

Multiculturalism in the College English Curriculum

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Abstract

The primary objective of this article was to describe, from the perspective of students, how multiculturalism is reflected in the current college English curriculum in universities. Through survey research, the researcher examined the planned curriculum (such as reading texts) and the implemented curriculum (what students learn through curriculum and their learning experience), as well as their attitudes and satisfaction toward such curriculum. The author concludes that a diversity of reading texts and instructional strategies has been emphasized in the curriculum, but the attitudes of instructors seem to be a much stronger factor influencing openness to diversity.

Introduction

As the world becomes increasingly more diverse, compact, and interdependent, citizens of the world need to learn how to interact with and understand people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different from themselves. From educational efforts to meet such needs the term "multiculturalism," which addresses issues of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, language, and disability (Grant & Sleeter, 1986) has been developed. Multiculturalism can be defined as a concept, a movement, and a process that attempts to reflect the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society in all of its institutions, especially in educational settings, including staff, norms, values, curriculum, and student body (Banks & Banks, 1993). Cultural identity, a concept housed within that of multiculturalism, is based on "traits and values learned as part of our ethnic origin, religion, gender, age, socioeconomic level, primary language, geographical region, place of residence (e.g. rural or urban), and disabilities or exceptional conditions" (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p. 182). Debated, as well as celebrated, multiculturalism has gradually been embraced as a particular focus of curriculum within the past twenty years (Noll, 2004). However, contradictory opinions have been proposed regarding the method of implementing multiculturalism in education.

Various and specific courses for understanding different cultures have been offered in universities (e.g., courses offered in African-American Studies, American-Indian Studies, Asian Languages and Cultures, Islamic Studies, and Women Studies, etc.), but these are not necessarily required courses (for example see the curriculum of the University of California, Los Angeles; UCLA, 2008) despite the fact that in numerous studies researchers have consistently found that diversity courses, programs, or activities have a positive effect on the openness of students toward cultural or racial awareness (Astin, 1993; Chang, 2002; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini & Nora, 2001). Thus some have argued, such as Musil, Garcia, Nettles, Sedlacek and Smith (1999), that colleges and universities should include knowledge which is related to the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism within the general education curriculum. Additionally it has been noted that in order to reach the greatest number of students, multiculturalism needs to be an integral part of college general education programs (Mitchell & Salsbury, 1996).

Liberal education, as a part of general education, has been viewed as "equally relevant to all forms of higher education and to all students" (Aleman & Salkever, 2003, p. 564). Required college English courses, as a part of liberal education and one of the few class experiences shared by every college student, appears to be one of the courses that influences the greatest number of students. Therefore, targeting college English courses provides a possibility for understanding the multicultural experience of undergraduates in general education classes in order to help evaluate the effectiveness of multiculturalism ideas that are transmitted through the general education curriculum.

Only in recent years have researchers begun to call for the inclusion of diverse content and perspectives in the general curricula in higher education (Chang, 2002). A growing body of research has been done on how to address multiculturalism in higher education—involving considerations such as courses, reading materials, instruction, activities, teacher preparation, and many other aspects in the higher education curricula (Casement, 1996; Diaz, 1994; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Santoro, 1997). Studies on incorporating multiculturalism into a curriculum have mostly centered on what students and teachers need to know (Hasseler, 1998). Few studies have been done to examine: what students are learning and how, what they have actually learned and acquired

through recent curricula, and what can be done to adjust or improve the current curriculum (Whitt et al., 2001). Years of efforts have been devoted to implanting the concepts of multiculturalism in higher education, so an evaluation of learning outcomes can be significant in providing ideas for future teaching and course design.

One major interest of this study is whether or not English course instructions and requirements influence the openness of students toward diversity, and promote multicultural understanding. Serving as a current overview and a possible index for future improvement, the researcher in the current study evaluated learning outcomes and presented a picture of multiculturalism in the U.S. college English curriculum, while also assessing the efficacy of multiculturalism in the general curriculum, student attitudes toward multiculturalism, and possible factors that students identify as helpful or harmful in shaping their concepts of multiculturalism. It is hoped that findings from the present study will assist educators in designing courses that more effectively address diversity, and help shape the future general education multicultural curricula.

