

The Cultural Divide

- ❖ Student make-up may be different
 - Religious diversity
 - In college just to party?
 - Not full time students? Have outside jobs?
 - Americans seem less well prepared, especially new students
 - American students may not all be motivated... meaning teachers are sometimes expected to provide stimulation in the material
 - Some students will be intolerant of accents
 - Racist? Or simply too lazy to do the “work” of interpreting an accent different from their own?
 - Some Americans use “TA accent” as an excuse for poor performance in class even if there is no problem
- ❖ Body language
 - Student body language might be different from yours
 - In some cultures, raising left hand is a problem due to it being used only for the toilet)
 - American students are not used to “formal” teachers who never smile; they perceive it as unfriendly
- ❖ Classroom atmosphere may be less formal than you expect
 - Americans seem to lack respect toward teachers? (note: disagreement with the teacher is NOT an attack on authority)
 - Americans sometimes use the instructor’s first name
 - American students dress informally
- ❖ Student expectations are different in America
 - Americans expect make up exams (and extra credit)
 - Americans expect grading curves / grade inflation
 - Foreign teachers are used to the “all knowing” teacher in some cultures (many Americans reject or are bored by unilateral transmission)
 - Foreign teachers are used to students asking questions if they don’t understand (many Americans will instead give up)

Cultural Bridges

- ❖ Try to identify and understand the culture divides above – such understanding is itself the bridge
- ❖ Tell the class about yourself; students will care more
- ❖ Talk about your culture and cultural differences; students will be interested (“celebrate difference”)
- ❖ Use midterm evaluations: find out from your students what you can be doing to improve
- ❖ Read “American Ways” by Gary Althen in the ATLE library. Also check out “The American Ways” by Maryanne Datesman.

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How Often?

Please answer each of the following questions about **YOUR NATIVE LANGUAGE** on a scale from 1-10.

a. How often do you engage in conversations in your native language with strangers?

Very seldom	Sometimes	Very Often							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

b. How often do you watch TV/movies in your native language?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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c. How often do you think in your native language when you are alone?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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d. How often do you think up sentences in your native language while talking in an *English* conversation?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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e. How often do you take (private) notes in your native language?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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f. How often do you read newspapers/Internet in your native language?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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g. How often do you talk to your friends and family using your native language?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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h. How often do you speak your native language at work?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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i. How often do you speak your native language at home?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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j. How often do you dream in your native language?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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- Add up the numbers you circled: _____

- Divide this result by 10: _____

Language Tips

- Not your fault? Students just need to attune their ears to your accent?

- **SLOW DOWN**
 - stay relaxed
 - be well prepared for the lesson; be organized
 - practice difficult words ahead of time
 - enunciate clearly
 - move your mouth differently; consider “warm ups”
 - pause so they can process (translate?) before answering

- **WRITE IT DOWN**
 - make good use of the board or overhead projector
 - especially write terminology and your own name
 - write in block letters, not cursive

- **BE AWARE OF YOUR VOICE**
 - don't talk to the board
 - your voice = more than words! Tone, animation, energy, loudness
 - word emphasis: place no stress on multisyllabic words like “city hall”
 - if you hit a roadblock in lecture, don't insist on the perfect word; rephrase

- **ENSURE STUDENT COMPREHENSION**
 - provide multiple explanations and examples
 - repeat their questions in your own words to make sure you've understood
 - ask them to “rephrase”, not “repeat” questions you don't understand (or ask a DIFFERENT student to rephrase it)
 - for key concepts, lay emphasis by: repetition, paraphrasing, pausing
 - avoid assigning homework verbally
 - pause often, and encourage questions
 - importance of daily classroom assessment

