

CHAPTER

7 Individual Differences

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Define cultural diversity;
2. Describe the role of culture in shaping similarities and differences among individuals;
3. Recognise race and ethnicity as an element of micro cultural diversity;
4. Explain the educational implications of differences in students' learning style;
5. Distinguish types of cognitive style;
6. *Relate* gender differences and socio-economic status to individual differences issues; and
7. Describe teacher's strategies in embracing diversity.

INTRODUCTION



As teachers, we must be aware of about students' individual differences such as differences in culture, ethnicity, intelligent, languages, learning styles, etc. It is because it may enhance students' understanding or limit their opportunity to learn from the school environment. These factors should be taken into consideration when we plan teaching and learning process in the classroom.

We begin by discussing the definition of cultural diversity and other factors that contribute to students' diversity. Next, we examine the differences of learning styles and cognitive styles among students. This is followed by the explanation of gender differences that influence the students' performance. In the final section of this chapter, we will discuss how teachers can cope with the individual differences effectively in the teaching and learning process.

7.1 CULTURAL DIVERSITY

7.1.1 Definition of Cultural Diversity

According to Garcia, **Culture** refers to:

"...Characteristics of an individual's society, or of some subgroups within this society. It includes values, beliefs, notions about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and other socially constructed ideas that members of the culture are taught are "true"."

(1994 in Tan 3003)

Henson & Eller (1999, p121) posit that the term **diversity** mean:

"...Those human characteristics that have both the potential to either enrich or limit a student's capacity to learn from the school environment."

Henson & Eller (1999, p121)

Whereas **Borich & Tombari** (1997.p29) posit that:

" Individual differences are the variations we observe among members of any group in a particular characteristic, such as temperament, energy level, friendship patterns and parent-child attachment."

Borich & Tombari (1997, p29)

In Malaysia we have different races such as the Malays, Chinese, Indians and others as illustrated in Figure 7.1. Each of the races has their own culture. Culture is a broad and encompassing concept. Even though we equate culture with race or ethnic identity, the truth is that within racial or ethnic groups there can be cultural variations.



Figure 7.1: Various races in Malaysia.

“Group membership can include racial identification, but regardless of race, it can vary further in term of assumptions, values, language, religion, behaviour, and symbols.”

(O’conor, 1988 in Tan 2003).

In short, culture governs how we think and feel, how we behave and how we live, and it is born largely of socialization. We often recognize national culture such as Malays, Chinese, Indians and others. We share Malaysian citizenship. So, differences in culture pertaining to Malaysia also mean differences in ethnicity and race.

7.1.2 The Role of Culture in Shaping Similarities and Differences Among Individuals

Culture has impact on our student’s socialization. Some elements of culture including religion, foods, holidays and celebrations, dress, history and traditions, and art and music. Cultural diversity also can manifest in our views of the life cycle, decorum and discipline, health and hygiene (Example: Explanations of illness and death), values, work and play, and time and space. All could be elements of a shared national culture or of additional family cultures. Each element shapes our students through socialization within their families, later through teacher, peers and environment.



We need to keep in mind that our students' membership in cultural groups significantly influences their lives both inside and outside of school. Therefore, we have to consider cultural diversities because honouring cultural diversities enhances classroom teaching and learning. As teachers, we have to understand these cultural diversities and try to accommodate to these differences.

Example:

The Indians who are Hindu's do not eat cattle meat or some Indians are vegetarian, so the canteen has to accommodate to the needs of these students.

Example:

When we discuss God, we must be aware that the Muslims' God is Allah, and the Chinese and Indians have many Gods and Goddess with different names.



We have to honour other people's beliefs and values because they have their rationale and that contributes to a harmonious society and peaceful nation. These have to start in school where the students are aware of their differences and teacher instil within them the spirit de core (spirit to live together peacefully), tolerance towards others, empathy and pro social behaviour.