Literature Review

Multicultural education, as Grant and Tate (1995) have indicated, evolved from the civil rights movements of the 1960s and the early 1970s. In 1972, the tone was set for the multiculturalism movement when the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) issued the "No One Model American" statement, supporting cultural pluralism and global understanding (Noll, 2004). In higher education, multiculturalism became "the buzzword of the 1990s" (Michael & Thompson, 1995, p. 31), and multicultural programs began to be experimented with during the 1980s and 1990s (Morris & Parker, 1996). Although research on multicultural education has long been urged to achieve diversity in curricula, according to Chang (2002), a systematic examination of curricular approaches, which includes diversity in higher education, has begun only in recent years. Much of the research on multiculturalism in higher education falls mainly into three categories: reading materials, teacher preparation, and outcomes of specific multicultural programs or college experience in general.

Studies investigating reading text materials were among the first that focused on exploration of multiculturalism in higher education (Grant & Tate, 1995). For example, Elson (1964), in her comprehensive analysis of 1,000 textbooks from the 19th century, found that xenophobia and racism existed in the textbooks. Following that, a number of research studies flourished on textbooks in the 1970s (Butterfield, Demos, Grant, Moy, and Perez, 1979; Hirschfelder, 1975; Trecker, 1971, 1973), that focused on examining responsiveness to multicultural issues in textbooks. These studies indicated that there was improvement, but that the portrayal of female characters and people of color in the textbooks was omitted, stereotyped, or presented negatively and inaccurately (Butterfield et al., 1979; Hirschfelder, 1975). Butterfield et al (1979) also revealed that attention in the textbooks to socioeconomic status of people and of those with a disability was rare. Studies of textbook bias continued on into the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1990s researchers gave much attention to "the need for greater and more accurate inclusion of people of color, women, people with disabilities, and people living at or below poverty" levels (Grant & Tate, 1995, p. 149). After intensive screening of the content of reading materials, research attention turned to diversity in authorship. Studies about diversity in authorship (Kruse, 1992) suggest that even if gender or ethnicity does not appear to be reflected in the content, if the author is female or African American it can still be an important point to make to students.

Since these earlier interests in multicultural instruction and research, multiculturalists have called for curriculum reform, including the addition of the perspectives of minority groups since "the traditional curriculum has neglected the contributions made by minority groups to the American culture," and "the economy [has become] more and more globalized" (Noll, 2004, p. 121). As Hilliard (1991) contended, the traditional Eurocentric curriculum was warped and restrictive, and a pluralistic curriculum is not a matter of ethnic quotas for balance but rather a way to present a truthful and meaningful rendition of the whole of human experience. Further, as Banks (1994) has pointed out, merely adding ethnic content to the curriculum without transforming it or changing basic assumptions, perspectives, and goals does not have the effect of assisting students in viewing issues and problems from diverse points of view.

When multiculturalism turned into a disputed topic with the onset of evaluation of reading materials, according to Noll (2004), a number of influential writers warned of the divisive nature of multiculturalism and demanded a renewed curricular focus on the values of the Western tradition. This later position fueled the cultural wars, including the debates over the legitimacy of the "great books," (e. g. the classical masterpieces that represent Western civilization and the intellectual tradition) (Noll, 2004). A number of influential and prominent scholars, such as Bloom (1994), Bennett (1984), and Hirsch (1987), expressed concerns regarding multiculturalism as an encroachment on American tradition and cultural literacy. Since "schooling is a finite process," as Famularo (1996) put it, "the more the curriculum represents a multicultural test based upon 'exposure to diversity,' the more shallow and superficial learning becomes" (p. 127). Similarly, Casement (1996), after examination of a collection of "great books" and the epistemological and political dimension of the theory which multiculturalists, in his term "anticanonists," advocated, concluded that reading materials should be selected

based on merit, not by prejudice. As “great books” are great books that have been selected and survived from thousands of years, they definitely communicate an essence of life and provide something extremely valuable to human experience. From this viewpoint, in order to make room for diversity, important considerations such as cultural literacy, tradition, and valuable learning are believed to be sacrificed.

With such a notion in mind, Bryden (1991) argued that the classical great books provide insight into human minds and serve as good reading material and therefore should be included in classrooms. Furthermore Bryden (1991) noted that what really matters is how teachers teach with such reading materials not the materials themselves. To provide empirical evidence for this later position, Worthan (1995) conducted a three-year investigation on the “great books” in classrooms, and found that the implemented curriculum could have moral and political significance that could not be foreseen in a planned curriculum which involved only classic Western texts. African American students did not feel alienated by a text from ancient Greece; rather, they were involved in a discussion on the sociocentric bias in Sparta (Worthan, 1995). Studies of this kind re-directed research attention from reading materials to instruction in the classroom with the overall conclusion being that teachers with cultural sensitivity might have more influence than a text.

