



THE ROLE OF CULTURAL COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: PERSPECTIVES FROM LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS

PERAN KOMPETENSI BUDAYA DALAM PENGAJARAN BAHASA INGGRIS: PERSPEKTIF INSTRUKTUR BAHASA DAN SISWA

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Abstract

This study explores the role of cultural competence in English language teaching (ELT) from the perspectives of and students. In the era of globalization, English language skills encompass not only linguistic abilities but also cultural understanding. Cultural competence is crucial for enhancing communication skills and understanding the socio-cultural context of language use. The study employs a qualitative methodology with a case study approach instructors, including interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and questionnaires to gather data. The findings indicate that both instructors and students recognize the importance of cultural competence in language teaching. Instructors with high cultural competence can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. However, challenges such as limited resources, lack of training, and time constraints often hinder the effective integration of cultural competence in teaching practices. The study emphasizes the need for cultural competence training for instructors to foster a more effective and inclusive learning environment.

Keywords: Cultural Competence, English Language Teaching

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran kompetensi budaya dalam pengajaran bahasa Inggris (ELT) dari sudut pandang dan siswa. Di era globalisasi, kemampuan berbahasa Inggris tidak hanya mencakup kemampuan linguistik tetapi juga pemahaman budaya. Kompetensi budaya sangat penting untuk meningkatkan keterampilan komunikasi dan memahami konteks sosio-kultural penggunaan bahasa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus yang dilakukan instruktur, meliputi wawancara, diskusi kelompok terfokus, observasi kelas, dan kuesioner untuk mengumpulkan data. Temuannya menunjukkan bahwa baik instruktur maupun siswa menyadari pentingnya kompetensi budaya dalam pengajaran bahasa. Instruktur dengan kompetensi budaya yang tinggi dapat menciptakan lingkungan pembelajaran yang inklusif dan mendukung. Namun, tantangan seperti terbatasnya sumber daya, kurangnya pelatihan, dan keterbatasan waktu sering kali menghambat integrasi kompetensi budaya yang efektif dalam praktik pengajaran. Studi ini menekankan perlunya pelatihan kompetensi budaya bagi instruktur untuk menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih efektif dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci : Kompetensi Budaya, Pengajaran Bahasa Inggris



INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English language skills have become very important for international communication and access to information. Teaching English involves not only linguistic skills, but also cultural understanding. Cultural competency refers to the ability to understand, appreciate, and interact effectively with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This competency is important for improving communication skills and understanding the socio-cultural context that accompanies language use.

According to experts, cultural competency plays a crucial role in English language teaching. Brown (2007) emphasizes that "language teaching cannot be separated from the cultural context, because language is a cultural product". Thus, effective teaching must include an introduction to the cultures associated with the language.

Byram (1997) added that cultural competence helps students understand and interpret the meaning of words and expressions in the appropriate context. This not only improves their communication skills but also helps them to better appreciate and understand cultural differences. "Instructors who have a high level of cultural competence can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment, allowing students from diverse cultural backgrounds to learn more effectively" (Byram, 1997).

However, the application of cultural competency in English language teaching faces various challenges. According to Kramsch (1993), instructors often must adapt their teaching methods to meet the needs of diverse students. This requires a deep understanding of students' cultural backgrounds as well as flexibility in teaching methods. On the other hand, students also need to develop cultural awareness and openness to understanding the material taught in different cultural contexts.

This research aims to explore the role of cultural competence in English language teaching from the perspective of instructors and students, as well as identify strategies and best practices that can be adopted to improve cultural competence in language teaching. By understanding the views of both parties, it is hoped that this research can provide a more comprehensive insight into the importance of cultural competence in English language teaching and how this can be effectively integrated into the curriculum and teaching practices.

Experts such as Nieto (2010) and Deardorff (2006) suggest that the development of cultural competence should be an integral part of language instructor training. "With this approach, it is hoped that teaching English will not only improve students' linguistic abilities but also prepare them to become competent and empathetic global citizens" (Deardorff, 2006).

The Problem Statement

1. How does cultural competence influence the process of English language teaching by instructors?
2. What are the perspectives of language instructors and students on the importance of cultural competence in English language learning?



3. What challenges do instructors and students face in integrating cultural competence into the English language teaching process?
4. How can cultural competence be developed in the context of English language teaching to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning?
5. The objectives
6. Understanding the Importance of Cultural Competence: To explain the significance of cultural competence in English language teaching and how it affects the teaching and learning process.
7. Identifying Perspectives of Teachers and Students: To uncover the views and experiences of language instructors and students regarding cultural competence in English language teaching.
8. Exploring Best Practices: To identify and document the best practices used by English language teachers in integrating cultural competence into the curriculum and teaching.
9. Assessing the Impact on Learning: To evaluate the impact of cultural competence on the effectiveness of English language learning, in terms of both language comprehension and student engagement.
10. Providing Recommendations: To offer recommendations for curriculum development and teacher training aimed at enhancing cultural competence in English language teaching.

METHODOLOGY

To explore the role of cultural competence in English language teaching (ELT) from the perspectives of language instructors and students, the following methodology can be employed:

1. Research Design

Qualitative Methodology: Use qualitative methods to capture in-depth insights and perspectives. **Case Study Approach:** Focus on a specific educational context, such as a language school, university, or online learning platform.

