Lecture Strategies for an Intercultural Classroom

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- Denial → Adjustment
- Transcultural approach
- Undoing deficit thinking: diversity of values, knowledge, and experience
- Improved academic outcomes

**Intercultural Teaching Competence (ITC) Model** (Dimitrov 2016)

Reflective Tool for Instructors

1. **Foundational Competencies**

   - Develop an awareness of their own cultural and disciplinary identities and positionality in the classroom
   - Anticipate, value and accept differences among learners and ways of learning in order to create cultural safety and trust
   - Model and encourage perspective-taking in the classroom
   - Model and encourage non-judgmental approaches to exploring cultural, social, or other types of difference
   - Model tolerance for ambiguity and help learners deal with the uncertainty involved in exploring difference

2. **Practical Tips**

   - Intrapersonal awareness
   - Interpersonal awareness
   - Make knowledge systems visible
   - What are the new rules of the game?
   - What are the potential sites of difference?
   - Explain rationale for course elements
   - Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)

   - Provide useful information and real-time feedback about student learning and effective teaching methods before high stakes assessment
   - For international students, can help them understand learning expectations, types of assessments, learning objectives, etc.
   - Types of CATs: Course-related knowledge and skills, student self-awareness, feedback on instruction methods
2. Facilitation Competencies

- Provide feedback across cultures in a variety of ways
- Tailor messages to audiences with different levels of linguistic ability
- Recognise the barriers students may face in participating in class
- Identify risk factors for learners that might surface during classroom activities
- Build and navigate relationships with students who have different perceptions of power distance
- Articulate and mediate differences in the roles of teachers and learners across cultures
- Mentor students during their transition to new cultures and new disciplines

Practical tips

- Goal of lowering the cognitive load of students
- Be aware of culturally specific language
- Use of language for understanding: plain English, analogies, concrete examples, low-context approaches, paraphrasing, repeating difficult concepts
- Verbal language and structure
- Consistency of visual language
- Use of multiple means of engagement
- Create opportunities for language practice
- Communicate any major changes in the course both verbally and in writing
- Record your lectures if possible
- Provide lecture outline or slides before class if possible

3. Curriculum Design Competencies

- Include concrete learning outcomes related to intercultural or global learning at the course and curricular levels
- Incorporate content and learning resources that represent diverse perspectives, paradigms, or disciplinary approaches
- Create learning activities that allow students to explore difference and practice perspective-taking
- Design assessments that recognise and validate cultural differences in writing and communication styles
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on and gain a better understanding of their own multiple cultural, personal, and disciplinary identities

Practical Tips

- Include concrete learning outcomes around the development of cross-cultural skills and awareness
- Use students’ cultural capital
- Make explicit links to assessment
- Draw on examples from a range of contexts
- Include subject matter relating to global, inter-cultural and local perspectives
- Consider international and cross-cultural research findings and their implications
- Explore how knowledge is constructed and theorised differently across different cultures in your discipline
- Acknowledge and debate perspectives on the topic from a range of sources
- Assignments: open topics which enable students to draw upon their own prior knowledge, culture, and experiences so that they feel validated and empowered
**Interaction for Learning Framework** (Arkoudis 2013)

- Planning for interaction
- Creating environments for interaction
- Supporting interaction
- Engaging with subject knowledge
- Developing reflexive processes
- Fostering communities of learners

**Practical Tips**

- Participation: choreographing, shaping, valuing, inviting in
- Explain the benefits of class discussions and articulate the role that active learning plays in learning and retention
- Poll the class about their experiences with group work and identify potential sticking points, propose ways to address challenges, be explicit about difference, set ground rules
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on and gain a better understanding of their own multiple cultural, personal, and disciplinary identities
- Modelling
- Build confidence: Move from low-risk (not output based) to high-risk discussion models in order to build trust
- Cocreate communication norms
- Create opportunities for peer learning and interaction among diverse learners
- Create learning activities that allow students to explore difference and practice perspective-taking
- Ask students to identify ways in which they could learn more about other cultures and ask them to commit to trying one or two.
- Make group work formative (they meet more than once) so that they can get to know each other, have experience of cross-cultural group work
- Involve students in assessing examples of work to establish marking criteria and expected quality
- Be aware of conflict areas: accent intolerance
- Debrief after activities to discuss the learning process, reflect on outcomes
References


