, suggests ways educators can reflection (ELLs) need and consider the implications for classroom management. The author focuses on the need to (a) understand the perspective of ELLs and the natural responses to being immersed in a second language, (b) use pedagogical strategies

that aid in second language acquisition and (c) create a classroom climate that affirms linguistic diversity. Learning and behaviors difficulties encountered by ELLS are expected as part of the normal linguistic, cultural, and academic learning process. The article suggests that being aware of students; natural responses to this process, using strategies to make classroom activities more comprehensible, and creating a linguistically affirmative classroom climate are ways we can successfully manage students' learning environment.

Naji Oueijan (2012), Notre Dame University. Loueize advocates a research entitled: Managing Cultural Diversity: The Role of a Teacher, where he states that the current educational system in Lebanese Universities and school are typical for their diversity, but their applications suffer several shortcomings. Although Lebanon is a cultural diverse country, yet the Lebanese educational system is unmatched and the failure of many Lebanese teachers in managing cultural diversity in the classrooms and in employing Lebanon's rich diversity to foster tolerance, respect, and appreciation of difference among students. Mismanagement of cultural diversity in the classroom may be rooted and related to teachers, and students affiliations, to their stereotyping which is learned about other, and to their unwillingness to learn about other, and to their stereotyping which is quite often ignited by family members, friends and the partial media. The researcher suggests that teachers and students minds must transcend all personal cognitive borders to acquire universal knowledge, one which holds firm the platform of world cultures.

Methodology

This paper adopts the analytical descriptive method by employing a questionnaire made up of five statements each of which reflect unique element of Sudanese culture, Sudanese indigenous languages, regional variations, physical appearance, Bedouin and nomads and types of clothing . These statements of

the research hypothesis are designed for the participants to reflect on and the data obtained was analyzed against chi-square. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) is used to statistically analyze the study sample of 80 4th year students of English, college of Languages, Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Analysis:

Frequencies and percentages of the hypothesis

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
When Sudanese languages are part of the reading passages, different aspects of the diverse cultures will be exchanged	2	11	21	28	18	Agree
	2.5%	13.8%	26.3%	35.0%	22.5%	
When regional variations are included in the reading passages, learners of English shall develop awareness of cultural diversity	4	8	12	27	29	Strongly agree
	5.0%	10.0%	15.0%	33.8%	36.3%	
When reading passages attach and illustrate the different physical appearance of the various cultures, awareness will be created in terms of cultural diversity.	4	5	25	27	19	Agree
	5.0%	6.3%	31.3%	33.8%	23.8%	
When Bedouin and nomads of the Sudan are an organic part of the reading passages, a mechanism for raising awareness of cultural diversity will be enhanced.	3	4	35	23	15	Neutral
	3.8%	5.0%	43.8%	28.8%	18.8%	
Different cultures of Sudan adopt different styles and methods of clothing, therefore reading passages that reflect diversity in clothing stereotypes of Sudan will equip learners of English with adequate knowledge that enhance cultural diversity.	3	4	16	28	29	Strongly agree
	3.8%	5.0%	20.0%	35.0%	36.3%	

The table above shows the frequencies and percentages of the statements of the hypothesis “*Students’ views on the role of reading comprehension passages enhance Sudanese cultural diversity*”. In the first statement of the hypothesis the responses of the students tend to agree with percentage (35%). In the second statement students’ responses tend to strongly agree with highest percentage (36.3%). For the third statement, as the

highest percentage is (33.8%) for agree. In the fourth statement, students' responses tend to neutral with highest percentage (43.8%) while in the fifth statement the responses tend to strongly agree with highest percentage (36.3%).

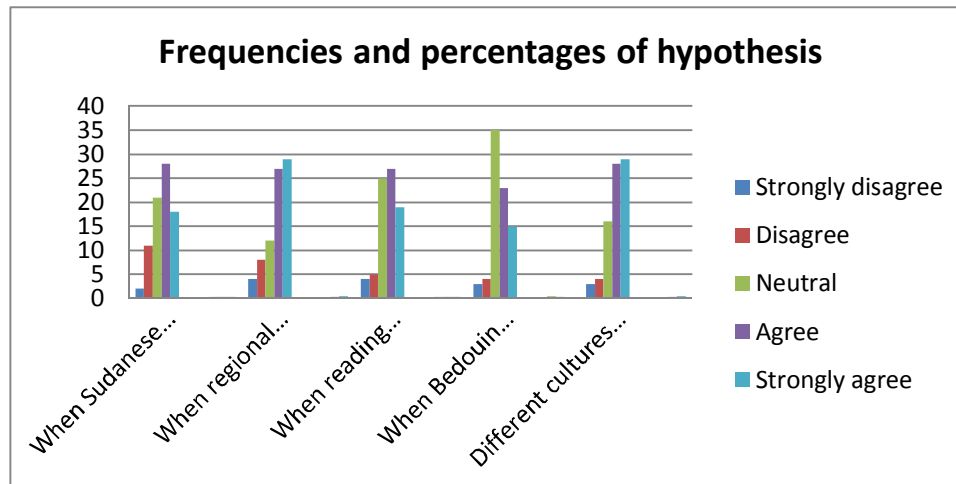


Figure (): shows frequencies and percentages of the statements of the hypothesis in students' questionnaire

