

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP STUDENTS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN CLASSROOM

Sardian Maharani Asnur

English and Literature Department of Adab and Humanities Faculty

UIN Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia

Email: sardian.maharani@uin-alauddin.ac.id

Abstract

Teacher in a classroom sometimes are difficult to get the students' attention in order to comprehend the subject material since the students are coming from many different culture. This study aimed to give some strategies to develop students cultural understanding for remote area students. There are several strategies that proved to be effective to develop students cultural understanding in the classroom, those are use a variety of instructional strategies and learning activities; consider students' cultures and language skills when developing learning objectives and instructional activities; incorporate objectives for affective and personal development; communicate expectations; provide rationales; provide frequent reviews of the content learned; facilitate independence in thinking and action; promote student on-task behavior; monitor students' academic progress during lessons and independent work; provide frequent feedback; require mastery. This study is far from comprehensive, as it only investigated the very surface of strategies to develop students cultural understanding in the classroom.

Keywords: cultural understanding, classroom, strategies

Abstrak

Strategi untuk Meningkatkan Pemahaman Budaya di dalam Kelas. Di dalam kelas, guru biasanya menemukan kesulitan untuk mendapatkan perhatian siswa dalam rangka memahami materi pelajaran karena adanya perbedaan budaya pada siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memberikan beberapa strategi untuk meningkatkan pemahaman budaya siswa. Terdapat beberapa strategi yang terbukti efektif untuk meningkatkan pemahaman budaya siswa dalam kelas, yaitu dengan menggunakan berbagai macam strategi pengajaran dan aktifitas belajar; mempertimbangkan budaya siswa dan kemampuan bahasa saat mengembangkan tujuan belajar dan aktifitas pengajaran; menggabungkan sasaran hasil demi peningkatan yang afektif dan personal; menyampaikan harapan; menetapkan dasar pemikiran; menetapkan review dari pelajaran; memfasilitasi kebebasan dalam berpikir dan bertindak; memantau peningkatan akademik siswa selama pembelajaran dan diluar kelas; menyediakan umpan balik; mewajibkan penguasaan. Penelitian ini masih jauh dari kesempurnaan, karena hanya meneliti permukaan paling luar dari strategi-strategi untuk meningkatkan pemahaman budaya siswa dalam kelas saja.

Kata kunci: pemahaman budaya, kelas, strategi

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has complicated web of culture, it has 726 different languages in this country (Crystal, 2000:4; and Marten et. Al, 2005:48). It means that indonesia has 23 milliaon native speaker and 140 million second language speakers. In teaching, a teacher first of all has to have passion and interest not only for the subject but also for

the students s/he teaching. Having great passion and interest will create positive atmosphere in the classroom and this is important in the process of teaching and learning, specially how to develop students cultural understanding in the classroom. In Indonesia, some schools which are located in urban area and considered as outstanding-schools which fill the criteria of having good buildings, infrastructure, facilities, well-qualified teacher with up-dated teaching methods as well as teaching materials. These schools also have good teaching and learning culture because of level of support mentioned above. Teachers do not find any difficulties in presenting materials and getting students actively involved as many resources can be used to always create interesting materials in teaching culture in the classroom like using literature and dramas. Unfortunately, not all schools are lucky enough to have this level of support, especially in rural area. So the writer would like to give some strategies to develop students cultural understanding for remote area students.

DISCUSSION

A multicultural society is best served by a culturally responsive curriculum. Schools that acknowledge the diversity of their student population understand the importance of promoting cultural awareness. Teachers who are interested in fostering a cultural awareness in their classroom should actively demonstrate to their students that they genuinely care about their cultural, emotional, and intellectual needs. To this end, there are several strategies that you can use to build trusting relationships with diverse students. To incorporate cultural awareness into your classroom curriculum, you should:

Express interest in the ethnic background of your students

Encourage your students to research and share information about their ethnic background as a means of fostering a trusting relationship with fellow classmates. Analyze and celebrate differences in traditions, beliefs, and social behaviors. It is of note that this task helps European-American students realize that their beliefs and traditions constitute a culture as well, which is a necessary breakthrough in the development of a truly culturally responsive classroom. Also, take the time to learn the proper pronunciation of student names and express interest in the etymology of interesting and diverse names.

Redirect your role in the classroom from instructor to facilitator

Another important requirement for creating a nurturing environment for students is reducing the power differential between the instructor and students. Students in an authoritarian classroom may sometimes display negative behaviors as a result of a perceived sense of social injustice; in the culturally diverse classroom, the teacher thus acts more like a facilitator than an instructor. Providing students with questionnaires about what they find to be interesting or important provides them with a measure of power over what they get to learn and provides them with greater intrinsic motivation and connectedness to the material. Allowing students to bring in their own reading material and present it to the class provides them with an

opportunity to both interact with and share stories, thoughts, and ideas that are important to their cultural and social perspective.