When research on curricula in multicultural education turned from planning to implementation, studies about teacher preparation increased. Up to 1995, there had been only 47 studies on preservice programs that focused on multicultural education (Grant & Tate, 1995), but these kinds of studies have rapidly grown in the past ten years. In the database of Education Resources Information Clearinghouse (ERIC), 1736 results could be located for teacher preparation in multicultural education. Among them, Beard and Danielson (1993) surveyed teachers of English in a teacher preparation program, and discovered that multiculturalism brought about changes in classroom instruction. The teachers self-reported that there had been a shift from lectures to student-centered discussions, and from teachers as lecturers to facilitators, and they tended to encourage the voices of students from different cultural backgrounds (Beard & Danielson, 1993). While some researchers reported the success of teachers acquiring multicultural concepts and practicing them in class, Hasseler (1998) and Ladson-Billings (1995) documented that there were problems with such inclusion. Ladson-Billings (1995) identified the major problems facing multicultural teacher education programs to be “a lack of coherence and connection among courses, lack of definitional clarity, student resistance to multicultural knowledge and issues, and political attacks on and distortion of multicultural education” (p. 755). Further, in an analysis of data from a faculty survey, Hasseler (1998) pointed out the factors that deter effective multicultural education include the following: lack of minority faculty, lack of minority students, lack of ownership (not identifying multicultural education as a primary responsibility or a top priority), lack of time for gaining expertise, and a lack of access to diverse school settings. Among the above problems, resistance to multicultural knowledge and issues regarding a lack of ownership appear to be the most relevant to implemented curriculum and actual instruction in the classroom setting.

According to Morris and Parker (1996), planning, implementation, and evaluation, are the three major dimensions of curricular development, and the first two dimensions have been extensively studied. What appears to be scarce, as many researchers (Chang, 2002; Morris and Parker, 1996; Whitt et al., 2001) have found, is the research done on evaluation and assessment. Morris and Parker (1996) recorded that the earliest study of this kind was done by Levine and Cureton in 1991. Levine and Cureton (1992) stated that neither side of the debate over “great books” made true claims, and indicated a clear curricular change without measuring impact or effectiveness existed. Among the 19 publications on evaluating multiculturalism in higher education listed by Morris and Parker (1996), 10 dealt with specific diversity courses (6 Woman Studies, 3 Black Studies, and 1 Ethnic Studies), seven assessed impacts in general, and only two examined impacts in liberal education and English literature. Further, these later two studies surveyed professors and department chairs, with a focus primarily on the planned curriculum only (Morris and Parker, 1996). Similarly, evaluation studies done after 1996 mostly have looked at specific diversity courses or impacts in general (e.g. Chang, 2002; Villalpando, 2002; Wittier et al., 2001).

The most recent evaluation studies appear to share a similar conclusion of positive satisfaction toward multicultural education and diversity. Whittier et al (2001) reported that multiple factors influenced students’ openness to diversity, including environmental, academic, and non-academic variables. Chang (2002) reviewed the impact of an undergraduate diversity requirement on students’ racial views and attitudes, and concluded that such course requirements did have educational value and were critical for the goal of reducing prejudice, and improving communication across racial and ethnic lines. Villalpando (2002) conducted a large scale longitudinal study, investigating the changes of 15,600 students in four years. This national study revealed that positive satisfaction with a college multicultural experience is influenced by racial or cultural activities, students of different racial or ethnic groups, courses offered by faculty who value multiculturalism, and campus policies and practices that promote diversity initiatives.

The review of the research literature suggests that studies of multiculturalism in evaluating the current learning outcomes in liberal or general education remain sparse. Since evaluation research is an integral part of the broader multicultural education picture, exploring this area at this point can be significant for policy makers, educators, and future researchers in assisting in the identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the current general education in addressing multicultural issues.

Research Questions

In response to the gaps in the literature and related identified need, in the current study the researcher sought to answer the following research questions: Does the current English curriculum provide students opportunities to experience multicultural education? If so, how does the curriculum address multicultural issues? What kinds of classroom instruction are implemented in general classrooms? Does the instruction incorporate multicultural perspectives? Do the assigned reading materials reflect diversity? Does reflecting diversity on reading materials or classroom instruction influence students' openness to diversity? What ideas regarding such multicultural issues have students actually learned and acquired through recent curriculum? What can be identified as the achievements or weaknesses of the current English curriculum regarding the multicultural experience?