To answer that question, Tan (2003), recognizes three ways in addressing cultural differences as illustrated in Figure 7.2:

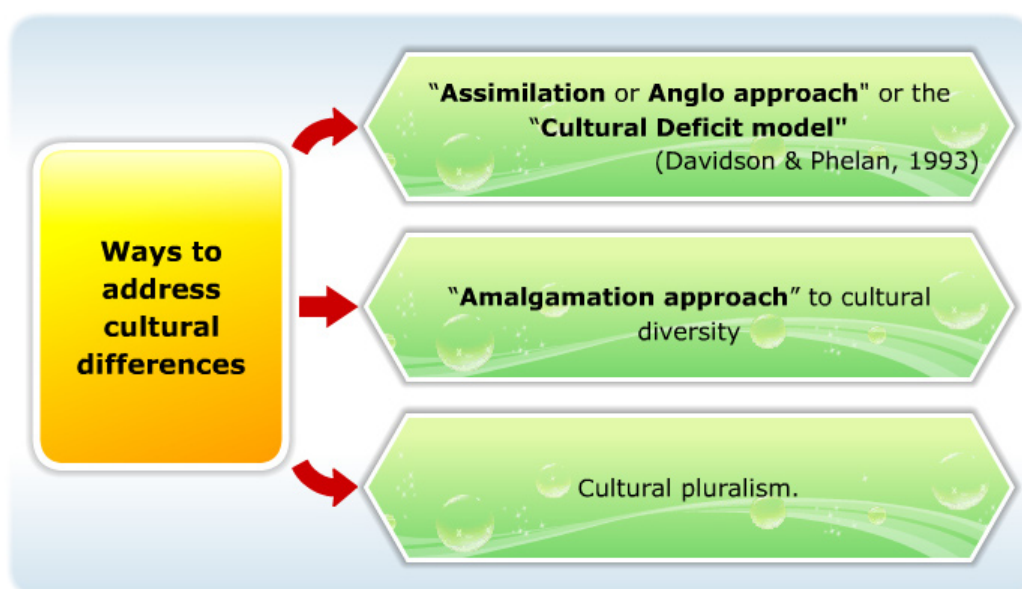


Figure 7.2: Three ways in addressing cultural differences

Now let us examine all these approaches.

(a) Assimilation Theory

According to the assimilation theory, all students must conform to the rules of the Anglo-American group culture, regardless of their family culture or the rules of other groups to which they belong. “Anglo” culture is superior to all others, differences are threatening and rejected.

(b) Amalgamation Theory

According to Davidson & Phelan:

"The amalgamation theory is the "melting pot" approach in which elements of individual cultures are blended to become a "new", synthesized American culture."

(Davidson & Phelan, 1993)

Cultural differences are ignored. Through the years, many of us have been comforted by the melting pot view of our society's institutions. But, it too has encouraged the loss of individual identity.

(c) Cultural Pluralism

According to Davidson & Phelan:

" In "cultural pluralism", we are encouraged to take multicultural view, in which we attempt to address the elements of both shared national culture and individual and/or family culture together. "

(Davidson & Phelan, 1993)

Diversity is not feared or criticized or ignored. It is valued, even celebrated. An effective teacher holds this view of diversity and incorporates beliefs about **multicultural education**. Multicultural education is education in which a range of cultural perspectives is presented to students.



1. What is cultural diversity? Give few examples of cultural diversity in your answer.
2. Think of ways in which teacher can accommodate to the cultural diversity among students.

7.2 RACES AND ETHNICITY DIVERSITY

Race and ethnicity are factors contribute to students' diversity. Through race and ethnicity, we will be able to trace the students' root and cultural make up. Through this awareness then we can be fair in our treatment to all students in the classroom.

As Ladson-Billings (1994) notes:

"The notion of equity as sameness only makes sense when all students are exactly the same".

Ladson-Billings (1994)

In reality we are different in race, ethnicity, culture and ways of life. Therefore we should take advantage of these differences by learning other languages, about food and dances. Students would respect teachers who know about their students' languages other than their own because it enhances their knowledge about the students and make their communication with the students easier.

In Malaysia, we have different race that are Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasian and others. Within the races, we have sub-groups or ethnicity. Examples of the sub-groups or ethnicity are listed in table 7.1.




Table 7.1: Races and its sub-groups or ethnicity in Malaysia.

Race	Sub-groups or ethnicity
Malays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Javanese Malays • Bugis Malays • Kelantanese Malays • Johorean Malays • Malaccan Malays etc.
Chinese	Chinese come from many parts of China which contribute to ethnic differences such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hokkien • Cantonese • Hailam and etc.