Maintain a strict level of sensitivity to language concerns

In traditional classrooms, students who are not native English speakers often feel marginalized, lost, and pressured into discarding their original language in favor of English. In a culturally responsive classroom, diversity of language is celebrated and the level of instructional materials provided to non-native speakers are tailored to their level of English fluency. Accompanying materials should be provided in the student's primary language and the student should be encouraged to master English.

Maintain high expectations for student performance

Given that culturally responsive instruction is a student-centered philosophy, it should come as no surprise that expectations for achievement are determined and assigned individually for each student. Students don't receive lavish praise for simple tasks but do receive praise in proportion to their accomplishments. If a student is not completing her work, then one should engage the student positively and help guide the student toward explaining how to complete the initial steps that need to be done to complete a given assignment or task.

Incorporate methods for self-testing

Another potent method for helping students become active participants in learning is to reframe the concept of testing. While testing is usually associated with grades (and therefore stress) in traditional classrooms, in a culturally responsive classroom frequent non-graded tests can be used to provide progress checks and ensure that students don't fall behind on required material. Teaching students to self-test while learning new information will help them better remember and use what they've learned in class and will help them realize on their own when they need to study a topic in greater depth.

Maintain an "inclusive" curriculum that remains respectful of differences

A culturally responsive curriculum is both inclusive in that it ensures that all students are included within all aspects of the school and it acknowledges the unique differences students may possess. A culturally responsive curriculum also encourages teachers' understanding and recognition of each student's non-school cultural life and background, and provides a means for them to incorporate this information into the curriculum, thus promoting inclusion. Schools have the responsibility to teach all students how to synthesize cultural differences into their knowledge base, in order to facilitate students' personal and professional success in a diverse world. A culturally responsive curriculum helps students from a minority ethnic/racial background develop a sense of identity as individuals, as well as proudly identify with their particular culture group. Teachers can play a big role in helping these students succeed through the establishment of culturally responsive classrooms.

There are many school factors that affect the success of culturally diverse students – the school's atmosphere and overall attitudes toward diversity, involvement

of the community, and culturally responsive curriculum, to name a few. Of all of these factors, the personal and academic relationships between teachers and their students may be the most influential. This relationship has been referred to as the "core relationship" of learning – the roles of teachers and students, the subject matter, and their interaction in the classroom. Certain behaviors and instructional strategies enable teachers to build a stronger teaching/learning relationship with their culturally diverse students. Many of these behaviors and strategies exemplify standard practices of good teaching, and others are specific to working with students from diverse cultures. A number of these behaviors and strategies are listed below:

Teacher Behaviors

Appreciate and accommodate the similarities and differences among the students' cultures

Effective teachers of culturally diverse students acknowledge both individual and cultural differences enthusiastically and identify these differences in a positive manner. This positive identification creates a basis for the development of effective communication and instructional strategies. Social skills such as respect and cross-cultural understanding can be modeled, taught, prompted, and reinforced by the teacher.

Build relationships with students

Interviews with African-American high school students who presented behavior challenges for staff revealed that they wanted their teachers to discover what their lives were like outside of school and that they wanted an opportunity to partake in the school's reward systems. Developing an understanding of students' lives also enables the teacher to increase the relevance of lessons and make examples more meaningful.

Focus on the ways students learn and observe students to identify their task orientations

Once students' orientations are known, the teacher can structure tasks to take them into account. For example, before some students can begin a task, they need time to prepare or attend to details. In this case, the teacher can allow time for students to prepare, provide them with advance organizers, and announce how much time will be given for preparation and when the task will begin. This is a positive way to honor their need for preparation, rituals, or customs.

Teach students to match their behaviors to the setting. We all behave differently in different settings. For example, we behave more formally at official ceremonies. Teaching students the differences between their home, school, and community settings can help them switch to appropriate behavior for each context. For example, a teacher may talk about the differences between conversations with friends in the community and conversations with adults at school and discuss how each behavior is valued and useful in that setting. While some students adjust their behavior automatically, others must be taught and provided ample opportunities to

practice. Involving families and the community can help students learn to adjust their behavior in each of the settings in which they interact.

Instructional Strategies

Use a variety of instructional strategies and learning activities. Offering variety provides the students with opportunities to learn in ways that are responsive to their own communication styles, cognitive styles, and aptitudes. In addition, the variety helps them develop and strengthen other approaches to learning. Consider students' cultures and language skills when developing learning objectives and instructional activities. Facilitate comparable learning opportunities for students with differing characteristics. For example, consider opportunities for students who differ in appearance, race, sex, disability, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, or ability. Incorporate objectives for affective and personal development. Provide increased opportunities for high and low achievers to boost their self-esteem, develop positive self-attributes, and enhance their strengths and talents. Such opportunities can enhance students' motivation to learn and achieve.