Methods

Sample

The sample in this study comes from two randomly-selected universities in the Los Angeles area, as this is one of the areas with the greatest diversity of demographics in the U.S. and higher education administrators in this geographic location appear to set multicultural education as one of the academic goals. One hundred copies of the questionnaire were sent to teachers who teach junior or senior undergraduates at the two universities to distribute to the students in their classes. Students were informed that participation was voluntarily and anonymous. Fifty questionnaires were distributed and collected by one teacher at one school, and another fifty by four teachers at the other school. A total of seventy-seven questionnaires were returned for a 77% response rate.

Variables of Study

The questionnaire surveyed student demographic information, reading materials used in English courses, class instruction implemented in the courses, students' attitudes toward diversity, their level of cultural competency and sensitivity, and how the courses influenced their openness to diversity. The statistical program SPSS was used to organize and compile the data collected.

Dependent variables. The dependent variables in this study include the diversity of reading texts, the multicultural aspects in class instruction, the influence English courses have on students in their openness to diversity, and the level of cultural competency and sensitivity of the teacher. The authorship of the reading texts and the perspectives covered in the texts were examined, including gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class, and age group. Each item was analyzed as a yes-no construct (1 = no, 2 = yes) to present the percentage of the perspectives included in the reading texts. Similar constructs were used to show the percentage of different classroom instructional strategies, the perspectives that were discussed or presented in class, and students' multicultural concepts acquired from the English courses. Students' attitudes toward the reading texts were surveyed through a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree; 1 = strongly disagree), whereas their opinions toward instructions, instructors, and overall influences were rated through a 3-point Likert scale (3 = very much; 1 = not at all).

Furthermore, the level of cultural competency and sensitivity was assessed according to the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS, created by Milton Bennett (1986), is a model of six stages to describe increasingly complex cognitive phases in viewing a diverse world. The construction of the DMIS was based on Bennett's (1986) thorough review of the developmental models in the literature and students observed for a long time in intercultural workshops. The DMIS is an established and useful tool in assessing the developmental level of individual learners (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The six stages of the DMIS represent an ordinal scale in which each stage is characterized by increasing sensitivity to cultural difference. In the first stage, "Denial," one believes that there are no real differences among people from different cultures. In the second stage, "Defense," one recognizes culture differences but thinks that one culture can be superior to another. In the third stage, "Minimization," all cultural differences are considered a mere biological deviation. In the fourth stage, "Acceptance," one accepts that differences exist, are important, and should be respected. In the fifth stage, "Adaptation," one claims that his or her knowledge about cultural differences is sufficient to improve relationships

with people who are culturally different. And in the final stage, “Integration,” one has the ability to communicate effectively with many cultural groups. The information collected through this measure is derived using a 6-point scale (6 = the final stage Integration to 1 = the first stage Denial).

Independent variables. There were four independent variables in the study related to students’ background information. These variables included: the students’ gender, ethnicity, whether English is a first or second language, and the time when students took the English courses that they indicated in the questionnaire. Among them, the time to take the courses was originally coded through a 4-point ordinal scale (4 = more than ten years ago, 3 = more than five years and less than ten years ago, 2 = more than two years and less than five years ago, and 1 = within the past two years). When it was found that a total of 29 respondents (40%) indicated that they took the courses more than ten years ago, the variable was recoded (2 = more than ten years ago, and 1 = within past ten years) to compare the two groups.

Results and Discussion

In this study, the majority of the participants were female Caucasian students. Except for the respondents who did not provide background information, there are 50 female and 21 male students, including 37 Anglo Caucasians, 15 Hispanics, 9 Asians, 2 African Americans, and 6 belonging to other ethnic or bi-ethnic groups (2 Armenians, 1 Mexican American, 1 Haitian American/Black, and 2 not indicated). The majority of the respondents were native English speakers, but there were 22 who reported English as their second language. As mentioned earlier, there were a number of returning students included in the study with 29 indicated that they took the English courses more than 10 years ago, and with 43 reporting that they had completed the English course within the past 10 years.