Indians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tamil Nadu • Hindustani • Benggali • Pakistani • Bangla (Bangladesh) • Bangla (Sri Lanka) and etc.
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These races and ethnicities also contribute to language differences.

SELF-CHECK



1. What are race and ethnicity diversity? Give few examples of race and ethnicity in Malaysia.
2. Can you understand other race or ethnic language? List out the advantages for teachers if they know their student languages.

7.3 LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

Linguistic diversity is one of the elements that contributes to student’s diversity. Your class will have language diversity, and you will have to realize that you need to be sensitive to this linguistic diversity and adjust accordingly.

In Malaysia, we are lucky because the medium of instruction is in Malay or *Bahasa Melayu* for all subjects except for English. Furthermore, English is regarded as the second language and all students must pass the subject at the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* level or the form 5 national exam. It moulds young generations of Malaysia to at least mastering three languages, namely *Bahasa Melayu*, the English language, and their mother tongue. With this capacity, it enhances the Malaysians to understand each other and to live harmoniously.

Tan (2003) suggested two ways to teachers in addressing language diversity as shown in Figure 7.3, which are Facilitating English, and Immersion and Transitional Methods.



Figure 7.3: Two suggested ways in addressing language diversity by Tan(2003)

Let us examine those approaches.

(a) Facilitating English

Enhancing the mastering of the English language among students can help overcome the problem of communication with others in the school and outside the school. Teaching English to all students is regarded as a tool for cultural understanding and communication among students. We can emphasize comprehension in our classroom. If you can understand the student and the student can understand you, then achievement can continue. Increased student achievement should be our overall instructional goal, regardless of linguistic diversity issues.

(b) “Immersion” and Transitional Method

Traditionally, we believed “immersion” approach was the best way to move children to standard language usage. In this approach, from the beginning till the end, the instructor uses only the language to be learned. It becomes, then, a “sink or swim” proposition.

- Some children swim, they thrive under these conditions; they learn the language with few problems.
- Other students, however, sink; they do not learn the language and suffer inside and outside of class. Similarly, linguistically diverse students can sink or swim in language learning.

Conversely, teacher may use transitional or balance bilingual strategies for adding standard language as a shared communicative tool are being examined. These approaches start with the language the student brings into the classroom and build on family and cultural language to promote standard language usage. Read on an example case below:

Several years ago, a Massachusetts teacher, Gary Simpkins, attempted to move his African-American students toward standard American English usage by developing an approach called “Bridge” (Shells, 1976). He used transitional strategies whereby the students learn English at first in their language-Black English in reading, writing and oral communication. Midway through, he taught partly Black English and partly standard American English. By the end of the instructional period, he taught all in standard American English but still aloud student to use Black-English for less formal communication.

The implementation of approach above yielded “promising” results.



1. What is linguistic diversity?
2. Explain how teacher can help the students overcome language differences.

7.4 LEARNING STYLE OR COGNITIVE STYLE DIVERSITY

7.4.1 Definition of Learning Style and Cognitive Style

Kagan is one of the earliest psychologists who introduced the reflective and impulsive cognitive style. Later, Witkin and Coodenough(1977) founded the concept of field-independent and dependent cognitive style(Borich & Tombari, 1997).

Another earliest psychologist, Massick proposed the concept of cognitive style. According to Massick:

"Cognitive style is stable attitudes preferences or habitual strategies determining a person's typical modes of perceiving, remembering, thinking and problem solving."

Messick (1976, p5)

Later, there are various definitions for learning style or cognitive style by psychologists, depending on their views and perspectives as shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Various definitions of Learning Style and Cognitive Style by psychologists.

Psychologist	Definition of Learning Style and Cognitive Style
Tan et.al. (2003)	<p>"Learning styles are biological and socialized differences or preferences for how students learn. Where as cognitive style is students' most comfortable, consistent, and expedient ways of perceiving and making sense of information."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Tan et.al. (2003)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In this definition, Tan stressed the influence of biological and socialization in moulding students' learning style.
Henson and Eller (1999, p505)	<p>"Learning style is how elements from basic stimuli in the current and past environment affect an individual's ability to absorb and retain information."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Henson and Eller (1999, p505)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Henson and Eller stress on basic stimuli that affect individual's learning style.