The Hidden Values behind Classroom Communication

Diversity in the classroom
Students in today’s classrooms come from many different socio-cultural, ethnic, linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds. There might be, for example:
- International students
- Students with chronic health conditions and/or disabilities
- First generation students
- Mature students and students from the workforce
- Students with family, e.g., parents and informal care-givers
- Students with a migration background

So, each of these students has his or her own unique background, thus bringing in her or his own experiences, attitudes, values, and approaches, acquired in many different situations and under many different circumstances. The question that arises is:

Do individual backgrounds influence academic writing and, if so, how?

Studies about differences in academic writing across borders
There are differences in academic writing in cross-national contexts. Studies (amongst others: Edwards 2008; Foster 2006; Kaiser 2003) describe differences in, for example,
- writing style
- structure of text
- building of one’s viewpoints
- references to existing literature
- critical reading and writing
- problem-solving
- citation (necessity, frequency)

Examples with regard to communication styles
Amongst others
- explicit – implicit
- affective (emotional) – neutral
- discussions valued – discussions seen as disrupting harmony
- criticism valued – criticism seen as extremely rude
- sociolects / dialects
- terminology (field specific)

Direct influence on individual writing styles

An example from the Tübingen Writing Center’s everyday-experiences:
There is a student with a ‘High-Context’ background. He writes his dissertation in German as a foreign language. He knows very well how to form short and understandable sentences. But sometimes he builds very long and complex sentences. He then refuses to shorten the sentences and make them more understandable. He explains: “Here I have to form a complex sentence, in order to express the complexity of the matter.” In German ‘Low-Context’ university culture it is expected to express explicitly that the matter is complex.

Examples with regard to values, attitudes and convictions
Amongst others
- Understanding of one’s role in society
- Religious convictions
- Understanding of human nature
- Perspective on nature

Direct influence on the content of the writing project
An example from the Tübingen Writing Center’s everyday-experiences:
A student with a strong hierarchical background has been asked to discuss and criticize the literature referred to in her thesis more thoroughly, which is essential in German university culture. She tried very hard but was not able to meet her professor’s expectations. She explained to us that one of the authors was her professor, the other her employer and that she really can’t criticize them as they are higher in hierarchy. She said she knew she should, but she would feel very bad because this would mean acting against her values.

Changing from one to another writing-culture
When changing from one to another writing-culture, students oftentimes face difficulties in adapting to the new environment. Misunderstandings may arise. It is even more difficult for them when they are not aware of the differences. Oftentimes they face difficulties although they are aware of the expectations in the new environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes, individual backgrounds have an impact on academic writing!</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The visible part of the impact, such as structure, style, language, is easily detectable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The invisible part of the impact, such as values, assumptions, expectations, is more difficult to perceive. But it still may cause difficulties, misunderstandings and misjudgments.</td>
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Strategies for dealing with hidden values in classroom communication
- Be aware of the influence of individual background on academic writing.
- Be aware of your own experiences, values, attitudes, approaches, etc., and how they might influence your judgement of academic writing.
- Listen to and make use of different perspectives in your class.
- Encourage individual perspectives in academic writing.
- Encourage different individual approaches to the writing process.
- Encourage Peer-to-Peer-learning and Peer-to-Peer feedback.
- Apply different teaching methods whenever possible.
- Make clear what you expect.
- Question your own standards.
- Welcome and value diversity.