Table 1. Background Information (N=77)

| Gender | No. | % | English as the First Language | No. | % |
|-------------------------|-----|------|----------------------------------|-----|------|
| Male | 21 | 29.6 | No | 22 | 30.1 |
| Female | 50 | 70.4 | Yes | 51 | 69.9 |
| Missing | 6 | | Missing | 4 | |
| Ethnicity | No. | % | Time to Take the English Courses | No. | % |
| African American/Black | 2 | 2.9 | 0-2 years ago | 12 | 16.7 |
| Anglo/Caucasian/White | 37 | 53.6 | 3-5 years ago | 18 | 25.0 |
| Asian American/Asian | 9 | 13.0 | 6-10 years ago | 13 | 18.1 |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano | 15 | 21.7 | More than 10 years ago | 29 | 40.3 |
| Other | 6 | 8.7 | | | |
| Missing | 8 | | Missing | 5 | |

The results described here are organized according to the categories of the dependent variables used in the study: (1) diversity in reading texts, (2) classroom instruction, (3) influences of English courses to students on their openness to diversity, and (4) level of cultural competency and sensitivity. As the researcher intended to present a current picture of the English curriculum, the following results are differentiated—meaning that those who took the course ten or more years ago (Group B) are provided as a comparison group to those who took the course within the past ten years (Group A).

Reading Texts

Diversity appears to be reflected in the selection of reading texts. Without including proportions, both groups A and B did not differ significantly on the diversity of authorship or content perspectives. Therefore, the two groups were combined for analysis. For the authorship, what is notable is that the two genders have found almost equal positions in the reading texts: almost as many respondents remembered reading male writers (70%) as those who indicated reading female writers (67%). Regarding the ethnicity of authors, as the required college English courses are intended to improve English proficiency, writers of different ethnic groups are relatively less selected. Thus Caucasian or Anglo writers, understandably, occupied the highest percentage (52%).

On the other hand, though not equally proportional, various cultural perspectives have been included in the content of reading materials. Obviously, next to the Caucasian or Anglo perspective (53%), the African American experience was indicated by 42% of the respondents as part of the content. Other than those perspectives presented in Table 2, perspectives such as different sexual orientations (homosexual 10%), age groups

(adolescence 31%, middle aged 27%, elder 14%), socioeconomic classes (working class 59%, middle class 63%, upper class 52%), and groups with a disability or special needs (5%) have were also indicated as part of the content covered in the reading materials.

Table 2. Diversity of the Reading Texts

| Authorship | No. | % | Content | No. | % |
|-------------------------|-----|------|-------------------------------------|-----|------|
| Male | 55 | 70.5 | Male Perspective | 62 | 79.5 |
| Female | 53 | 67.9 | Female Perspective | 52 | 66.7 |
| African American | 23 | 29.5 | African American Perspective | 33 | 42.3 |
| Native/Indian American | 8 | 10.3 | Native/Indian Perspective | 15 | 19.2 |
| Asian American | 20 | 25.6 | Asian American Perspective | 19 | 24.4 |
| Caucasian/Anglo | 41 | 52.6 | Caucasian/Anglo Perspective | 42 | 53.8 |
| Hispanic/Latino/Chicano | 20 | 25.6 | Hispanic/Latino/Chicano Perspective | 30 | 38.5 |

According to the literature, the first step for many schools in including diversity in their curricula was to provide reading texts that emphasize diversity; and in accordance with that, the results of the survey reflected the outcome of the effort. As shown in Table 3, both groups of respondents on a 5-point scale appeared to share a neutral satisfaction toward such textbook related multicultural issues. The two groups did not differ significantly on t-test comparisons. However, when it was asked if the assigned reading texts emphasized diversity, the two groups differed significantly. A low significance value of 0.032 ($p < .05$) for the t-test indicated that there was a significant difference between the two group means. According to the sample, there appears to be a stronger emphasis on diversity in reading texts in the past ten years.

Table 3. Comparison of Two Groups on Opinions about the Content of the Reading Texts

| The Content of the Reading Texts | Group | No. | Mean | SD |
|--|-------|-----|------|------|
| Did it include diverse points of view? | A | 42 | 2.45 | 0.74 |
| | B | 27 | 2.52 | 1.01 |
| The texts helped free me from cultural boundaries. | A | 43 | 2.91 | 1.00 |
| | B | 27 | 2.41 | 1.15 |
| The assigned reading texts emphasized diversity. | A | 43 | 3.35 | 1.00 |
| | B | 27 | 2.78 | 1.15 |
| Did it help you understand different cultures? | A | 43 | 2.16 | 0.61 |
| | B | 25 | 1.92 | 0.64 |