<p>Woolfolk (2004, p603),</p>	<p>“Learning preferences is preferred ways of studying or learning, such as using pictures instead of text, working with other people versus alone, learning in structured or unstructured situation, and so on. Whereas a cognitive style is different ways of perceiving and organizing information.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Woolfolk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woolfolk proposed that learning styles as characteristic approaches to learning and studying. • She also equates learning styles and learning preferences.
<p>Sternberg (1997)</p>	<p>“Learning and thinking styles are not abilities, but rather preferred ways of using one’s abilities.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(Santrock, 2008, p132).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to Sternberg, intelligence refers to ability. • Individual vary so much in thinking and learning style, literally hundreds of learning and thinking styles have been proposed by educators and psychologist.

So from these definitions, we find overlapping views on learning styles and cognitive styles. We can conclude that:



Learning style and cognitive style cover many domains such as physical, psychological, audio, visual, kinaesthetic, etc.

7.4.2 Types of Learning Styles

According to Butler, there are few types of learning styles (Butler, 1989 in Tan, 2003) such as explained below.

(a) Psychological/Affective styles

- One of the instruments to assess individual's learning style for this type of learning style is Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).
- This instrument will reveal how a student feel about him/herself and how self-esteem developed is linked to learning.

(b) Physiological Styles

- There are few instruments in this category such as:
 - Honey and Munford Learning Styles Inventory,
 - Kolb Learning style inventory,
 - Modality Preferences Inventory, etc.
- These instruments show individual of her/his consistent ways to facilitate learning through the use of the senses or environmental stimuli.
- These instruments also show hemispheric specialisation (i.e. right or left brain), auditory, visual, kinaesthetic, olfactory preferences or preferences for environmental conditions.

(c) Cognitive Styles

- Students may utilize cognitive styles such as field-dependent or independent, impulsive or reflective, whole or serial, etc.
- These instruments measure consistent ways of responding and using stimuli in the environment, how things are perceived and make sense, the most comfortable, expedient and pleasurable way to process information.

7.4.3 Measurement of Learning Styles and Cognitive Styles

Since students' preferred styles of learning influence their achievements and teachers' learning styles influence their instructional choices, it is suggested that teacher and students take the test we describe below.

(a) Modality Preference Inventory

Through this inventory, teacher and students can classify their learning styles such as auditory, visual or kinaesthetic. To assess an individual's learning style, he/she has to respond to the questions shown in Figure 7.4.

Learning Styles Modality Preference Inventory

Read each statement and select the appropriate number response as it applies to you.

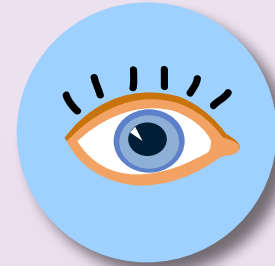
Often (3)

Sometimes (2)

Seldom/Never (1)

Visual Modality

- I remember information better if I write it down.
- Looking at the person helps keep me focused.
- I need a quiet space to get my work done.
- When I take a test, I can see the textbook page in my head.
- I need to write down directions, not just take them verbally.
- Music or background noise distracts my attention from the task at hand.
- I don't always get the meaning of a joke.
- I doodle and draw pictures on the margins of my notebook pages.
- I react very strongly to colors.
- Total



Auditory Modality

- My papers and notebooks always seem messy.
- When I read, I need to use my index finger to track my place on the line.
- I do not follow written directions well.
- If I hear something, I will remember it.
- Writing has always been difficult for me.
- I often misread words from the text (eg, them for then)
- I would rather listen and learn than read and learn.
- I'm not very good at interpreting an individual's body language.
- Pages with small print or poor quality copies are difficult for me to read.
- My eyes tire quickly, even though my vision check-up is always fine.
- Total



Kinesthetic Modality

- I start a project before reading the directions.
- I hate to sit at a desk for long periods of time.
- I prefer to see something done and then to do it myself.
- I use the trial and error approach to problem-solving.
- I like to read my textbook while riding an exercise bike.
- I take frequent study breaks.
- I have difficulty giving step-by-step instructions.
- I enjoy sports and do well at several different types of sports.
- I use my hands when describing things.
- I have to rewrite or type my class notes to reinforce the material.
- Total



Total the score for each section. A score of 21 points or more in a modality indicates a strength in that area. The highest of the 3 scores indicates the most efficient method of information intake. The second highest score indicates the modality which boosts the primary strength.

