The Impact of Culturally Diverse Reading Texts on Student's writing Proficiency

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Abstract—-Assumption University as an international university is expected to empower students to interact with diverse market with different cultural and social mindsets. However, Assumption university reading texts fail to prepare students to deal with cultural diversity in trade markets. So this study tries to investigate if culturally diverse reading comprehension texts can improve students' writing proficiency level. For this purpose, 60 students were selected and divided into two groups (30 in each Group) based on stratified sampling done by office of registrar. The statistical method for the current study was based on Pre-test-Post-test experimental design which signifies the quantitative aspect of the study. Then ANCOVA technique is used for data analysis. The data was collected and corrected by the researchers from students after 10 weeks of instruction indicated the existence of significant difference between pre-test and post-test results. This study found out that culturally diverse reading comprehension texts have improved students' writing proficiency..

Index Terms—Culturally Diverse Texts,Regular Based Texts, Student's Writing Proficiency,Text Types.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, international universities or learning organizations help students to acquire knowledge on: lives, cultures, contributions, experiences and challenges of different groups of stakeholders by emphasis on teaching to cultural diversity. But, in reality cultural diversity is often unrecognized or unnoticed in their schooling. For this study the focus will be on the case of the English Language Learning institutes (IELE) in Assumption international university of Thailand who focus on developing students to become successful in the diverse market of modern society. In IELE it is clear that language classroom textbooks focus on the knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis, but it seems that IELE have failed to focus on the cultural features.

From the perspective of teachers, the condition is worse while they face indifferent faces of Thai students and sometimes their deep misunderstanding and misconception of different cultures in the classroom where they try to encourage mostly reserved Thai students speak or even write in target language in the classroom.

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The existing gap between what these learners can learn from other cultures potentially and what they know in their current situation is so conspicuous in English III textbooks in which great emphasis is on reading passages mostly taken from Bangkok Post and Nation. These selected texts fail to meet the main objectives of Teaching English at an international level while focusing just on Thai cultural aspects. In simple terms, most of Thai learners and other students from other nationalities are deprived from learning more about global culture, other cultural values and life styles which might be their main challenges in the future global market. Besides, in such an internationally rich academic context, the English language teaching syllabus and textbooks especially in English III are losing a very invaluable aspect of language teaching which is called cultural diversity. Therefore, the present study is going to investigate the impact of culturally diverse reading comprehension texts on students' writing proficiency.

Research Question

As an experienced teacher and a member of the IELE for more than five years, the researcher has been trying to find more insights to discover the nature of success behind such strong image of a leading organization in language education development in Thailand; therefore, the following research questions have been formed:

Question: What is the effect of texts type on student writing proficiency?

Research Hypothesis

The Following Hypotheses Are Made On The Basis Of The Presented Research Questions:

Hypothesis1. Culturally Diverse Reading Comprehension Texts Improve Students' Writing Proficiency.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Nowadays, it is a widely known fact that teaching and learning a foreign language cannot be reduced to the direct teaching of linguistic skills like phonology, morphology, vocabulary, and syntax. The contemporary models of communicative competence show that there is much more to learning a language, and they include the vital component of cultural knowledge and awareness (Bachman 1990; Council of Europe 2001). According to Kramsch (1993), culture "is always in the background, right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard-won communicative competence, challenging their ability to make sense of the world around them.

A. The Role of Culture in a Foreign Language Classroom

Various researches on teaching culture have proved that language and culture are closely related and one cannot be taught without the other (e.g., Brown, 2007; Kramsch, 1998; Kuang, 2007; Savignon & Sysoyev, 2005; Schulz, 2007; Tang, 1999) and both of them are best acquired together (Schulz, 2007). The interrelatedness of language and culture has been expressed by Brown (2007) "that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture, the acquisition of a second language, except for specialized, instrumental acquisition […], is also the acquisition of a second culture" (p. 189-190). As it was found in these academic works, it is clearly signifying the existing link between that language and culture learning., but it is important to know what role does culture play in language teaching and how is it should be taught? Great emphasis noted by Lafayette (1988) who studied this relationship said that teachers spent greatest amount of time and effort on teaching grammatical and lexical components of the language, leaving the culture as the weakest component in the curriculum. In another study Moore (2006) found that least 80% of the teachers surveyed indicated they were teaching culture more than half of their instructional time.

Great attempts and ongoing efforts were made to define "culture", social scientists have not yet come up with a unanimous definition (Tang, 2006) or a common conceptualization. This might be for the fact that culture is a "very broad concept embracing all aspects of human life" (Seelye, 1993, p. 15). The existence of such a lack of agreement left the second and foreign language teachers with the challenge of selecting appropriate components or segments of the target culture need to be taught. Consequently, culture has been regarded as a composition of different various elements, some of which are emphasized in the classroom, while others are not.

How to Integrate Culture into Language Teaching Texts and Classrooms?

