


Teaching English as a Second Language

Unit Five: Culture and the Language Teacher

The image shows two young girls in traditional Indian attire. The girl on the left is wearing a maroon sari with a patterned blouse and has her hands raised in a prayer gesture. The girl on the right is wearing a red sari with a patterned blouse and has her hands pressed together in a prayer gesture. Both girls are wearing multiple colorful bangles on their wrists. The background is dark and out of focus.

“Culture refers to the common values & beliefs of a people and the behaviors that reflect them.”

Jerry Gebhart

- 
- Telling time
 - Belief that all people are equal
 - How we avoid conflict and maintain harmony
 - Religious beliefs

Examples Include

Clip One

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36o4fthR4ss>

- Where is she living?
- Where is she from?
- What kind of person does she say it takes to live/travel abroad?

Clip Two

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jI5A5bbTKJ8&feature=fvwrel>

- What are some of the cultural differences she has noticed?
- How has she dealt with these differences?

Cultural Adjustments



Moving to the USA

Student adjustment difficulties





INITIAL ATTITUDES

INEVITABLE REACTIONS TO CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

COPING STRATEGIES

RESULTS

Openness
Acceptance
Trust

Suspicion
Fear
Prejudice

Cultural Differences

Choices

Frustration

Confusion

Tension

Embarrassment

Observe
Listen
Inquire

Criticize
Rationalize
Withdraw

Rapport and Understanding

Alienation and Isolation

REACTIVE RESPONSES

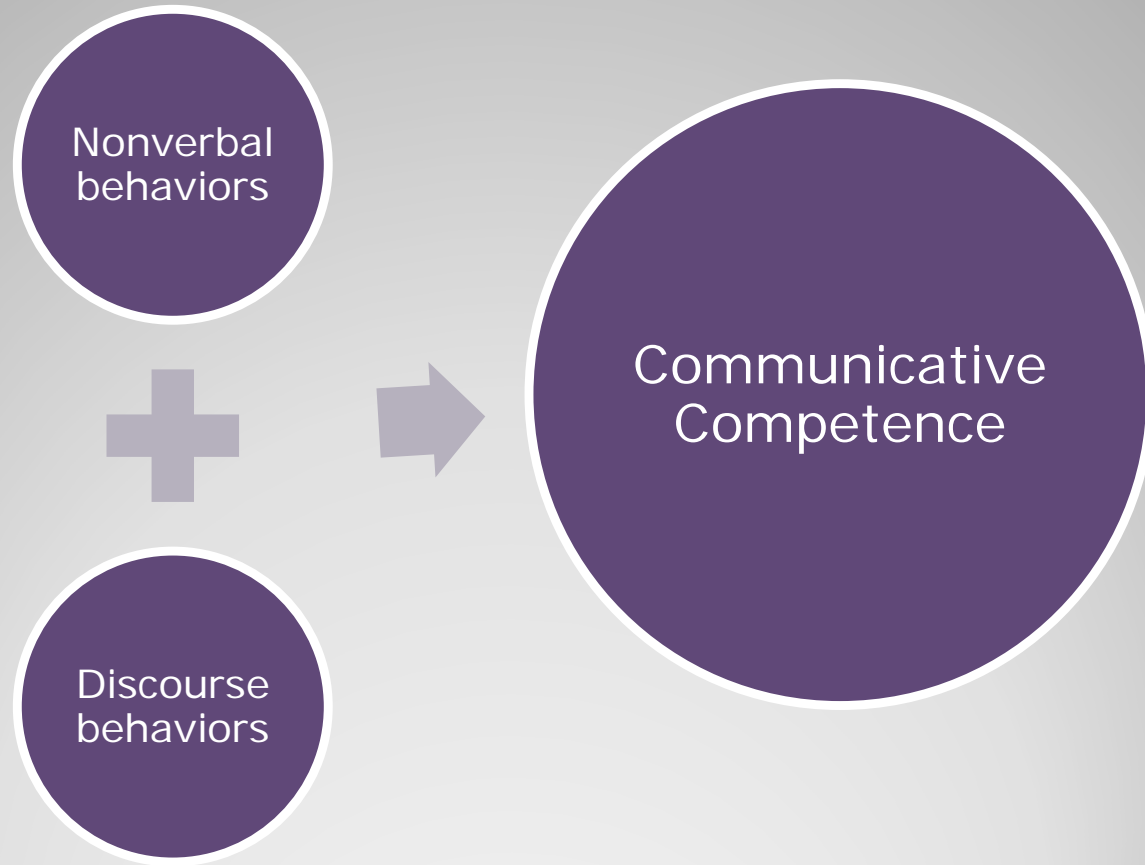
- Fuller sense of security
- Possibility of greater success in the workplace
- Possibility of establishing meaningful relationships with people from the culture
- The possibility of gaining fluency in the language
- A deeper understanding of one's own culture
- A deeper understanding of oneself