Note: Group A: within the past ten years; Group B: more than ten years ago (N = 77)

Table 4. Attitudes toward Inclusion of Diversity in Textbooks

| 5-point Scale Questions | No. | M | SD |
|---|-----|------|------|
| Did the reading texts include many different cultures? | 75 | 2.40 | 0.77 |
| The texts helped free me from cultural boundaries. | 75 | 2.69 | 1.07 |
| The reading texts helped me acquire knowledge and skills about English. | 74 | 3.31 | 0.95 |
| The assigned reading texts emphasized diversity. | 75 | 3.08 | 1.09 |
| I am satisfied with the texts used in my English courses. | 74 | 3.18 | 1.09 |
| I think focusing so much on diversity makes learning shallow and superficial. | 76 | 2.32 | 1.05 |
| I think understanding diverse points of view can be achieved through discussing books about the Western tradition. | 75 | 2.91 | 0.95 |
| I think if the reading texts do not reflect diverse points of view, it is difficult to elicit discussion/recognition about diversity. | 74 | 3.38 | 0.93 |
| I think learning the English language itself is more important than including diversity | 75 | 2.64 | 1.09 |

As for the great book debate, the respondents appear to lean toward the traditionalists. The students appeared to agree that understanding diverse points of view could be achieved through discussing books about the Western tradition ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.95$), although they also admitted that if the reading texts did not reflect diverse points of view, it would be difficult to elicit recognition about diversity ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 0.93$). Sharing the

view with multiculturalists, the respondents did not agree that focusing on diversity would make learning shallow or superficial ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.05$), and that learning the English language itself is more important than including diversity ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.09$). Also, they tended to disagree that their reading texts include many different cultures ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 0.77$). However, respondents felt pretty satisfied with the texts used in their English courses ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.09$), since the reading texts did help them acquire knowledge and skills about English ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.95$).

Classroom Instruction

Results of the survey indicated that a total of 88% of the respondents reported the lecture as the major classroom instructional strategy implemented in the English courses, and class discussion (71%) as the next most common strategy. When the two groups were compared, prominent differences were found. In the past 10 years, although the lecture format (90%) has still been the major instructional strategy, classroom discussion (81%) has been more extensively employed than it was 10 years ago (61%). Another increasingly used strategy was cooperative learning, growing from 17% to 39%. From Table 5, as the percentage of each strategy grows in Group A, it implies that different instructional strategies have been increasingly adopted in the past ten years.

Table 5. Comparison of Classroom Instructional Strategies Being Implemented

| | Group A | | Group B | | Overall | |
|-------------------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Lecture | 39 | 90.7 | 30 | 88.2 | 69 | 88.5 |
| Class Discussion | 35 | 81.4 | 21 | 61.8 | 56 | 71.8 |
| Cooperative Learning | 17 | 39.5 | 6 | 17.6 | 26 | 33.3 |
| Problem Solving | 6 | 14.0 | 9 | 26.5 | 12 | 15.4 |
| Case Study | 11 | 25.6 | 6 | 17.6 | 17 | 21.8 |
| Guest Speakers | 11 | 25.6 | 6 | 17.6 | 17 | 21.8 |
| Role Playing/Simulation | 9 | 20.9 | 5 | 14.7 | 14 | 17.9 |
| Practicum | 7 | 16.3 | 5 | 14.7 | 12 | 15.4 |
| Laboratory | 4 | 9.3 | 2 | 5.9 | 6 | 7.7 |
| Other | 1 | 2.3 | 0 | 0.0 | 1 | 2.3 |

Note: Group A: within past ten years; Group B: more than ten years ago (N = 77)

Similarly, in the open-ended question asking what students liked least about the English courses, 5 out of 27 responses indicated that they did not like the lecture format. Some simply wrote "lecture," "lecture format," or "the dryness of the lectures," and some stated that they did not like it when professors would only lecture without interacting with the class and that they preferred discussion or hands-on activities.