The main issue here is teaching culture should be integrated into the foreign language textbooks and classroom practices. Since certain language teaching materials in second language classrooms fail to incorporate cultural aspect of the target language, it has been the language teachers' responsibility to find practical solutions to this problem to integrate culture into their teaching in one way or another. It is a false concept to assume that language learners will later be exposed to cultural material when they acquired dominancy over the linguistic features of the language. Therefore, the great burden on the teacher's shoulders would be to incorporate cultural material into their teaching through which they try to make them familiar with the culture of the language they are teaching.

Harumi (2002) introduced a new framework which found Chastain's dichotomy inadequate for teaching culture to the students. He believed that there is a new trichotomy in which it is possible to divide culture into three components such as culture around language, culture in language and culture through language. The first component which is culture around language as exemplified in people's behavior along with language use. It is known as being exposed to language culture which is known as the valuable educational experience for students. Culture in language is culture which is embedded in thought patterns of people in every social context. It is the target of foreign language classrooms where the foreign language is taught as an ordinary school subject. The third component is culture through language which is culture as embodied in cultural information transacted in cross cultural communication. It is the target in foreign language classroom where the medium of instruction is foreign language for learning and communication. Often times, as disclosed earlier, teachers lack the necessary knowledge of classroom of the target language culture and training in how to teach it, resulting in a state of insecurity to even approach culture.

Seelye (1974) puts forward a number of goals for language teachers to set while teaching culture, which serves as a reference list in the process of selecting, collecting and compiling cultural materials. According to Seelye (1974), teachers should first invoke interest and curiosity about the target culture. Secondly, they should ensure that their students recognize the fact that social factors like age, gender, social class, and ethnicity influence how people use the language. Thirdly, teachers should seek to present to their students the case that language use changes according to whether the particular situation entails an ordinary routine for people of the target culture or is an unusual and unexpected situation (i.e., emergency). Hence, students should be able to make sense of why people of the target culture choose to behave in certain ways in certain situations, and ultimately, acquire the skills to know the proper thing to say, at the appropriate time and place, and to the right people.

To illustrate, such materials, as Brooks (1975) lays out, should be derived from symbolism, values, authority, order, ceremony, love, honor, humor, beauty, and spirit, and should take into consideration and reflect several aspects, such as the life style, uniqueness, common sense, religion, and family values of the speakers of the target language. In light of the issues mentioned and emphasized here, the creative classroom teacher can come up with numerous ideas regarding how to integrate culture into the textbooks and classroom activities. Some of the strategies the authors would like to suggest are the utilization of movies, lectures from native speakers of the target culture, audio-taped interviews with native speakers, video-taped observations of the target language community, and authentic readings and reliable.

B. Culturally Diverse Texts

It is essential for foreign language classroom to be exposed to global culture needed for global communication. The culturally diverse texts give students the device they need in order to examine the cultural dilemmas of different situations they may face in an international context. This will help them higher level of awareness in order to perform better on more sophisticated and complex interpretations of their texts than they might have done using traditional interpretative approaches (Mohammadzadeh, 2009). The students' use of reading strategies, as Mohammadzadeh (2009) emphasized, can help them to be more effective intercultural communicators.

Students, who are exposing to culturally diverse texts, are encouraged comparing, analyzing the cultural views and values of different cultures. This will improve students' attitudes towards the necessity of learning foreign languages. When students examine culturally diverse texts, they learn to connect the various cultural issues and conflicts which take place in similar conflicts in other related texts. In such classrooms students are expected to read the texts to become aware of the gaps between their own culture and the internationally recognized cultures so that they can extend their discussions of themes and conflicts in the directions which they believe to be significant. Thus, learners who exposed to these issues will contribute to students' awareness of the existing gaps.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effect ofculturally diverse texts on students' writing proficiency. The researchers collect data from 60 students in English III in the academic semester, 1/2016 by using Stratified Sampling technique. Stratified Sampling technique select is used to divided students and selected into two groups based by office of registration, the students studying in IELE 30 students are in Control group (CG1) and 30 in Experimental group (EG2) The data was collected through pre-test and post-test design used and constructed by IELE testing section..

IV. RESEARCH FINDING

According to the data collection from the two groups of students studying in English 3 at IELE in 1/2016 here in Assumption University of Thailand, the Pre-test and Post-test results are as follows;

A. Descriptive Data for Pretest

The results of the data collected from such administration were given to data analysis, and then the Pretest score were used as the dependent variable by using SPSS descriptive statistics method to find and summarize the Mean and Standard Deviation of the current study as shown in the table 1

TABLE 1:
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PRE-TEST MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Type of Text	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Regular Text	30	35.35	3.052
Culturally Diverse Text	30	35.53	3.697
Total	60	35.44	6.749

By comparing the regular text Mean and the culturally diverse text Mean it is clear that there is a difference between the Means of these two text types on students' writing proficiency.

