Integrating Multicultural Literacy into Curriculum of Tourism Industry

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Abstract

Globalization is the main stream of 21st century (Bruthiaux, 2002; Kim, 1998; Pieterse, 2003; Hsieh, 2010). People have to move to other countries in need of education, work, and business. As tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, global tourism market becomes prosperous and diversified. According to World Trade Organization, "International tourist arrivals reached 1.035 billion in 2012, up from over 983 million in 2011, and 940 million in 2010"(WTO, 2013). The tourism industry has become one of the prior boosters for global economy. Owing to employees of tourism industry need to communicate with customers from different countries all over the world, they are required to cultivate better language skills and to develop flexible communication skills. In order to train the employees to provide best services to multicultural tourists, multicultural literacy turns to be a crucial subject in developing cultural understanding of employees in tourism industry. Integrating multicultural literacy into curriculum is significant for universities to discipline potential workers (the students major in tourism) of tourism industry in facing multicultural tourists. In this case, this study intends to figure out the strategies of integrating multicultural literacy into curriculum of tourism industry. This study conducted the method of content analysis to explore the strategies of integrating multicultural literacy into curriculum of tourism industry to develop students' multicultural literacy. After reviewing and analyzing relevant documents and related literatures, this study elucidates five elements of multicultural literacy and tries to propose strategies to integrate these elements into curriculum to elevate students' multicultural literacy. The strategies contributing to reinforce students' multicultural literacy encompasses reading multicultural books and stories, watching multicultural movies and TV programs, providing authentic cultural environment and situational episodes for students to experience the vivid situations in facing multicultural tourists, enhancing tips and customs of different cultures and strengthen cultural understanding of the students, redesign teaching materials inclusive multicultural literacy, and creating thematic activities for students to understand the difference of different cultures.

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1. Introduction

Globalization is the main stream of 21st century (Bruthiaux, 2002; Kim, 1998; Pieterse, 2003; Hsieh, 2010). With different purposes, people have to move to other countries in need of education, work, and business. As tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, global tourism market becomes prosperous and diversified. Convenient rapid transportation vehicles diminish the distance between different countries, provide more options while traveling, and increase the opportunities to travel aboard. Foreign tourists bring into opportunities for local shoppers to accumulate more money and stimulate the development of local economy. According to World Trade Organization, "International tourist arrivals reached 1.035 billion in 2012, up from over 983 million in 2011, and 940 million in 2010" (WTO, 2013). Likewise, the latest available data shows that tourism directly contributes, on average, around 4.7% of GDP and 6% of employment and 21% of exports of services in OECD member countries (OECD, 2014). More than this, the report of OECD also indicates that

While the number of international tourists exceeded one billion for the first time in 2012, that number is expected to increase to 1.8 billion by 2030. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) long-term forecast- Tourism Towards 2030- enviusaged an annual average growth in tourism arrivals of 3.3% over the period 2010 to 2030. Actual performance up to and including 2013 suggests that this forecast remains broadly on track (OECD, 2014, p18).

The tourism industry grows rapidly and has become one of the prior boosters for global economy. The growth of tourism continuously develops, with growth in arrivals in Asia/Pacific of 7% compared to 3% in Europe (OECD, 2014). Nowadays, tourism turns to be a major source of income for many countries, and affects the economy of both the source and host countries significantly. In order to train the employees to provide best services to multicultural customers from different countries, multicultural literacy turns to be a crucial subject in developing cultural understanding of employees in tourism industry.

Globalization fosters the prosperity of tourism industry due to different purpose of travelling. Tourism is the travel for recreation, leisure, religious, family business purposes, usually of a limited duration.

Tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, but may also refer to travel to another location within the same country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (WTO, 1995). Tourism has become a popular global leisure activity. Tourism can be domestic or international, and international tourism has both incoming and outgoing implications on a country's balance of payments (WTO, 2013).

Hospitality refers to the relationship between the guest and the host, or the act or practice of being hospitable. This includes the reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers. Providing good service is the main obligation of employees in tourism industry, such as flight attendants, travel agents, tour operators, and hotel staffs. Trying to eliminate misunderstanding derived from cultural difference is crucial for those who work in this area. Developing multicultural literacy can assist the potential employees (students in the department of hospitality or tourism management) to eliminate cultural difference and offer proper and better service. In order to adapt with globalization trend, tourism employees behoove to cultivate their multicultural literacy and strengthen their cultural understanding in facing multicultural tourists. With better understanding of the diversity of different cultures, it can reduce some troubles resulting from misunderstanding of communication.