Table 6. Opinions of Two Groups Different Significantly

| | Group | No. | M | SD | T-Test Sig. |
|--|-------|-----|------|------|-------------|
| Did the instructors take the time to learn about students' backgrounds and cultural characteristics? | A | 43 | 1.77 | 0.61 | 0.018 |
| | B | 26 | 1.42 | 0.50 | |
| Did the instructors respect and accommodate individual and culture-based learning styles? | A | 42 | 1.98 | 0.75 | 0.046 |
| | B | 25 | 1.60 | 0.71 | |
| Did the instructors evaluate students regarding their multicultural understanding? | A | 42 | 1.88 | 0.63 | 0.000 |
| | B | 25 | 1.32 | 0.48 | |
| Did the course assignments help develop multicultural understanding? | A | 42 | 2.00 | 0.62 | 0.047 |
| | B | 25 | 1.68 | 0.63 | |
| Overall, did the courses have a positive influence on your openness to diversity? | A | 42 | 2.17 | 0.70 | 0.042 |
| | B | 26 | 1.81 | 0.69 | |

Note: Group A: within past ten years; Group B: more than ten years ago (N = 77)

For attitudes and opinions toward class instruction, the two groups did not differ significantly. Generally speaking, respondents gave positive opinions toward class instruction. On a 3-point scale, most people agreed ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.497$) that all students were encouraged to participate in free and open discussions of ideas and beliefs. Also, most of the respondents ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.655$) felt that their voices were respected and included in the discussion. The class instructions were commonly viewed as facilitating the understanding of different genders, cultures, age groups, racial or ethnic groups, and socioeconomic classes.

The major differences between the two groups occurred when the reference was to instructors. Most respondents who took English courses within the past ten years appeared to have more positive impressions toward the instructors than those who did more than ten years ago (as shown in Table 6). Another significant difference was that Group A generally thought the courses had a more positive influence on their openness to diversity than Group B.

Influences of English Courses to Students on Their Openness to Diversity

Several multicultural concepts have been reported as knowledge that was acquired from the English courses. Most of the respondents (36 out of 77, 46%) indicated knowledge of diverse life experiences. 31 respondents (39%) showed that they acquired empathy from the classes. 28 (35%) pointed out that they acquired concepts of individual differences. Also, 27 respondents (34%) reported that they learned knowledge of diversity in general, respect for differences, different culture-based values, beliefs, characteristics, and customs. Finally, 24 (30%) said they acquired an understanding of different learning or communication styles. Nonetheless, there were 14 respondents (17%) who skipped the item, and two of them wrote that they did not acquire any multicultural concepts through the courses.

When running correlational tests on variables, I found three variables that appeared to correlate with the overall positive influence the courses create on students' openness to diversity. As seen in Table 7, it was found that reading texts that emphasize diversity ($r = 0.292$, $p < .01$) and instructors who pay attention to students' backgrounds and cultural characteristics ($r = 0.236$, $p < .05$) appeared to correlate with the positive effects that the courses had on students' openness to diversity. Furthermore, the more the instructor respected and accommodated individual and culture-based learning styles, the more the courses influenced students' openness to diversity ($r = 0.491$, $p < .01$). To compare the absolute values of the three correlational values, as the third variable is closer to one than the other two, it seems that the respondents thought that instructors' attitudes have a stronger impact than reading texts do on students' openness to diversity.

Table 7 Variables Correlation with Positive Influence on Students' Openness to Diversity

| | |
|---|-----------|
| The assigned reading texts emphasized diversity | 0.292(**) |
| Did the instructor take the time to learn about students' backgrounds and cultural characteristics? | 0.236 (*) |
| Did the instructors respect and accommodate individual and culture-based learning styles? | 0.491(**) |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)

Students' Level of Cultural Competency and Sensitivity

Table 8. Distribution of Level of Cultural Competence and Sensitivity

| Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity | No. | % |
|---|-----|------|
| 1 No real differences among people of different cultures. | 2 | 3.1 |
| 2 One culture can be superior to another. | 1 | 1.6 |
| 3 All cultural differences are mere biological deviation. | 3 | 4.7 |
| 4 Differences exist, are important, and should be respected. | 34 | 53.1 |
| 5 Able to improve relationships with people of different culture. | 8 | 12.5 |
| 6 Able to communicate effectively with many cultural groups. | 16 | 25.0 |
| | 64 | 100 |

Attempting to provide a distribution map on the level of cultural competency and sensitivity of current students, the questionnaire also assessed students' level of cultural competency and sensitivity. As described in the key variables, the six stages in the model represent Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. Respondents had to choose only one statement that they most agreed. According to the survey, most students (34 out of 64) appeared to self-report as being in the stage of Acceptance (53%). The second largest group of students identified with the Integration stage—16 respondents (25%). As shown in Table 8, the majority of the distribution is skewed onto the later three stages. These results seem to demonstrate that most students have entered the ethnorelative stages and have been pretty confident in dealing with issues of cultural difference or diversity.