Descriptive analysis of the hypothesis:

	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation	Result
When a reading passage contains information about different social status, learners' cultural diversity will be enhanced	4.1375	4.00	.70699	
When a reading passage includes information about the different tribes of the Sudan, learners' cultural diversity will be developed	4.2875	5.00	.82973	
When the reading texts are explicitly rich with knowledge about the Sudanese various ethnicities, this serve as a tool to raise learners' awareness of cultural diversity	3.8750	5.00	1.08354	
As far as other subcultures rather than Sudan's main stream culture are reflected in reading passages, learners of English shall acquire adequate knowledge of cultural diversity	3.2750	3.00	1.14709	
When male and female issue are readily addressed within the reading texts, gender bias will definitely be avoided and consciousness will be raised of cultural diversity	3.2000	4.00	1.19493	

The table above shows the descriptive analysis of the hypothesis' statements. As it is shown in the table, the mean (average value) is range between 4 and 5 as well as the mode (the most frequent value) is 4 and 5. Depending on the values of the mean and the lekrt scale which is demonstrated earlier, the two numbers indicate (strongly agree) and (agree). This clearly means the opinion of the participants on this hypothesis' statement is acceptance (agree and strongly agree). The last column result shows that clearly.

Chi-square value of the hypothesis:

	Chi-Square(a)	df	Asymp. Sig.
When Sudanese languages are part of the reading passages, different aspects of the diverse cultures will be exchanged	24.625	4	.000
When regional variations are included in the reading passages, learners of English shall develop awareness of cultural diversity	32.125	4	.000
When reading passages attach and illustrate the different physical appearance of the various cultures, awareness will be created in terms of cultural diversity.	29.750	4	.000
When Bedouin nomads of the Sudan are an organic part of the reading passages, a mechanism for raising awareness of cultural diversity will be enhanced.	45.250	4	.000
Different cultures of Sudan adopt different styles and methods of clothing, therefore reading passages that reflect diversity in clothing stereotypes of Sudan will equip learners of English with adequate knowledge that enhance cultural diversity.	39.125	4	.000

To evaluate the significance of the students' opinion on the hypothesis, the researcher uses Chi-square value for the statements. The chi-square values range from 24.625 to 45.250 with degree of freedom (df) equals 4 for all statements with significance value (.000) less than the standard (sig) 0.05. That means there are statistically significant differences in all the statements of the hypothesis and looking at the previous tables of the frequencies, descriptive analysis and chi-square the researcher finds that there are statistically significance differences for the participants' opinion on the hypothesis' statements tend to (acceptance). So, the participants agree with the claim that Students' views on the role of reading comprehension passages enhance Sudanese cultural diversity.

Results and Discussion

Reading comprehension passages at the tertiary level are of greater significance for the development of the students' reading skills. Culturally diversified reading comprehension passages have crucial role to play over the

enhancement of reading skills. As far as reading passages adequately include several elements of the Sudanese various and diversified cultures, thus reading skills shall there be automatically enhanced. The incorporation of the diversified cultural elements within the components of the reading comprehension passages of the Sudanese University syllabus can empower the enhancement of both the English language reading skills as well as can widen the scope of the learners and raise their awareness about their native and indigenous cultures of their own community. With reference to question one which investigates the extent to which culturally diversified reading passages can enhance the reading abilities of the university students. This research findings confirm the importance of the inclusion of the cultural elements within the components of the reading passages and the great role it plays in enhancing the reading abilities of the students.

Question two of the research realizes the students' view about the role of the culturally diversified reading comprehension passages in enhancing the students' reading skills. Finding of this research emphasize the great role played by the culturally diversified reading passages in enhancing the reading skills of the students. In question three where teachers' views are investigated about the inclusion of the diversified reading passages within reading texts and resulted findings that indicated the significant role of the culturally diversified reading passages in enhancing the students reading skills. Students of diverse cultural backgrounds and who study reading passage where all or part of his /her culture is there in the passage, is likely to be deeply involved in the other aspects of the text (linguistic aspects) because he/ she is familiar with the cultural content of the passage. Reading passages include various elements of Sudanese cultures inspire interest and indirectly enhance reading skills practice and development. Similar findings can be realized as stated by (Chiamello, 2012). "the idea that education must account for lives experiences and cultural reference points of the students" and (Robosto, 2014) indicated that "cultural context influences reading comprehension skills". It is worth mentioning that cultural elements within the reading passages that match the students' schemata is of greater enhancement to the development of the Students' reading skills. Due to the fact that all students shall be deeply involved in the relevant familiar text of reading, and shall there be highly motivated in practicing reading skills.

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