

INCREASING STUDENTS' CULTURAL AWARENESS BY USING FILM IN TEACHING CROSS CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING

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Abstract: This research is about the students' attitude toward the use of films in teaching Cross Cultural Understanding as classroom research taking fourth semester students of English and Literature department, Adab and Humanities Faculty of UIN Alauddin as the sample of the research. The research question put forward is: what is the student's attitude toward the use of film in increasing their cultural awareness. The research instrument is a questionnaire consists of sixteen items which aims at finding out the students' attitude toward using films in increasing their cultural awareness. The data analysis showed that they have positive attitude toward the use of film in the Cross Cultural Understanding class because: 1. Films were interesting material, 2. Using films were new variation of teaching in the class, 3. Students understand the material easier, 4. Students know the other culture better. Film can also increase students' cultural awareness because: 1. They get information from the movie, 2. They can compare their culture and others, 3. It can prevent them from culture shock if they study Cross Cultural Understanding.

Keywords: *cultural awareness, cross cultural understanding, film*

Introduction

Background

Human civilization cannot be separated from culture. Culture is defined as the values, traditions, customs, art, and institutions shared by a group of people who are unified by nationality, ethnicity, religion, or language (Roell 2010, 2). It is culture that brings the identity of one nation into being that within the nation, people communicate to express their values, traditions which in turn will transform its culture. An Anthropologist defines culture as "...the whole way of life of a people or group. In this context, culture includes all the social practices that bond a group of people together and distinguish them from others" (Montgomery and Reid-Thomas 1994, 5). Based on this definition, it can be said that the classroom context is an example of a cultural group.

Understanding how different culture being conducted and communicated will enable other people from different culture to comprehend particular things done in a different way. In other words, cross-culture tries to bring together such relatively unrelated areas as cultural anthropology and established areas of communication. Its core is to establish and understand how people from different cultures communicate each other and the culture of a society comprises the shared values, understandings, assumptions, and goals that are learned from earlier generations, imposed by the members of the present day society and passed on to the succeeding generations.

In the field of language teaching, the understanding of cross culture enables students to grasp the comprehensive skills of the target language, especially for English Language Teaching (ELT). Comprehending how particular gestures and how matters were settled in one culture will provide better way of how learners performing particular actions in similar circumstances. Suneetha and Sundaravalli, (2010, 1) explores that there is a need to pay attention to intercultural communication and discusses some specific approaches and strategies in the teaching of intercultural communication in the classroom. These approaches include addressing issues like learning to honor one's own culture and sharing it with others while developing a capacity to be open to other cultures. Other strategies include progressing from an ethnocentric to an ethno-relative state of understanding and acceptance of cultural differences and increasing one's ability to communicate with non-native speakers. Specifically, classroom practices and strategies suggested include intercultural explorations, use of texts, films, short stories and other multi-media resources, contrastive case studies of cultures, group encounters and role plays.

Films are considered as very valuable tool to classroom learning in a course on cross cultural management as they communicate through their characters, story, context, dialogues and audio-effects at several levels to students. Films help students to internalize situations which they might not have experienced personally; hence help them to connect with various theories and concepts.

For the last few years, in English and Literature Department, Faculty of Adab and Humanity, for the subject of Cross Cultural Understanding, the researcher has introduced films related to cross cultural content to the students. Having varieties of English language movies, students can have choices of movies they can independently assess in comprehending cross cultural understanding.

Based on those explanations above, the writer would like to make a research entitled Increasing students' cultural awareness by using film in teaching cross-cultural understanding.

Problem statement

As mentioned earlier in the background of the research, films related to cross cultural content have been used for students to learn aspects of the intercultural differences. The problem statement is: what is the student's attitude toward the use of film in increasing their cultural awareness.

Methods

The method used in this research was descriptive method. The population of this research were all 4th semester students at English and Literature Department, Academic year 2009/2010, Faculty of Adab and Humanities UIN Alauddin Makassar. There were 75 students (class AG1, AG2, AG3 and AG4) taken as the sample of this research. But only 58 students came when the research was conducted. The instrument used in the research was questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed in qualitative interpretation.