Limitations

There are two major limitations in this study. The first limitation to be considered is the 3-point Likert-scale method. In one section of my questionnaire, a 3-point scale was employed to assess classroom instructions and instructors. The mean scores in Table 6. suggest that there was no clear distinction between the levels of agreement of each item. A 5-point scale might have provided more accurate results than the 3-point scale used in assessing instruction.

The second limitation is the sample. The sample is small, containing only 77 valid responses, and limited to only two universities in the Los Angeles area. This means that one cannot generalize the results to all college English curricula. In addition, in the sample, the majority of students tended to hold neutral attitudes on many issues. This meant that those who held stronger opinions on many of the issues may have created an effect of de-centering the measure of central tendency in the current study whereby the majority tendency may not be a true representation of participants in the study. A larger sample would have the potential to more accurately show the majority tendency in each item.

Suggestion for Future Research

The examination of how multicultural issues are addressed in general education and how such educational curricula might better address such issues in the future is an integral part of promoting a broader multicultural educational picture. As evaluation research in the area remains in a state of infancy, a larger scale investigation would provide better examination. Also, although the researcher found that instructors' attitudes can be critical in influencing students' openness to diversity in the current study, such results do not provide a detailed description of influences or the reasons for their impact on openness. Questions such as how instructors can impact the openness to diversity and what kinds of attitudes create positive or negative impacts need to be further investigated.

The findings of this study reassure that openness to diversity can be fostered through general education and that there is still room to help students develop openness to diversity. Further examination and a detailed description of multicultural issues in general education would help identify factors that can assist most students to develop multicultural awareness and attitudes.

Conclusion

The data gathered in this survey offers some interesting information about the English curriculum in this sample. From the information analyzed, multiculturalism has obviously been emphasized in the English curriculum in the two universities. In addition to knowing more about how the English curriculum addresses multiculturalism, the study also indicates possible factors that support or obstruct multicultural education. The conclusions to the initial research questions are summarized below.

Apparently, to a certain degree, the current English curricula in the two universities provide students with opportunities to experience multicultural education. On reading texts, diversity has long been included and has increasingly been emphasized in the past ten years. Classroom instructors have incorporated multicultural perspectives, and students have generally been encouraged to participate in free and open discussion of ideas and beliefs. Different kinds of instructional strategies have been employed in classrooms in recent years, and English courses within the past ten years have generally created a positive influence on students' openness to diversity. Furthermore, around forty percent of the respondents reported that several multicultural concepts have been acquired through the courses.

However, the study also presents certain weak areas regarding multicultural issues. For reading texts, several cultural groups, such as Native or Indian Americans, the elderly, homosexuals, and groups with disabilities or special needs appear to be underrepresented. On classroom instruction, the lecture format still makes up the majority of class time in many English courses. In reply to what students like least about the English courses, 5 out of the 27 responses indicated the lecture format, and another five referred to reading texts as not sufficiently including positive multicultural perspectives. Rather confusingly, at the same time, many of the respondents appeared to hold neutral attitudes toward the inclusion of diversity in English reading texts. Whether or not this has to do with the majority of the respondents being Caucasian or Anglo students would need further study.

What seems to be the most interesting finding in this study was the identification of the factors that have a positive influence on students' openness to diversity. The researcher has confirmed that diverse reading materials and instructors do create a positive influence on the openness of students toward diversity. As was detected through correlational test, the diversity of the reading texts played a role in creating a positive influence. However, what appeared to be a much stronger factor was instructors' attitudes. In this study, reading texts and class discussion appear to have provided multicultural experiences for students, but students seemed to be relatively less satisfied with instructors' attitudes. Thus, for future improvement on multicultural education, instructors' attitudes need to be viewed as playing an important role.

In conclusion, multiculturalism has been reflected in some ways in general education, but there is still room for further improvement. Obviously, multiculturalism can be seen through the diversity of reading texts and class instruction. From the assessment of students' level of cultural competency and sensitivity, most students have acquired cultural competency in understanding behavior within a cultural context, and showed confidence in dealing with issues of cultural differences or diversity. Also, in their overall assessment of the courses, students have expressed satisfaction toward the English curriculum, and regarded it a positive influence on their openness to diversity. Still, one aspect that may require further attention is teacher attitudes. To better address multiculturalism, the attitudes of instructors may need further improvement.

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