Benefits of Adjusting to Another Culture

Cultural Concepts ESL Teachers Should Teach

1. Cross-cultural communication includes adapting behaviors
2. Cross-cultural behavior involves problem solving
3. To understand a culture, get to know individuals
4. To understand another culture, study your own

“Cross-cultural communication includes adapting & understanding behaviors”



Cultural Concepts

For Teachers to Teach

[http://www.youtube.com/
watch?v=wBnAUyzNgeU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBnAUyzNgeU)

Did anything surprise you
in this clip?

What kind of kinesthetic
behaviors did you
notice?

Nonverbal Kinesthetic Behaviors

- Facial expressions
- Gaze & eye movements
- Gestures
- Touch
- Posture
- Movement



Shaking Hands Across Borders

The reasons for shaking hands may be similar across borders, the expression is often different.

Germans: firm grip, pump the arm and maintain strong eye contact.

Japanese: weak grip, no arm pump, and no eye contact



Greetings around the world





In America

- Intimate distance
- Personal distance
- Social distance
- Public distance

Other Cultures

- Arab: comfortable spacing is equivalent to our intimate distance
- Latin Americans, Greeks, & Turks: stand and sit very close

Use of Space & Distance

Low contact cultures

- North Americans
- Northern Europeans
- Asians
- Africans

High contact cultures

- Latin Americans
- Greeks
- Turks

Don't invade my
space!!

Space and Distance



English language learning/teaching involves:


- Cognitive functioning
- Phonetic development
- Cultural influences of both the native and target cultures

Cultural Influence on English Language Learning

“The need for cultural literacy in English Language Teaching arises mainly from the fact that most language learners, not exposed to cultural elements of the society in question, seem to encounter significant hardship in communicating meaning to native speakers.”

Erdogan Bada



- 
- Expectations for learning are affected by culture
 - Cultural differences must be addressed in the classroom
 - Language production can be affected by culture

Significance of Culture on Language Instruction

Native language influences

- Grammar
- Syntax
- Language rules
- Phonetics


Gendered Languages

- Word order differences


Learning or Teaching Styles

- Differing cultural expectations
- Differing classroom behavior expectations


Cultures Differences Influencing the L2 Classroom

- 
- Cultural education
 - Diversified instruction responding to needs of student
 - Classroom instruction must include lessons on body language, gestures, eye contact as well as academic and conversational language

Solution

- 
- Appropriate ways to interact in social settings
 - How to greet
 - Make promises
 - Approve
 - Disapprove
 - Complain
 - Show regret
 - Invite
 - Refuse an invitation
 - Offer
 - Giving thanks

Socio-cultural Behaviors Across Cultures

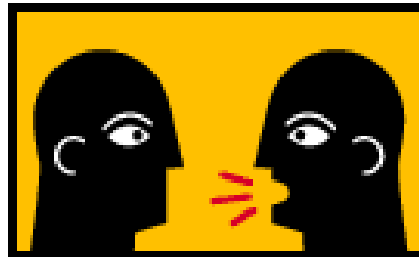
- 
- **Greeting:** "Hi, Eric. How are things going?"
 - **Request:** "Could you pass me the mashed potatoes, please?"
 - **Complaint:** "I've already been waiting three weeks for the computer, and I was told it would be delivered within a week."
 - **Invitation:** "We're having some people over Saturday evening and wanted to know if you'd like to join us."
 - **Compliment:** "Hey, I really like your tie!"
 - **Refusal:** "Oh, I'd love to see that movie with you but this Friday just isn't going to work."