Students, especially in technological university which aims at training skilled potential employees for the tourism industry, plan to integrate multicultural literacy into their curriculum so that the students with multicultural literacy can communicate well in this worldwide tourism industry. The main focus of the curriculum objectives in many universities is to develop student's multicultural literacy. With an attempt to meet the need of this inevitable trend of globalization, integrating multicultural literacy into curriculum is crucial for universities to discipline potential workers (the students major in tourism) of tourism industry. In this case, this study intends to explore how multicultural literacy integrates into curriculum of tourism industry.

1.   Multicultural Literacy

"Cultural diversity is a central rationale for and tenet of conceptualizations of global citizenship education" (Eidoo, Ingram, Macdonald, Nabavi, Pashby, Stille, 2011).   Multiculturalism defines an inclusive approach to cultural diversity in government policy, school curriculum, people's life style, and popular understandings of a certain country.   (Joshee, 2009, cited in Eidoo, Ingram, Macdonald, Nabavi, Pashby, Stille, 2011).   "Multicultural literacy has become a term that best represents the awareness of social-social diversity that exist in most countries today" (Raihanah , Hashim & Yusof, 2012).   Namely, multicultural literacy is the awareness and appreciation of different beliefs, appearance, and lifestyle.   Taylor and Hoechsmann's (2011) view toward multicultural literacy focus on developing a means of measuring openness to contestatory knowledges, intercultural awareness, and respect as lived relations and processes.

More than this, they explain that "multicultural literacy depends not on the just-in-time recall of significant facts, but on a growing repertoire of knowledge, an appreciation for the global intellectual heritage of different disciplines, a balanced learning regime (family, community, media, and school), and an apparent willingness or respectful desire to learn more" (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2011).   Multicultural literacy requires an understanding of the different cultures in the diversified society and this can be achieved through targeted programs at various levels of education that help increase the sensitivity and effectiveness of social engagement in a heterogeneous context (Raihanah , Hashim & Yusof, 2013; Stevens & Brown, 2011).   To this extent, multicultural literacy can help our world move "beyond binaries" and somehow eliminate racial discrimination and misunderstanding between cultural diversity in some ways.

Arredondo & Toporek (2004) points out that multicultural ability turns to be a lifestyle so that it can provide diversified services to variety of people (Cited in Wong, 2007).   Many research papers indicate that multicultural literacy can be taught through diversified curriculum.   Affluent of studies discuss the application, design, or evaluation scale regarding to multicultural literacy in education (Eidoo, Ingram, Macdonald, Nabavi, Pashby, Stille, 2011; Stewart, 1992; Cited in Wong, 2007).   Students can learn to tell from the difference of living in different cultures.   Most important of all, students are required to learn how to achieve diversified multicultural knowledge, and they need to possess positive attitude and value in facing the variety of different cultures (Gray & Herrick, 1995; Cited in Wong, 2007).

Some scholars claim that multicultural literacy can also serve as a skill which can play a vital role in the reading of minority fiction whose focal point among others, is to partake in the recognition politics of the land (Raihanah, Hashim & Yusof, 2012). Recognition of the land signifies the recognition of self. Self recognition is the crucial part of developing multicultural literacy. Developing multicultural literacy can play a key role in changing the mindsets of both majority and minority communities while promoting the plural geographies of land (Raihanah, Hashim & Yusof, 2012). According to U. S. Department of Health and Human services (2002), there are 14 indicators referring to multicultural service ability including the ability of cultural care, the ability of language proficiency, and the ability of organization support which are three major concerns toward multicultural literacy (Cited in Wong, 2007).

The aforementioned description of definition of multicultural literacy indicated five learning emphases or perspectives of multicultural education. They are cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and empathy in facing cultural difference. Since tourism is commonly associated with trans-national travel, but may also refer to travel to another location within the same country. Employees in tourism industry have the opportunities to interact with people from different cultures.

In the other hand, hospitality regards to the relationship between the guest and the host, or the act or practice of being hospitable. For the main purpose of employees in tourism industry is to offer best service. Eliminating misunderstanding is the essential requirement of staffs in tourism industry. Referring to the elements required by tourism industry, this study concludes cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy contributing to the five elements or perspectives in developing multicultural literacy in the curriculum of Tourism industry.

2. Method

This study conducted the method of content analysis to explore the strategies of integrating multicultural literacy into curriculum of tourism industry to develop students' multicultural literacy. Relevant studies, lesson plans, textbooks used by teachers in this department, class teaching materials were collected to be coded and analyzed.

They were viewed as an objective indicators of phenomena to which they referred, and was therefore concerned with analyzing the content of a document (Henn, Weinstein, Foard, 2008). After reviewing and analyzing the relevant studies and documents, the researcher tries to generalize the constituent elements of multicultural literacy and hereafter propose some strategies in promoting multicultural literacy.