Communicate expectations. Let the students know the "classroom rules" about talking, verbal participation in lessons, and moving about the room. Tell them how long a task will take to complete or how long it will take to learn a skill or strategy, and when appropriate, give them information on their ability to master a certain skill or complete a task. For example, it may be necessary to encourage students who expect to achieve mastery but are struggling to do so. They may need to know that they have the ability to achieve mastery, but must work through the difficulty. There are some special features about students who have been involved in this study that should be taken into consideration in relation to student's culture understanding and their present progress. They are Junior high school students, aged between 13-15, who are in the eighth grade. Most of them do not do not speak Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesi) as their first language but their local language (mother tongue, for example Bugis or Macassar). Most of teachers do not come originally from these place and so they cannot speak local language but Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia), and so they can not use the local languageas instructioanal and explanatory language in the classroom. They do not really like to learn culture as for them it does not belong to their local culture.

Here are some other strategies to develop cultural students understanding in the classroom:

Provide rationales

Explain the benefits of learning a concept, skill, or task. Ask students to tell you the rationale for learning and explain how the concept or skill applies to their lives at school, home, and work.

Provide rationales

At the beginning of lessons, give the students an overview and tell them the purpose or goal of the activity. If applicable, tell them the order that the lesson will

follow and relate it to previous lessons. At the end of the lesson, summarize its main points.

Provide frequent reviews of the content learned

For example, check with the students to see if they remember the difference between simple and compound sentences. Provide a brief review of the previous lesson before continuing on to a new and related lesson.

Facilitate independence in thinking and action

There are many ways to facilitate students' independence. For example, when students begin their work without specific instruction from the teacher, they are displaying independence. When students ask questions, the teacher can encourage independence by responding in a way that lets the student know how to find the answer for him- or herself. When teachers ask students to evaluate their own work or progress, they are facilitating independence, and asking students to perform for the class (e.g., by reciting or role-playing) also promotes independence.

Promote student on-task behavior

Keeping students on task maintains a high level of intensity of instruction. By starting lessons promptly and minimizing transition time between lessons, teachers can help students stay on task. Shifting smoothly (no halts) and efficiently (no wasted effort) from one lesson to another and being business-like about housekeeping tasks such as handing out papers and setting up audiovisual equipment helps to maintain their attention. Keeping students actively involved in the lessons – for example, by asking questions that require students to recall information – also helps them to stay focused and increases the intensity of instruction.

Monitor students' academic progress during lessons and independent work

Check with students during seatwork to see if they need assistance before they have to ask for help. Ask if they have any questions about what they are doing and if they understand what they are doing. Also make the students aware of the various situations in which a skill or strategy can be used as well as adaptations that will broaden its applicability to additional situations.

Provide frequent feedback

Feedback at multiple levels is preferred. For example, acknowledging a correct response is a form of brief feedback, while prompting a student who has given an incorrect answer by providing clues or repeating or rephrasing the question is another level. The teacher may also give positive feedback by stating the appropriate aspects of a student's performance. Finally, the teacher may give positive corrective feedback by making students aware of specific aspects of their performance that need work, reviewing concepts and asking questions, making suggestions for improvement, and having the students correct their work.

CONCLUSIONS

There are many ways of strategies to develop students cultural understanding in the classroom. The first is use a variety of instructional strategies and learning activities, the next is Consider students' cultures and language skills when developing

learning objectives and instructional activities, Incorporate objectives for affective and personal development, Communicate expectations, Provide rationales, Provide rationales, Provide frequent reviews of the content learned, Facilitate independence in thinking and action, Promote student on-task behavior, Monitor students' academic progress during lessons and independent work, Provide frequent feedback and the last is Require mastery, master one task before going on to the next. When tasks are assigned, tell the students the criteria that define mastery and the different ways mastery can be obtained.

When mastery is achieved on one aspect or portion of the task, give students corrective feedback to let them know what aspects they have mastered and what aspects still need more work. When the task is complete, let the students know that mastery was reached. This study is far from comprehensive, as it only investigated the very surface of strategies to develop students cultural understanding in the classroom. These further studies are significant to be conducted in gaining the more insight of how to encourage the students cultural understanding. The Teacher and the lecturer, on the other hand are hesitant in promoting cultur in their learners because of the fact that they are so much accustomed to adopting the teacher centered approach in their everyday teaching and learning practices and this leads to them believing that their learners are heavily dependent on them to make decision to their Students.

SUGGESTION

We recommend that Teachers and lecturer who act as facilitator, manager, and motivator to develop students cultural understanding in classroom through apply two techniques to sensitize students to the miscommunication that always accompanies interaction with bearers of another culture. The first technique involves a specially designed out of class reading of emphatic literature. The second is involves a specially designed class skit called minidramas.

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