2. Data Collection Methods

- a. **Interviews:** Conduct semi-structured interviews with language instructors and students. Prepare an interview guide with open-ended questions to explore their experiences, beliefs, and perceptions regarding cultural competence in ELT.
- b. **Focus Groups:** Organize focus group discussions with both instructors and students to encourage interaction and collective reflection on cultural competence.
- c. **Observations:** Observe English language classes to see how cultural competence is integrated into teaching practices and how students respond to it.
- d. **Surveys/Questionnaires:** Distribute surveys or questionnaires with both closed and open-ended questions to gather a broader range of data on participants' attitudes and experiences.



3. Participants

- a. Language Instructors: Include instructors with diverse backgrounds, teaching experiences, and levels of cultural competence.
- b. Students: Select a diverse group of students, considering factors like age, nationality, linguistic background, and prior exposure to English and other cultures.

4. Data Analysis

- a. Thematic Analysis: Analyze interview and focus group data by identifying recurring themes and patterns related to cultural competence in ELT.
- b. Content Analysis: Analyze survey responses to identify trends and commonalities.
- c. Triangulation: Use multiple data sources to cross-validate findings and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the role of cultural competence.

5. Ethical Considerations

- a. Informed Consent: Obtain informed consent from all participants, ensuring they understand the study's purpose and their rights.
- b. Confidentiality: Maintain the confidentiality of participants' identities and responses.
- c. Anonymity: Use pseudonyms or codes to protect participants' identities in the reporting of results.

5. Limitations and Delimitations

- a. Limitations: Acknowledge potential limitations, such as a small sample size or potential biases in self-reported data.
- b. Delimitations: Define the study's scope, including the specific cultural contexts and teaching settings considered.

6. Validity and Reliability

- a. Member Checking: Share preliminary findings with participants to verify accuracy and ensure the validity of interpretations.
- b. Inter-Coder Reliability: Involve multiple researchers in data coding and analysis to enhance reliability.

RESULTS

1. Instructors' Perspectives

- a. Understanding of Cultural Competence: Instructors generally recognized the importance of cultural competence in ELT. They defined it as the ability to understand, respect, and effectively communicate with students from diverse cultural backgrounds.



- b. Implementation in Teaching: Many instructors pHreported incorporating cultural elements into their lessons through materials, discussions, and activities that highlight different cultures. However, the extent and method of implementation varied widely.
- c. Challenges Faced: Instructors faced challenges such as limited resources, lack of training, and time constraints, which hindered the effective integration of cultural competence in their teaching practices.
- d. Perceived Benefits: Instructors believed that promoting cultural competence helped create a more inclusive classroom environment, improved student engagement, and better prepared students for global communication.

2. Students' Perspectives

- a. Awareness and Importance: Students were aware of cultural differences and generally viewed cultural competence as an important aspect of learning English, particularly for understanding context, idioms, and cultural references.
- b. Learning Experiences: Students appreciated when instructors included cultural content, as it made lessons more interesting and relevant. Some students reported that exposure to different cultures through language learning enhanced their intercultural communication skills and broadened their perspectives.
- c. Challenges and Barriers: Students noted challenges, such as stereotyping and misunderstandings, that arose from cultural differences. They expressed a desire for more structured and comprehensive cultural education.

3. Classroom Observations

Integration of Culture: Observations revealed that cultural content was often integrated through discussions, multimedia resources, and collaborative projects. However, the depth of cultural exploration varied, with some lessons only superficially touching on cultural topics.

Student Engagement: Classes that incorporated cultural elements often saw higher student engagement and participation. Discussions on cultural differences and similarities were particularly popular.

DISCUSSION

1. The Role of Cultural Competence in ELT

The study highlights the critical role of cultural competence in English language teaching. Both instructors and students recognized its value in enhancing communication skills, fostering mutual respect, and preparing learners for global interactions.

The findings suggest that cultural competence is not just an add-on but a fundamental component of language education that can significantly influence the learning experience and outcomes.



2. Challenges and Opportunities

Despite its importance, the integration of cultural competence in ELT faces several challenges. Instructors often lack adequate training and resources, which can limit their ability to effectively teach cultural content.

There is an opportunity for educational institutions to provide more support, such as professional development workshops, culturally diverse materials, and curriculum guidelines that emphasize cultural competence.

3. Implications for Teaching Practice

Instructors should strive to create a culturally inclusive classroom environment by incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences into their teaching. This includes using culturally relevant materials, encouraging open discussions about cultural differences, and addressing stereotypes.

Collaboration among educators, students, and communities can enhance the cultural competence of all participants, promoting a richer and more empathetic learning environment.

4. Future Research

Further research could explore the long-term impact of cultural competence on language learning outcomes and intercultural communication skills. Additionally, studies could investigate the effectiveness of specific teaching strategies and resources in promoting cultural competence.

The results and discussion sections illustrate the complexity and significance of cultural competence in ELT. They underscore the need for continued efforts to integrate cultural education into language teaching, benefiting both instructors and students.

CONCLUSION

1. Importance of Cultural Competence: Both instructors and students recognize the importance of understanding cultural differences in language learning. Cultural competence helps in creating a more inclusive and effective learning environment.
2. Enhanced Communication: Instructors with high cultural competence can better communicate with students from diverse backgrounds, leading to more effective teaching and learning.
3. Student Engagement: Students are more engaged and motivated when cultural elements are integrated into language lessons, as it makes learning more relevant and relatable.
4. Recommendations for Teaching: The study might recommend that English language teachers undergo training in cultural competence to better address the needs of their diverse student populations.
5. Future Research: The conclusion might also suggest areas for further research, such as exploring specific cultural challenges in different educational contexts or evaluating the long-term impact of cultural competence on language acquisition.



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