3. Finding

After reviewing and analyzing relevant documents and related literatures, this study defines five elements of multicultural literacy and tries to propose strategies to integrate these elements into curriculum to elevate students' multicultural literacy. The five elements of multicultural literacy found in this study include cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy. However, current curriculum designs and lesson plans in the Department of Tourism Industry emphasize to cultivate students' professional skills and abilities. Similarly, most teaching materials as well as textbooks utilized by the teachers focus on professional knowledge such as how to be a tour guide, a leader, a hotel receptionist, a hotel manager, or a flight attendant. Some classes deal with building up students' good etiquette so that they can get a good start in entering tourism industries. It is hardly to see the elements of cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy which contribute to multicultural literacy involving in these curriculums. Seeing that, this study tries to find out strategies to elevate students' multicultural literacy after reviewing and analyzing the existed literatures, curriculum designs and teaching data.

In a nutshell, the strategies contributing to reinforce students' multicultural literacy include reading multicultural books and stories, watching multicultural movies and TV programs, providing authentic cultural environment and situational episodes for students to experience the vivid situations in facing multicultural tourists, enhancing tips and customs of different cultures and strengthen cultural understanding of the students, redesign teaching materials inclusive multicultural literacy, and creating thematic activities for students to understand the difference of different cultures. Furtherer discussion will be as follows.

1. Reading multicultural books and stories

As an employee working in tourism industry areas, cultural care and cultural understanding are the first concern for them because they have to communicate with people from all over the world. Different culture in different counties exist some restrictions and taboos. All employees in tourism industry should keep in mind to avoid misunderstanding or offend the taboos of the customers' society. Reading is the best way to learn knowledge. Reading is also a way to diminish the distance between different cultures and to connect people's mind. Studies supports the educational benefits of using multicultural literature to assist students in making connections between content areas and building background knowledge of other cultures (Dragun, nd). By narrowing the focus to one cultural group, students can gain a better understanding of that certain culture. Aside from this, multicultural books and stories sometimes depict legends and fables of the culture group's society which can express and reveal the details of a certain society and their lifestyles. Through reading multicultural books and stories, cultural care and cultural understanding could be deeply rooted in the student's mind and thus it can contribute to develop their multicultural literacy to this extent.

2. Watching multicultural movies and TV programs

In order to embed cultural care and cultural understanding to students' mind, watching multicultural movies and TV programs may help the students learn how people live and think in other cultures. Drama is an excellent venue for creating active engagement with subject matter and addresses Gardner's multiple intelligence. By using plays or movies, students can engage with the literature and develop a better understanding of the concepts. Movies or TV programs present people's lifestyle, customs, dietary, even religion or belief of their society. Students can get a vivid impression of the behaviors and thought in that society and learn what their culture concern about. In order to replicate the lifestyle of the certain society, movie makers, directors, actors and actresses behoove to develop a profound understanding of the society to create better movie effect.

It is most effective for the students in tourism industry to understand how people wear, think, eat, and live in their society, more than that, students can learn the life philosophy in that society through the movies or TV programs.

Seeing movies or watching TV programs help the students fully and deeply understand the culture in the society appeared in the movie or TV program. It is possible for the students to build cultural empathy through their understanding of the culture after seeing a multicultural movie. For instance, people can recognize what the Indians think and act through the movie named "Three Idiots." The audiences may perceive Koreans' lifestyle or dietary by watching "Dae Jang Geum." Consequently, seeing movies or watching TV programs contribute to construct students' cultural care, cultural understand and cultural empathy and hence help to develop their multicultural literacy in some ways.

3. Providing authentic cultural environment and situational episodes for students

The best way to understand one culture is to live in an authentic environment in that certain society so that people can experience the lifestyle and customs with the people there. Through communicating with the local residents, people learn how to buy their daily equipments, to share their favorites, to join the wedding, to attend the funeral or to worship their god. Being living with the local residents, people would understand other people's thought, love, hates, and fear. More than that, it is a way to help the students to build up cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy. Living in a certain circumstance can help students learn the lifestyles of different people. On account of a better understanding of the culture, people are possible to respect people from other cultures. More than this, they may start to tolerate the difference between different cultures, and then they can construct a cultural compatibility between them. In this vein, providing authentic cultural environment and situational episodes for students can help them experience the vivid situations in facing multicultural tourists. It can help them build up multicultural literacy and learn how to deal with peoples from different countries when the students come to serve the tourists after their graduation.

4. Teaching tips and customs of different cultures

Teaching tips and customs of different cultures is one way to promote cultural understanding which can also cultivate students' multicultural literacy. Explaining tips and customs of different cultures is able to strengthen cultural understanding of the students. Every religion or culture has taboos and restrictions in the certain society.

In order to avoid offending some customers from different countries, learning tips and customs of different cultures can help the students deal with taboos of the customer's country.