B. Descriptive Data for Posttest

After the treatment was done in each group and the final post-test was administrated to the two groups the descriptive data was collected and displayed in by using the Post-test score were used as the dependent variable by using SPSS descriptive statistics method to find and summarize the Mean and Standard Deviation of the current study as shown in the table 2.

TABLE II:
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF POST-TEST MEAN AND STANDARD DEVIATION

Type of Text	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Regular Text	30	35.73	3.205
Culturally Diverse Text	30	45.20	3.134
Total	60	40.47	6.339

By comparing the regular text Mean and the culturally diverse text Mean it is clear that there is a significant difference between the Means of these two text types on students' writing proficiency.

Following the application of ANCOVA technique the SPSS Univariate Analysis of Variance is used in the data analysis with the post-test score as the dependent variable, text type as the fixed factor and the pre-test score as the covariate variable. The data collected summary table of ANCOVA is given in table 3.

TABLE III:
ANCOVA SUMMARY TABLE OF THE TWO INDEPENDENT GROUPS

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F-statistic	Probability
Covariate: Pretest	206.558	1	206.558	31.304	.000
Text Types	1318.547	1	1318.547	199.829	.000
Error	376.108	57	6.598		
Corrected Total	1926.933	59			

Based on the data displayed in Table 4.4.the calculated F-statistic for Text Types is 199.829 with very small significance Probability at .000, the magnitude of error Mean Square = 6.598

V. CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion and Discussion

The existence of significant difference between pre-test and post-test results suggest possible effects of different type of texts on the students writing proficiency. The results obtained from ANCOVA indicated that students improved there is a significant impact of culturally diverse reading texts on the students' writing proficiency as it was show clear that the calculated F for Text Types is 199.829 with very small significance Probability .000. It means that the F is significant at .01 level of significance, this leads to confirm that the Research Hypothesis that the means of students' writing proficiency of reading culturally diverse text with the means of students' writing proficiency of regular reading text are significantly different at .01 level of significance.

I. Decision of the Hypothesis Testing:

The ANCOVA Result is that the calculated F-Statistic is 199.829, the magnitude of error Mean Square = 6.598, the significant probability is .000. The decision of the ANCOVA method is rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis that the two reading text methods Means are significantly different at the .01 level of significance.

II. Comparison of the Two Reading Text Methods:

As mentioned before, the probability significant level of ANCOVA is lower than 0.01 which strongly suggests that the two reading text methods are significantly different in improving students writing proficiency, even if the sample size of both groups being compare are equal. But, after using the ANCOVA method the results showed clearly that the experimental group (culturally diverse text learning method) performed better on the post-test score in comparison with the control group (regular text learning method).

III. Conclusion Significance of the Finding

In conclusion, students can improve their writing proficiency significantly by using culturally diverse text (experimental group 2) more than with the regular text (control group 1). This show that a greater focus should be adjusting the learning text to relate to students understand help student to learn more effective and improve clearly their skills in writing as they have to learn outside their comfort zone open more challenges for student to analyze, think and learn. This experiment has been a successful finding to better understand students learning capability can be influence significantly by the reading texts type they receive.

Recommendations

The findings of the current research have the following recommendations for various stakeholders in teaching methods for student writing proficiency:

I. Recommendation for Teachers

Teachers who are interested to teach writing might find the findings of the current research very valuable for their students in the classroom. This means for teachers who show greater concern regarding their students' proficiency in writing, the current study emphasizes on the impact of different type of text have on students' improvement in language writing proficiency. Teachers can use culturally diverse texts for enhancing their student's more in writing and analyzing the text they learn. This has the advantage of being more related for the 21st century learning method as we are teaching students' to become global citizen with renovated, reflective and innovative in writing for the development and meaning based writing for being an advanced learner in English 4 at the IELE.

II. Recommendation for Curriculum Designers

For many teachers especially those who are newly joined the teaching team of IELE, the textbook, syllabus and materials as well as course objectives would be the best guide for teaching. This is the real case for a new teacher when he or she finds the textbooks and its content inadequate though useful, to provide the guidelines for teaching real genuine writing in English. This study paves the way for better materials development and curriculum designers to include such points in which more input are provided for students and more innovative procedures and methodologies for teachers to use in the classroom. The curriculum should also be more relevant to the 21st century learning, as we are teaching student to become global citizen by teaching only local ideas and perspectives, this does not match up with the university concept as an international university who leads people toward being global citizen. In the curriculum it is very necessary to include various culture, ways of live, society behaviors and etc. to have a more analytical mindset to analyze other culture and compare them with your own so student can learn more affective, this will help students' become proficient learners not just as writers but as future leaders.

Further Studies

The evidence-based findings from the current study leave certain related parts for more research and understanding. Therefore, it is suggested to consider the following ideas for further studies.

1 There is a need to know if the length of the students' writing or their fluency of writing is related to the type of reading text given by the teacher.

2 There is a need for further research if students' writing and rewriting or revisions are affected by the types of reading texts given by the teacher.

3 The students' verbal report on the type of written feedback given by the teacher can be an area for more studies.

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