Examples: Speech Acts

For example, the following remark as uttered by a native English speaker could easily be misinterpreted by a native Chinese hearer:

Sarah: "I couldn't agree with you more. "

Cheng: "Hmmm...." (Thinking: "She couldn't agree with me? I thought she liked my idea!")





“Your house is very big!! It must be expensive!”

Accepting:

Complement: “This food is delicious!”

American response: “Thank you! I’m happy you like it!”

Japanese response: “That’s really not so.”

Giving & Accepting Compliments



Helpful Hints

- Develop case scenario's which outline a problem
- Develop scenarios based upon your knowledge of the two cultures

**Problem Solving the Cross-Cultural
Communication Breakdown**

A Cross-Cultural Problem: American University Dorm Life

Siriporn, a 22-year-old from suburban Bangkok, had secretly dreamed of studying in the United States ever since she was a little girl. As an undergraduate at Thammasat University, she majored in English. Although Siriporn rarely spoke with her conservative merchant parents about going to the United States, they knew about her dream, and they had saved money through the years to send her to America. Siriporn applied to several universities in the United States, and together, she and her parents selected a state university in Pennsylvania.

Siriporn arrived at her American university full of enthusiasm. She wanted to be an excellent student. Studying was the first thing on her mind. She attended all her classes and did her required readings before each lecture. However, Siriporn soon became more and more frustrated. She could not fully follow the lectures, and it took her a long time to comprehend the readings. She would study at the library until it closed and then go to her dormitory room to study some more.

But she had a problem. Her American roommate had many friends, and they all liked to meet in her room to talk and eat. They would simply walk into her room, sit down on her bed, and start to talk, eat potato chips, and play music. Sometimes they would stay up very late, and after they left, she had to clean potato chip crumbs, and even dirt from their shoes, off her bed.

Siriporn thought they were inconsiderate, and she attempted many times to get them to leave so she could study. Twice she walked out of the room in a hurry and without speaking. Another time she politely mentioned to her roommate that she likes to study in the room, but her roommate did not pay any attention to her comment. Another time, while walking with a friend from Japan, she said within earshot of her roommate, "I wish my roommate would not have parties every night." But, nothing Siriporn said or did seemed to make a difference. Her roommate's friends kept coming into her room. She became more and more frustrated, sometimes feeling helpless and angry.

What is the problem? What conflict between Thai and American behaviors and values created this problem? Why do you think Siriporn's ways to solve the problem did not work? How could Siriporn solve this problem?

Read this scenario
and think about
how you would
answer the
questions which
follow the scenario.



The individuals

- As a whole society
- Individually

Help Students Understand Their Own Culture

- Provide opportunities for students to consider how people interact in normal every day situations
- Requires that teacher have a minimal knowledge of the culture as well

To Understand a Culture...

Problems ESL Teachers Have

Related to Culture and Language Teaching & Learning



To ease the adjustment problem, tell students

- Time...time...time. It takes time to adjust.
- Identify, accept, and treat the symptoms of culture shock
- Talk with others who have successfully adjusted
- Learn as much as possible about the host culture
- Get involved with people in the host culture
- Study the language of the host culture

"I Can't Seem to Adjust" Problem

- Don't give up
- Take advantage of the opportunities to use the language with the local people
- Enroll in classes
- Use the language in every day life
- Develop relationships with the local people
- Develop a plan of study & stick to it!

“Learning English will help!”

Choose one of the following.

Research the socio-cultural behaviors in a country where one (or more) of your students may be (or are) from. Write a two page paper on the cultural differences between that country and the USA.

Homework

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