For instance, many taboo foods in Islam exist because of the religion's strict dietary laws. Practicing Muslims who adhere to these laws are not permitted to consume pork and its by-products, alcohol or food prepared with alcohol, meat not slaughtered according to Islamic law and foods containing blood or blood by-products. In terms of taboos of Thais, people do not show disrespect towards the Thai Royal Family. Thai people have a deep, traditional reverence for the Royal Family, failing or deliberately failing to show some respect towards the king or the Monarchy in any situation where it is expected, is not only an offence, but can also get you in prison. Thus, as employees of tourism industry, people should try not to offend those taboos when providing your service to Muslims or Thais. Showing respect towards different cultures can reduce misunderstanding and foster better communication with the customers from other countries. To this extent, teaching tips and customs of different cultures to assist the students to understand taboos of different countries and cultures contributes to cultivate cultural empathy and cultural respect towards customs or religions of the countries. Students hereafter can develop their multicultural literacy in this way.

5.   Redesign teaching materials inclusive multicultural literacy

Since most scholars regard cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy as the most important aspects of multicultural literacy, issues of teaching materials for students in tourism industry should concentrate on these aspects. Trying to redesign teaching materials inclusive multicultural literacy is a direct way to assist the students to cultivate their multicultural literacy. Reading is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. Reading is a knowledge enhancement tool to develop cultural understanding and scientific knowledge, literature, works of art, and common knowledge. Extensive reading is crucial in developing background and expectations necessary for genuine comprehension. Reading is also a way for us to break down boundaries and create an imaginative world when reading a novel, fiction or drama (Anderson, 2006; Cited in Hsieh, 2010). Extensive reading enriches the content of information and knowledge.

Through reading, same information and knowledge can spread the world and people can obtain various messages and information from all over the world. Designing reading materials is a possible way to root in the concept of multicultural literacy.   Through reading teaching material including cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy , students would possible to construct their multicultural literacy.   Consequently, redesigning teaching materials inclusive elements of multicultural literacy is a procurable strategy to cultivate multicultural literacy of the students in tourism industry.

6. Creating thematic activities for students to understand the difference of different cultures

Activity, which focuses on the achievement of a long-term goal, seems potentially powerful as it has previously been used to develop an understanding of complex roles and relationships in education (Hsieh, 2010).   In coherence with Fernandez's (2006) definition, the activities which combine cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions of development to uncover the factors that contribute to an individual's ability to engage in critical self-reflection and to act in culturally sensitive and informed ways.

On account of incorporating multicultural literacy into course design, activities or assignments designed to require the students to search for all kinds of data such as population, philosophy, dietary, history, religion, social behaviors, and cultures in an allocated country.   Students can hereafter understand this allocated country well through a deep search for the country's data in order to fulfill their assignments. Meanwhile, they can develop a better understanding of the allocated country.   It is effective to assist the students to learn the lifestyle, philosophy, dietary, taboos of the allocated country.   The presentation encompasses all aspects comprising population, philosophy, history, dietary, religion, society, and culture in a certain country which contribute to elevating students' understanding of a foreign country from different backgrounds, and thus contributes to elevating students' multicultural literacy through this assignment.

Conclusions

Since the global tourism market is prosperous and diversified, the tourism industry has become one of the prior boosters for global economy.

The convenience of rapid transportation vehicles shorten the distance between different countries and increase the opportunity to travel aboard. The numbers of tourists has been raised through convenient transportation and the requirement of job responsibility. Foreign tourists bring into opportunity for local shoppers to accumulate more money and stimulate the development of local economic. Trying to understand the diversity of different cultures turns to be a good way to improve communication problems. In order to adapt with globalization trend, tourism employees ought to cultivate their multicultural literacy and strengthen their cultural understanding in facing multicultural tourists. To integrate multicultural literacy into curriculum is crucial for universities to discipline potential workers (the students major in tourism) of tourism industry.

The outcomes of this study elucidate five elements of multicultural literacy which encompass cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy. In order to elevate students' multicultural literacy, this study proposes six strategies to integrate cultural care, cultural understanding, cultural compatibility, cultural respect, and cultural empathy into the curriculum of Department of Tourism Industry. Consequently, the strategies contributing to reinforce students' multicultural literacy include reading multicultural books and stories, watching multicultural movies and TV programs, providing authentic cultural environment and situational episodes for students to experience the vivid situations in facing multicultural tourists, enhancing tips and customs of different cultures and strengthen cultural understanding of the students, redesign teaching materials inclusive multicultural literacy, and creating thematic activities for students to understand the difference of different cultures. Through implementing these strategies, students may develop their multicultural literacy in facing multicultural tourists and eliminate the misunderstanding derived from culture difference in some ways.

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