Figure 7.4: Example of questions should be responded by students to measure their learning styles.

(b) Field-Dependent and Independent

Teacher or student may utilize Field-Dependent or Independent Cognitive Style in perception or information processing. Field-Independent learners perceive items as more or less separate from the surrounding field. They are interested in concept for their own sake. They have self-defined goals and function successfully in self-structured situations and impersonal learning environments. For field-dependent learners, their mode of learning is strongly influenced by the prevailing context or setting. They are more aware of their surroundings as they learn. These learners value practical information. They can memorize human faces and social facts such as best friend’s birth date more easily than field-independent learners.

Garger and Guild(1987) have summarized the characteristics of field-independent and field-dependent learners. These are illustrated in Table 7.3. From this table it is clear that, at least in the extremes, the two styles are very different.

Table 7.3 Characteristics of Field-Dependent and Independent learners.

Learning Styles- Dependence and Independence Descriptions.	
FIELD-DEPENDENT	FIELD-INDEPENDENT
Perceives globally.	Perceives analytically.
Experiences in a global fashion, adheres to structures as given.	Experiences in an articulate fashion, imposes structures of restrictions.
Makes broad general distinctions among concepts, sees relationships.	Makes specific concept distinctions, little overlap.
Social orientation.	Impersonal orientation.
Learns material with social content best.	Learns social material only as an intentional task.
Attends best to material relevant to own experience.	Interested in new concepts for their own sake.
Requires externally defined goals and reinforcements.	Has self-defined goals and reinforcements.
Needs organization provided.	Can self-structure situations.

More affected by criticism.	Less affected by criticism.
Uses spectator approach for concept attainment.	Uses hypothesis-testing approach to attain concepts.

Teacher and students can assess their cognitive style using Embedded Figures Test (EFT) or Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT). In this test, they have to recognize geometry figure, which are embedded in the picture or in the background. Those who can recognize the figure faster than the others are learners with the field-independent style and those who take longer than a few seconds or cannot find the figure at all, can be classified as field-dependent learners. Figure 7.5 illustrates an example of Embedded Figures Test (EFT).

Recognize the geometry figure, which are embedded in the designs picture.

	Figures	Designs	
		1	2
A.			
B.			
C.			
D.			
E.			

Answer:

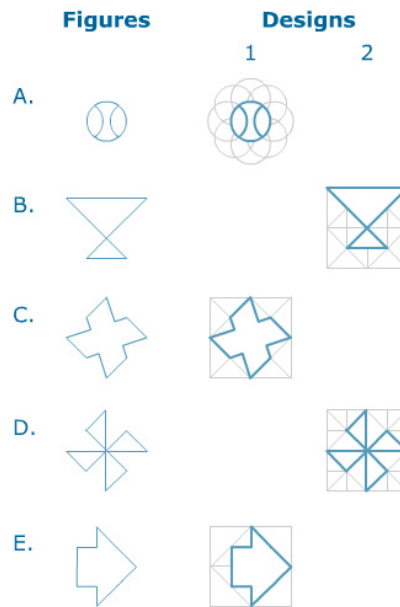


Figure 7.5: An example of Embedded Figure Test (EFT)

If you are a field-independent teacher, you may be comfortable giving lectures and emphasizing cognition. You may prefer offering corrective feedback, using negative feedback as warranted, and you may use grades and personal goal charts motivationally.

If you are a field-dependent teacher, you may prefer interaction and conversation with your students. You may rely less on corrective feedback and little on negative evaluations. You also like to establish a warm and personal environment and prefer to motivate through external reward such as verbal praise.

Many educational psychologist views that if the teacher cognitive style match with the student cognitive style, students will benefit most and vice versa. Student learn best when there is congruence between their preferred teaching style. Unfortunately, most teachers ignore student's cognitive style because it takes longer time for them to prepare lesson plan and devices or activities to fulfil their needs.