List of references


Information & Resources
Responding to micro-aggressions and everyday (casual) racism in the classroom

Definitions:

Casual (Everyday Racism): vague, commonplace, just-below-the-surface acts of racism that include insults, indignities or demeaning messages sent to racialized and indigenous folk.

Micro-aggression: seemingly innocuous statements (jokes), actions and attitudes (looks, body language, sighs, etc.), which can be direct or indirect. They exclude/other persons who are not part of the dominant group.

The Basics of Everyday Racism: https://medium.com/@tiedr/basics-of-everyday-racism-b355c0d00ca3

A visual representation of the everyday of “microaggressions.”
http://www.microaggressions.com/

Everyday Tips:

• Assume racism/oppression continues to happen, both subtly and bluntly, every day.
• Initiate discussions about racism/oppression.
• Notice who is at center of power.
• Notice how racism is minimized, denied and justified.
• Understand connections between racism and other forms of oppression.
• Self-educate about racism, the ongoing colonial project, resistance and change.

Adapted from “Uprooting Racism”, Paul Kivel

Taking Action – Talia D’Souza (2016)

The acronym and steps below provide a guide on how to take ACTION rather than feeling frozen when faced with a microaggression.

**A**sk clarifying questions to assist with understanding intentions.

“I want to make sure that I understand what you were saying. Were you saying that...?”

**C**ome from curiosity not judgment.

- Listen actively and openly to their response.
- If they disagree with your paraphrase and clarify a different meaning, you could end the conversation. If you suspect they are trying to “cover their tracks,” you may consider making a statement about the initial comment to encourage learning.
  “I’m glad to hear I misunderstood you, because, as you know, such comments can be...”

- If they agree with your paraphrase, explore their intent behind making the comment.
  “Can you tell me what you were you hoping to communicate with that comment?”
  “Can you please help me understand what you meant by that?”

**T**ell what you observed as problematic in a factual manner.

“I noticed that...”

Impact exploration: ask for, and/or state, the potential impact of such a statement or action on others.

“What do you think people think when they hear that type of comment?”

“As you know, everything speaks. What message do you think such a comment sends?”

“What impact do you think that comment could have on...”

**O**wn your own thoughts and feelings around the impact.

“When I hear your comment I think/feel...”

“Many people might take that comment to mean...”

“In my experience, that comment can perpetuate negative stereotypes and assumptions about... I would like to think that is not your intent.”

**N**ext steps: Request appropriate action be taken.

“Our class is a learning community, and such comments make it difficult for us to focus on learning because people feel offended. So I am going to ask you to refrain from stating your thoughts in that manner in the future. Can you do that please?”

“I encourage you to revisit your view on X as we discuss these issues more in class.”

“I’d appreciate it if you’d consider using a different term because it is inconsistent with our course agreement regarding X...”

Human Rights & Equity Office (2018)
When practiced, the ACTION framework can be a tool that is quickly retrieved out of your mental toolbox to organize your thoughts and unpack the microaggression in a way that addresses the situation and cools down tension.

When students make comments that are microaggressive in the classroom, doing nothing is a damaging option (Souza, Vizenor, Sherlip, & Raser, 2016).

**Foundational research and reading:**

Anne E. Wagner (2005) Unsettling the academy: working through the challenges of anti-racist pedagogy, Race Ethnicity and Education, Vol.8 no.3, 261-275

[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13613320500174333](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13613320500174333)


[https://journals.scholarsportal.info/pdf/0003066x/v62i0004/271_rmielifcp.xml](https://journals.scholarsportal.info/pdf/0003066x/v62i0004/271_rmielifcp.xml)

In *Faculty Focus Special Report: Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom (2016)*. Magna Publication


Human Rights & Equity Office (2018)
October 23, 2018 Supporting International Students in the classroom:
Lee Richard: Building intercultural competency – both for you and your students
Further reading and resources
Resources – Further reading on intercultural approaches to instruction and student support