Teaching International Students

1. **Use the board.** If they don't know a word by the way it sounds (and this is more common than you think), it will help them to SEE it. If you use PPT instead of the board, be careful to avoid "death by PowerPoint".
2. **Face the audience.** If they can't see your mouth, it's harder for them to make sense of the words (sounds weird, but this pretty much proven fact).
3. **Tell the student to "rephrase" rather than "repeat".** A student told to repeat will just say it louder; but rephrasing will force them to think of a different way to ask their question.
4. **Lay emphasis with repetition and pauses.** Students will know a key concept when you pause or duplicate your sentence.
5. **Explain it twice.** Providing a second explanation (or a second example) will increase the odds they will understand
6. **Leverage those international differences.** Instead of hiding or ignoring the differences between countries, make use of them. Students are here because they are by definition interested in other cultures, so have them share/swap stories relevant to your (micro)topic as a way to "lead into" the next topic. It creates interest in the topic before you even discuss it. You might even wish to create an assignment on "introducing" their home culture to the rest of the class, even if this has nothing to do with the class content. Spaced out over several weeks and each presentation being short, this need not disrupt class too much.
7. **Celebrate the languages.** Take the topic of the day (say, "harassment") and ask students to write on the board this same word in their own languages. This linguistic similarities and differences go surprisingly far in harvesting interest in ALL the students in today's topic.
8. **Do not allow isolation.** Enforce interaction among and between all people in the class; students who normally might be shy by nature should be 'forced' to take part. This will boost their interest level in the course, and in participating. Make sure they learn each other's names.
9. **BUT: go slow on calling shy students.** People from some cultures (especially perhaps China) are unused to speaking up in class. Many will not pose questions because they've been taught that is a sign of rudeness to the teacher (it implies the teacher didn't explain it right), so do not "force" participation early in the term. However, work your way up to it later. Make the participation as non-threatening as possible (ie, groupwork rather than speaking in plenary).
10. **Role Play in pairs and groups.** Non-native speakers are reluctant to speak up in plenary but most are more willing to become involved at a "table" level
11. **Give advance notice for who is the secretary.** If groupwork is to be followed by a plenary debrief (as it always should, in fact), then elect a spokesperson early in the process so they can prepare. Non-native speakers elected at the last second do a poor job and often resent it.
12. **Use a variety of methods for posing questions.** Not every question should start as a plenary topic. Make some for individual reflection, others for partner work, others for group work. Plenary discussions work best when done LAST.

How do you know?

INDIVIDUALS

1. **One-Minute Papers** – Students write for one minute on a specific question. It may be helpful to ask for the “most confusing” point instead.
2. **Daily Slips** – Similar to one minute papers, but turned in after every class, asking them to pose questions they didn’t want to ask out loud
3. **Drawing for Understanding** – Students illustrate a concept or idea. Comparing drawings around the room can clear up misconceptions.
4. **Impromptu Speeches** – Students generate keywords, drop them into a hat, and self-choose presenters to speak for 30 seconds on each topic.
5. **Pass the Chalk** – Provide chalk or a soft toy; whoever has it must answer your next question, and they pass it on to the student of their choice.
6. **Using Pictures** – Show a picture and ask students to write about it using terms from lecture, or to name the processes and concepts shown.
7. **Fishbowl** – A student unpacks her ideas and thoughts on a topic in front of others, who take notes and then write a response. Avoid asking questions.

PAIRS/GROUPS

8. **Think-Pair-Share** – Students share and compare possible answers to a question with a partner before addressing the larger class. Variation: re-mixing groups with planted “experts” on each topic forces them to teach the rest of the group.
9. **Forced Debate** – Students debate in pairs, but must defend the opposite side of their personal opinion.
10. **Concept Mapping** – Students write keywords onto sticky notes and then organize them into a flowchart.
11. **Role-Playing** – Assign roles for a concept, students research their parts at home, and they act it out in class. Observers critique and ask questions.

CLASS

12. **Choral Response** – Ask a one-word answer to the class at large; volume of answer will suggest degree of comprehension.
13. **Total Physical Response (TPR)** – Students either stand or sit to indicate their binary answers, such as True/False.

Learning styles include auditory, visual, and kinesthetic.
Thus, interactive “assessment” is just effective teaching/learning in disguise!