SELF-CHECK



1. What is cognitive style and learning style?
2. Give a few examples of learning or cognitive styles.

7.5 GENDER DIFFERENCES

Linguistic diversity is one of the elements that contributes to student's diversity. Your class will have language diversity, and you will have to realize that you need to be sensitive to this linguistic diversity and adjust accordingly.

In Malaysia, we are lucky because the medium of instruction is in Malay or *Bahasa Melayu* for all subjects except for English. Furthermore, English is regarded as the second language and all students must pass the subject at the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* level or the form 5 national exam. It moulds young generations of Malaysia to at least mastering three languages, namely *Bahasa Melayu*, the English language, and their mother tongue. With this capacity, it enhances the Malaysians to understand each other and to live harmoniously.

Tan (2003) suggested two ways to teachers in addressing language diversity as shown in Figure 7.3, which are Facilitating English, and Immersion and Transitional Methods.

In Asian society, being a girl or a boy has significant impact. The people usually adore boys than girls. It's because most Asian country are rice bowl or dependent on agriculture where the man are more utilizable in manual jobs than ladies. But they forget, in terms of resilience and patience, the women are the winners!

Now, let us examine gender-related student differences in several ways and explore their implications for teaching.



(a) Developmental rates



According to Egan and Kauchak:

"Differences exist in boys' and girls' developmental rates. Girls develop faster with differences in verbal and motor skills appearing at an early age. Boys and girls are different in other areas as well, and these differences appear as early as the preschool



years. Girls tend to play with dolls and other girls and to gravitate toward activities such as make-believe and dress-up. Boys play with blocks, cars, dinosaurs, and other boys."

(Egan and Kauchak, 1997).

(b) Family treatment



We can observe society and family, school and work place treat girls and boys differently. In the family, they are treated differently from the day they were born.

- Baby girls are given pink blankets, are called cute and handled delicately.
- Baby boys are dressed in blue, are regarded as handsome, and are seen as tougher, better coordinated, and hardier.

Differences in treatment continue in later years. In high school, girls become cheerleaders for the boys, who become basketball or football players.

(c) Expectation for school success

These differences also include expectation for school success. Parents probably communicate different expectations for their sons and daughters. Researchers have found that:

“Parents’ gender-stereotyped attitudes toward girls’ ability in math, adversely influence their daughters’ achievement in math and their attitudes toward it.”

(Nagy-Jacklin, 1989 in Egan & Kauchak, 1997)



(d) Academic area



Research on gender effects founded differences in boys and girls in different academic areas.

According to Maccoby and Jacklin,

“Boys did better in math and on visual and spatial tasks, example tasks in geometry. Girls did better in on verbal skills such as in languages.”

(Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974)

(e) Treatment in school

Boys and girls also received different treatment in school. Both male and female teacher treat boys and girls differently. They interact with the boys more often and ask them more questions, and those questions are more conceptual and abstract.

Gender stereotyping also influences career decisions. According to Kochenberger-Stroeher:

“Differences in students’ view of gender-appropriate careers appear as early as kindergarten.”

(Kochenberger-Stroeher, 1994)

Significantly, when children choose non-traditional roles for males or females, their choices are based on personal experience.



1. Why teacher treat boys and girls differently?
2. Give few examples of different treatment to boys and girls.
3. Think of ways in which teacher can accommodate to gender differences.

7.6**DIFFERENCES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS**

According to Ballantine;

“One of the most powerful factors influencing school performance is socio-economic status (SES), the combination of parents’ income, occupations, and level of education. SES consistently predicts intelligence and achievement test scores, grades, truancy and dropout and suspension rates.”

(Ballantine, 1989 in Egan & Kauchak, 1997)



How does SES influence learning?

One way is through basic needs.



Many families lack in proper nourishment, and adequate medical care. Poverty also influences the quality of home-life, unstable work conditions increased economic problems that lead to parental frustration, anger and depression. These pressures can lead to family scattered, marital conflict and nurturing homes.

The impact of SES is also transmitted through parental attitudes and values where their attitudes and values are different. Example is in interaction pattern.

- Low SES parents are more likely to “tell,” rather than explain.
- High SES parents, in contrast, talk more with their children, explain ideas and the cause of events, and encourage independent thinking.

Walbergs observed that:

“High SES parents are more likely to ask “wh” questions (who, when, where, why) promoting language development, provide strong foundation for reading and vocabulary development.”

