

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACT OF TEACHING STRATEGIES - CASE STUDY ON AN INTERCULTURAL COMPARISON COURSE IN GENERAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

- ◎ **Current situation in Intercultural education in Hong Kong**
 - Intercultural education became an issue after the transfer of sovereignty
 - However, HK teachers
 - showed the **least sensitivity to cultural differences** (Yuen & Grossman, 2009)
 - were remain at the **stage of denial/ defense** (Westrick and Yuen, 2007; Yuen, 2010)
- ◎ **Project aims:** a trial to **nurture student teachers' intercultural sensitivity** in a university general education course
- ◎ **Presentation focus:** will report on the students' movement of intercultural sensitivity and their evaluation on the teaching strategies

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. **Intercultural sensitivity development models**
 - **Providing a frame** to examine and evaluate the growing complexity of intercultural sensitivity.
 - Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
2. **Pedagogies applied in intercultural education**
 - Effective teaching strategies adopted in intercultural education
 - Reflective, Role-playing, Group and cooperative learning and Narrative, etc.
 - Bennett (1993) provided a frame to organize teaching activities
 - This study is to **organize teaching based upon Bennett's development model and also an examination of the teaching principles proposed by Bennett.**

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METHODOLOGY

- ◎ **Research Method:** Qualitative Study
- ◎ **Sampling:**
 - 36 Students (those who enrolled in the 2011 fall semester)
 - **Gender:** 2 Males and 34 Female
 - **Student identities:** 10 from Mainland China and 26 from Hong Kong
- ◎ **Date collected by:**
 - **Individual interview**
 - Investigating students' perceptions of the development of intercultural sensitivity and the impact of content and instructional strategies.
 - 8 students participated in the 60 – 90 minutes individual interviews, which were recorded and transcribed

FINDINGS-

Movement of learners' intercultural Sensitivity

1. **Prior to the course**
 - Before committing to the course study, students
 - Paying little attention to cultural difference issues
 - Only holding wide categories of cultures
 - **Students were in the stage of Denial**

After the course

- 5 out of 8 students: moved to the acceptance stage
"After taking the course, when I observe and think of some cultural difference phenomena, my first response has been not whether I like it, but why it is happened. (Xu)"
- Broadened the categorization of cultures and get to be more conscious of the existence of diversified cultures
- 2 students: Intended to find out similarities or to construct the commonality among different cultures
 - increasing sensitivity to culture related phenomena and an orientation to minimize the difference
 - At the stage of Minimization
- Oppositely, one HK local student reported a strong dislike of the communication style of students from Mainland China

FINDINGS- Effectiveness of pedagogies

1. Effective teaching strategies identified by students

- **Narrative Writing**
 - Increase learners' cultural self awareness
" Because if writing stories about unequal power relationship in my family, I start to understand why the similar situations happened again and again in my life (Xu)"
 - Broaden their horizons; perspective transformation was stimulated
" It seemed that you understood what and why something happened all of a sudden, and unexpectedly I begin to make observation of the inside form the eye of an outsider (Xu)"
- **Extended essay**
 - learn cultural difference issues in-depth
 - Key characteristics: flexibility, matching with personal interest, immersing in a topic, dialoguing with literature independently

2. Perceptions of the strategies those show substantial differences of cultures

- **movies or movie clips**
Explicit relation with concepts, Culturally typical, Exhibition of diverse cultures
- **Cultural conflict cases**
“the cases you selected were very good examples to tell cultural difference and the possible consequence of cultural conflict when the difference hadn't been well aware of. (Tin)”
- **Difference between HK born students and those from Mainland China**
 - 4 Mainland China (MC) students reported positive comments
 - 4 Hong Kong (HK) students reported that the case studies were nothing but a common activity

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3. Mis-arrangement of Issue-based discussion

- **MC Students**
 - Highly appreciated the approach and deep engagement
 - motivate active thinking
“The discussion on controversial issues stimulated me to think on the issue, when I heard a viewpoint or a sentence, it was naturally for me to comment on the view, and then some of my own points of view appeared (Yang)”
 - relate it to different social norm and values
- **HK Students**
 - 3 out of 4 students had no particular feelings
 - One student (Tin) had bad feelings on MC students
“I am strongly impressed by their desire to express personal views, they always held absolute standpoints, didn't accept different points and would not change their views after listening to others (Tin)”
 - Instructor's control of the discussion
“I have a feeling that the instructor didn't intervene in the discussion and it seemed the discussion had not been controlled well (Tin). ”

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4. Limited impact of group learning

- **Positive response**
 - Group presentation made students conduct thick description of one or two cultures and compare them with their own national or regional cultures
“You have to has a clear concept about which dimension is to be used to make analysis and consider how to analyze concrete social phenomena, I think this process help me to learn in terms of the application of a concept (Wang)”
- But students distributed the task among group members and reported individual parts when presentation
- **the distributing the task into several parts destroyed the wholeness of learning**

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DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

1. **For teaching strategies**
 - The synergy of using multiple strategies can inspire students' self cultural awareness and engage students in deep exploration of other cultures
 - Guiding questions can lead students to reflect on personal experience within a conceptual frame.
2. **For organization of multiple strategies**
 - The sequencing of three assignments reflects a consideration of
 - Developing self cultural awareness
 - Understanding other cultures
 - Independently investigating cultural issues
 - The sequencing is important to help students broaden and deepen the understanding of cultural difference issues and develop intercultural sensitivity gradually

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3. For the case of one HK born student

- Two issues raised
 - The instructor should be better aware of the cultural differences among students, in particular when controversial issues are introduced
 - The instructor should accurately evaluate students' IS stage and arrange suitable activities
 - ✓ it might be easy to arouse emotions than cognitive analysis when students in the early stage of ethnocentric.

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