Teaching *With* your Students: Effective Instruction in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

Karla Garjaka Ed.D
Karla.garjaka@nl.edu
National Louis University
ESL/Bilingual Professor and Educational Consultant
“Whatever knowledge we acquire, it is always acquired through language and culture, two interlocked systems considered essential for human interaction and survival. Culture and language are so intricately intertwined that even trained scholars find it impossible to decide where language ends and culture begins, or which one of the two impacts the other the most.”

(Trueba, 1993, pp. 26–27)
The Learning Process

Teaching

Learning

Teachable Moment
Teachable moments *only* occur when teachers *invite* and *welcome* students to be an *active* part of the learning journey.
...BUT...

how can teachers make their students feel invited and welcomed in their classrooms?
By creating an environment in where human interaction is valued!

But...How easy is that?
Potential Problems:

- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Social Factors
- Discourse Factors

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJGyAPqqVm8&feature=related
Non-Verbal Interaction

What do you think these gestures mean?
• Beckon with index finger.
• Point at something in the room using index finger.
• Make a "V" sign.
• Smile.
• Sit with sole of feet or shoe showing.
• Form a circle with fingers to indicate “O.K.”
• Pat a student on the head.
• Pass an item to someone with one hand.
• Wave hand with palm facing outward to greet someone.
• Nod head up and down to say “Yes.”
Key Ingredients for an Effective Student-Teacher Interaction
Framework for an Effective teaching in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms

Framework for a Successful Teaching Interaction

Copyright © Karla Garjaka 2009
What can you do in order to make your CLD students feel comfortable in your classroom?
Comfortable Tips!

Make your classroom a *multicultural place*. For example, hang flags encompassing all nationalities represented, and post “Welcome and good morning” signs in all languages represented.

Find a *buddy* for every CLD student, preferably one from the same country.

Talk to *students frequently*. Do not wait for clear signs of problems to show up. Demonstrate genuine care, and help them see you as someone they can count on. All newcomer students will go through a period of culture shock, and you are the person in the best position to help them through it.
What Do You Have to Do in Order to Understand Other Cultures?

http://www.metacafe.com/watch/69491/respect_the_different_cultures/
Understanding your Students’ Cultural Background

Fine arts
- Literature
- Drama
- Classical music
- Popular music
- Folk dancing
- Games
- Cooking
- Dress

Eye behaviour
- Contextual conversation patterns
- Social interaction rate
- Facial expressions

Notions of modesty
- Conception of beauty
- Ideals of childrearing
- Relationships to animals

Patterns of superior/subordinate relations
- Definition of sin
- Courtship practices
- Conception of justice
- Incentives to work
- Notions of leadership
- Tempo of work
- Group decision-making

Conception of cleanliness
- Attitudes towards dependents
- Theory of disease
- Approaches to problem-solving
- Conception of status mobility
- Status designations based on age, sex, class, occupation, kinship etc.

Nature of friendship
- Ordering of time
- Conception of “self”
- Preference for competition or cooperation
- Body language
- Notions about logic and validity
- Patterns of handling emotions

Copyright © Karla Garjaka 2009
Understanding Tips

Recognize and be conscious of your **OWN** cultural positioning and attitudes. The only way to understand your students is by first understanding yourself!

Questions you might ask yourself include:

- What is my own cultural and ethnic heritage?
- What are my inherited beliefs?
- What are some characteristics of my cultural behavior that are different from other people I have met who do not share the same culture?
- How do I behave in a classroom? Do I hold any type of prejudicial attitudes or stereotypes that may hinder students learning?
- How do I respond to differences in students’ appearances, values, and behaviors?
- Do I view diversity factors, such as ethnicity, language, gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, as part of the norm? Do I consider them as important as other factors such as time, age, grade level, social skills, and academic ability when planning instruction?

Discuss the differences and similarities in students’ cultural backgrounds (physical traits, home traditions, typical day, language, etc.) in the classroom.
Mr. Thomas, an eager young teacher from Minnesota, is Caucasian, English speaking, and shows a natural zest for life. He feels great respect and fascination for Native American cultures, and he leaps at the opportunity to begin his teaching career in a reservation school in Oklahoma. He prepares his classroom to look friendly, warm, and intellectually interesting. On the first day of class, he is ready and well prepared for the first lesson. He introduces the concepts he is going to teach with a KWL (what you know, what you want to know, and later, what you learned) chart. He asks Little Flower a comprehension question, and she does not know the answer. In an effort to get a student to answer, he directs the question to another student. The student lowers his eyes and remains silent. Again and again, Mr. Thomas gets the same response from the rest of the class. Mr. Thomas does not understand the mutinous attitude of the class; he is truly baffled by their behavior. (p. 17)

Final Tips!

Research the ways that CLD students in your class make use of **verbal** and **nonverbal communication**.

Familiarize your students with **“rules” of communication** in the United States.

Monitor your **behavior, attitudes**, and **style** of communication, including your tone of voice, how you approach students, and how you call for their attention.
Always be sensitive to the potentially problematic outcomes of intercultural communication in a culturally diverse classroom.

Students from different cultural, social, linguistic, and economic backgrounds may view, interpret, and react differently from teachers’ expectations.
Answer Key for Body Language Activities

Each of the following responses give a general guide to cultural differences in the meaning of gestures.

1. Beckon with index finger. This means “Come here” in the U.S. To motion with the index finger to call someone is insulting, or even obscene, in many cultures. Expect a reaction when you beckon to a student from the Middle or Far East; Portugal, Spain, Latin America, Japan, Indonesia and Hong Kong. It is more acceptable to beckon with the palm down, with fingers or whole hand waving.

2. Point at something in the room using index finger. It is impolite to point with the index finger in the Middle and Far East. Use an open hand or your thumb (in Indonesia).

3. Make a "V" sign. This means "Victory" in most of Europe when you make this sign with your palm facing away from you. If you face your palm in, the same gesture means "Shove it."

4. Smile. This gesture is universally understood. However, it various cultures there are different reasons for smiling. The Japanese may smile when they are confused or angry. In other parts of Asia, people may smile when they are embarrassed. People in other cultures may not smile at everyone to indicate a friendly greeting as we do in the United States. A smile may be reserved for friends. It is important not to judge students or their parents because they do not smile, or smile at what we would consider "inappropriate" times.

5. Sit with soles shoes showing. In many cultures this sends a rude message. In Thailand, Japan and France as well as countries of the Middle and Near East showing the soles of the feet demonstrates disrespect. You are exposing the lowest and dirtiest part of your body so this is insulting.

6. Form a circle with fingers to indicate “O.K.” Although this means “O.K.” in the U.S. and in many countries around the world, there are some notable exceptions:
   - In Brazil and Germany, this gesture is obscene.
   - In Japan, this means “money.”
   - In France, it has the additional meaning of “zero” or “worthless.”

7. Pat a student on the head. This is very upsetting to students from Asia. The head is the repository of the soul in the Buddhist religion. Children from cultures which are influenced by Buddhism will feel uncomfortable if their head is touched.

8. Pass an item to someone with one hand. - In Japan this is very rude. Even a very small item such as a pencil must be passed with two hands. In many Middle and Far Eastern countries it is rude to pass something with your left hand which is considered “unclean.”

9. Wave hand with the palm facing outward to greet someone. In Europe, waving the hand back and forth can mean “No.” To wave “good-bye,” raise the palm outward and wag the fingers in unison, This is also a serious insult in Nigeria if the hand is too close to another person’s face.

10. Nod head up and down to say “Yes.” In Bulgaria and Greece, this gesture means “No.”