(Walberg, 1991)



The educational aspirations parents have for their children are probably the most powerful variables affecting achievement. Parents who expect their children to graduate from high school and to attend college have children who do well than parents who have low aspirations. These expectations are communicated through dialogue between parents and children. Low SES parents in contrast, allow their children to “drift” into classes and often got lost in the shuffle and failed in their lives.

The differences between low and high SES families also reflect the emphasis placed on student’s autonomy and responsibility. High-SES parents emphasize self-direction, self-control, and individual responsibility while low-SES parents, in contrast, place greater emphasis on conformity and obedience.



1. What is meant by parents’ SES differences?
2. Give few examples impact of SES on student’s aspirations, attitudes and values.
3. Think of ways in which teacher can accommodate to SES differences.

7.7

WAYS IN EMBRACING DIVERSITIES

To be a good teacher, you should know the ways to embracing diversities among your students. Below are the discussions on how to handle your student’s diversities in the gender differences, cultural, race and ethnicity, learning style, socio–economy and linguistic differences.

(a) Gender differences

It is not easy to eliminate gender differences in the class, but to make teacher cautious and not gender bias, Figure 7.6 shows some recommendations warrant that need to be considered.

Avoid stereotypical language.

(Example: “Okay, guys lets get work”)

Provide equal opportunities for males and females.

(Example: club membership).

Reduce or oust gender-typed activities.

(Example: Girls have to cook, boys wash the car).

Figure 7.6: Some recommendations warrant that need to be consider to eliminate gender differences in the class.

(b) Cultural diversity

In eliminating cultural diversity, teacher may utilize assimilation, amalgamation or cultural pluralism approach. In Malaysia we are encouraged to utilize cultural pluralism approach.

(c) Race and ethnicity



In eliminating race and ethnicity, we move toward moulding one Malaysian nation with the same identity and characteristics such as same language and same spirit. One of the ways to unite Malaysians is through education system where all races study in the same school, same college and same university. All Malaysian know and appreciate the same food like *nasi lemak*, *roti canai*, *the tarik*, *tosay*, *mee teow*, *mee suah* and etc.

(d) Learning styles diversity

In coping with students with learning styles diversity, teacher may use multi-approach in instruction such as cooperative learning which is suitable for field-dependent students and doing experiment and also suitable for field-independent students. During instruction, teacher may use diagram and charts which is suitable for visual learner, using records and video tapes which is suitable for auditory learners and utilize hands-on experience such as experimenting for tactile learners.



(e) Socio-economy

Teacher have to help students from poor family to excel by motivating them to learn, give extra-class to help them catch up with the other students, maybe organizing charity work to earn money that can be donated to the poor students. Later, teacher can also go to welfare Ministry and ask for donation/help on behalf of the poor students. Teacher can also help poor students, which are excellent in their study to get sponsorship or bursary from Education Ministry, MARA or PTPN.

**(f) Linguistic differences**

In eliminating linguistic differences, Malaysian government have ruled out that all subjects are to be taught in Bahasa Melayu, which is the national language, except for English. This is compulsory to all schools. Other languages such as Chinese, Indian, Urdu and Arabic can still be taught in the vernacular schools besides other subjects.

SUMMARY

- The sources of student's differences are culture, race and ethnicity, linguistic, learning styles and cognitive style, socio-economic status, gender, etc.
- In cultural diversity, teacher has to understand the students' culture and try not to elicit problems with their belief, world view, way of life and attitudes. Encourage students to understand and honour other people's culture and live harmoniously as one nation.
- The students in a class also differ in race and ethnicity. Whatever it is, as teachers, we have to accept it as it is. In instruction, teacher has to stress the sameness among students and encourage them to understand other people, tolerate with other races or ethnics and live harmoniously as one nation
- In eliminating linguistic differences, the Malaysian government can use one nation and one national language approach to unite all Malaysian.
- In eliminating gender differences, teacher is encouraged to avoid stereotyping or gender-bias and provide opportunity for boys and girls to participate equally in the teaching and learning processes, participate in extra co-curriculum activities and choose their careers.
- In eliminating parents and students differences in SES, teacher has to help poor and at risk students who excel in their studies. All students must be given equal

opportunity to learn in the school ambiance. Teacher must give extra class to poor students, so that they can catch-up with other students in the class.