Findings and Discussions

Students' attitude towards using film in CCU

The result of the findings in closed ended items showed that they had positive attitude toward the use of films in CCU class. It was proved by aggregate percentage the students got from agree plus strongly agree of the six items (items 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 13) as follows. a) Item 1 was 96,6 %. b) Item 2 was 86,2 %. c) Item 3 was 84,5 %. d) Item 6 was 69%. e) Item 7 was 82,7 % . f) Item 13 was 84,5 %.

They also thought that the use of films in CCU class, can increase their cultural awareness and they could find some new vocabularies from the films (items 9 and 10).

The result of finding from the open ended item also shows that they had positive attitude toward the use of films in CCU class. They had positive attitude because: a) Films were interesting material. b) Using films were new variation of teaching in the class. c) Students understand the material easier. d) Students know the other culture better

In what follows, I look at each of these separately. Most participating students like films because they were interesting material. This is in line with Roell's opinion (2010, 2) "Films are a great medium to use not only to practice English but also to facilitate intercultural learning." The students found it interesting because they learn the language and the culture through film which is fun for them.

New variation was also one major reason cited for the use of films in class. The students sometimes bored with the lecturing or discussion method. The teacher role is very important to make the class alive. As a lecturer, I need to make new environment in my class so they will study happily and enjoy the assignment in the class. As Massi and Merino (1996, 20) stated, giving visual messages a place in the foreign language curriculum is an interesting and entertaining way to enhance the learner's command of the target language; the messages available through a refreshing change of routine in the classroom.

Understanding the material easier constituted another positive attitude. Some students said it is easier for them to understand the material through films because they can see others culture in the films, they do not have to go abroad to see different culture. Roell (2010, 2) mentioned that numerous films contain excellent examples of intercultural communication such as how different dialects, forms of address, customs, taboos, and other cultural elements influence interaction among different groups. These are lesson and activities that the students can understand easier.

The last item is students can know the other culture better. Having better understanding from what they see and listen on particular culture students from the movie, students can react and interact more confidently with other people. This is also supported by Summerfield research as he mentioned that "Learning about stereotypes, ethnocentrism, discrimination, and acculturation in the abstract can be flat and uninspiring. But if we experience intercultural contact with our eyes and ears, we begin to understand it" (Summerfield 1993, 1).

Using film can increase students' cultural awareness.

There are four items will be discussed as the result of open ended item. From the finding, it shows that film can increase students' cultural awareness because: a) Students get information from the movie. b) They can compare their culture and others. c) It can prevent them from culture shock if they study CCU

The first reason is students get information from the movie. As most of the students mentioned that they "get many new information and insights," "we can get some lessons about the culture, behavior, and attitude." Although the result will vary for each individual, but in general students are expected to use this information or lessons benefit for their cultural awareness. As Kim (2002, 30) suggests, teaching a foreign language is not confined to developing the learner' language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). It should also raise their cultural awareness that is indispensable in the use of the foreign language.

Secondly, students can compare one culture with the other culture although they are not necessarily interacting with foreign people who have the culture at one time. As mentioned by Tavers and Cavalcanti, the aim of film activities is to “increase students’ awareness and to develop their curiosity toward the target culture and their own, helping them to make comparisons among cultures” (1996, 18).

The last which is important social phenomenon is culture shock. This can happen to anyone who is not ready in facing a situation that is new for them especially when they have never learned the situation before not to mention experience it. Having this benefit of understanding culture from the movies, students can anticipate any situation when they come across a situation where they have to react appropriately.

Conclusions

Based on the findings and the discussions the writer concludes that the fourth semester students of English Department, academic year 2009/2010, Adab and Humanities Faculty of UIN Alauddin Makassar have positive attitude toward the use of film in the Cross Cultural Understanding class because : 1) Films were interesting material. 2) Using films were new variation of teaching in the class. 3) Students understand the material easier. 4) Students know the other culture better

Film can also increase students’ cultural awareness because: 1) They get information from the movie.2) They can compare their culture and others. 3) It can prevent them from culture shock if they study CCU.

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