- As teachers we have to be aware of the government aspirations in nation building and unite all Malaysians to be powerful workforce in the world. We play an important role toward achieving this aspiration. We have to educate all students with world-class knowledge and ICT skills. We have to eliminate all these differences among students and work toward uniting them as one powerful nation.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Terms	Definitions
Audio learning styles	Possess by students who learn better by listening to teacher's explanations, records, or audio tapes.
Audio learning styles	Elements of individual culture are blended to become a new, synthesized culture.
Assimilation Theory	According to the assimilation theory, all students must conform to the rules of the Anglo-American group culture, regardless of their family culture or the rules of other groups to which they belong. "Anglo" culture is superior to all others; differences are threatening and rejected.
Antibias education model	Teaching model stressing the inequalities of society and problem-solving strategies; also called "anti-bias curriculum" and "bicultural education models".
Cultural diversity	The term diversity to mean those human characteristics that have both the potential to either enrich or limit a student's capacity to learn from the school environment.
Culture	Culture refers to characteristics of an individual's society, or of some subgroups within this society. It includes values, beliefs, notions about acceptable and unacceptable

	behavior, and other socially constructed ideas that members of the culture are taught are “true”.
Cultural pluralism	Education attempts to address both shared national culture and/or individual/ family culture.
Cognitive styles	Students’ most comfortable, consistent, and expedient ways of perceiving and making sense of information in the environment.
Ethnic	A group of person who are descendents of a common group ancestors most likely within the same race such as orang Jawa, Bugis, Minang (Malays).
Field-dependent learners	Cognitive style variation emphasizing the perception and analysis of distinct pieces of information as integrated wholes.
Field-independent learners	Cognitive style variation emphasizing the perception and analysis of distinct pieces of information.
Gender bias	Favoring one gender over the other.
Gender differences	Differences between boys and girls in cognitive, language, behavior, emotion, attitude,value and learning styles.
Immersion approach	Teaching model for addressing language diversity by placing students in classrooms where all instruction and verbal socialization are in the language to be learned.
Language diversity	Differences in language usage in communication.
Learning styles	Biological and socialized differences or preferences for how students learn.

Multicultural education model	A model of education in which a range of cultural perspectives are presented to students.
Race	A group of person who are descendents of a common group ancestors, same culture and same language such as Malays, Indian and Chinese.
Single group study approach	Teaching model emphasizing self exploration of cultural elements and sources.
Setereotypes	Oversimplified characteristics used to describe students generally.
Tactile/Haptic learning style	Posses by students who learn better by touching the objects or prefer hands-on experiences.
Transitional approach	Teaching model for addressing language diversity by allowing students to learn and socialize initially in the students' cultural or familial language and moving students gradually to standard language usage.
Visual learning style	Posess by students who learn better through watching/looking at teacher, see demonstration by teacher, studying a table or chart or mind map.

ENDNOTES

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REVIEW AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Of the following, which are cultural elements?
 - A. Religion, food, celebrations.
 - B. Race, gender and ethnicity.
 - C. Learning and cognitive styles.
 - D. Socio-economic status and education system.
2. Of the following, which is assimilation approach in eliminating cultural differences among students.
 - A. All students must conform to the rules of Prominent culture.
 - B. Elements of individual culture are blended to become a “new” synthesized culture.
 - C. Attempt to address the elements of both shared national culture and individual culture shared together.
 - D. Attempt to address the elements of both shared national culture and race culture shared together.
3. Field-independent learner is a student with _____.
 - A. self-defined goals.
 - B. influence by prevailing context.
 - C. awareness of their surrounding.
 - D. capacity to memorize practical information.
4. While solving problems, I talk to myself or to a friend or I hum a tune. This characteristic belongs to student with which learning style?
 - A. Visual
 - B. Auditory

- C. Tactile
- D. Practical

5. Which definition listed below proposed by Sternberg (1997) pertaining to learning style?
- A. Preferred ways of using one's abilities.
 - B. Preferred ways of studying or learning.
 - C. Using mind-mapping and graphic organizer.
 - D. How elements from basic stimuli in the environment affect an individual's ability to retain information.