Carnegie Mellon – Eberly Center:
• Teaching across cultures: Online resource that covers Intercultural perspectives to instruction in Western and non-Western classrooms – http://eberly.cmu.edu/teaching-across-cultures


Western University – Teaching Support Centre
• Western Guide to Mentoring International Students Across Cultures:
  – https://www.uwo.ca/tsc/faculty_programs/pdf/PG_3_MentoringAcrossCultures.pdf
Resources - Further reading on development of intercultural competencies


Strategies – Facilitating active student engagement in class

• Set aside a specific time during the class where Q&A can take place (ex. leave time at the end of class for questions, students will know when questions will be fielded and hopefully prepare)
• Post questions in advance of class. This will give students time to prepare an answer.
• Post notes in advance of class
• Zero tolerance of ridicule of accents, or requests for clarification of culturally specific questions in the classroom
• Allow students time to confer with a partner before responding to a question in class (think, pair, share) approach
• Online forum/format to provide feedback/ask questions (i.e. interactive teaching tools such as poll everywhere, learning catalytics, etc.) used throughout class
• Anonymous “exit survey” to allow students to ask questions. These are reviewed at beginning of next class
Strategies – Facilitating active student engagement in class (cont.)

• Post questions in advance of class. This will give students time to prepare an answer
• Scaffold classroom Q&A
  – Pre: Post questions in advance
  – During: Groupwork, in-class interaction
  – Post: Discussion boards
• 1 minute feedback writing exercise at end of class
• Journal writing assignments, provide feedback
• Form discussion groups within the class, have groups submit questions before each class
Strategies – Laying ground work for collaboration in group work

• Provide process for formation of groups
• Clear assignment design that values group work (not divide & content)
• Giving enough time/guidance for groups to form and decide on work-flow (both in and out of class time)
• Roles and responsibilities contract for participants to fill-out
  – Guidelines on how to work in groups
• Integrate tools such as Google sheets as a resource to keep group work on track
• Have groups schedule regular meetings with instructor (meetings count towards final mark)
• Templates for potential distribution of tasks
• Time set aside for in person consultation with groups, either in-class or out
Working with Students with English as an Additional Language

In addition to sentence-level language issues, EAL students may also face challenges related to differences in culture. This chart provides some interculturally-aware communication strategies for providing feedback to EAL students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Suggested Phrasing</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unclear meaning</td>
<td>“As your reader, this is how I interpret this.” “As someone with English as my first language, I read this as…”</td>
<td>Clarifies given meaning and gives student opportunity for self-correction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing by a speaker of a Global English</td>
<td>“As a person from Canada, I read this as / I understand this to mean… / I picture X when I read this. Is that your intended message?” “Who is your audience? What variety of English will be most accessible to them?” “I don’t have X in my English. Is X part of your English?”</td>
<td>Identifies differences in dialect without assuming superiority of Canadian English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awkward or problematic structure / style</td>
<td>“I notice you have done X. Can you describe why you chose this approach?” “Is this approach common in the literature?” “The convention at Queen’s / in Canada is to…”</td>
<td>Avoids culturally-based assumptions about writing styles and conventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete idea development / critical thinking</td>
<td>“Can you describe the main point of this section?” “When I read this, I understand X as your main point. Am I missing anything?”</td>
<td>Creates an opportunity to determine whether the issue is related to language or critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improper vocabulary choice</td>
<td>“When I read [this word], I think of X. Is that what you mean?” “Using this word suggests X to your (Canadian) reader. Is that what you want to convey?” “What word does the literature uses to discuss this?”</td>
<td>Probing for better vocabulary can also help the student with higher order concerns, like argumentation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To help intercultural students develop their academic writing skills, you might suggest these strategies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Suggested Strategy</th>
<th>How It Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing in another variety of English</td>
<td>Codemeshing – see Young, 2011</td>
<td>Bring together home dialect and local dialect to create effective and authentic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not adhering to cultural conventions of style and structure</td>
<td>Patchwriting – see Hilton, 2018</td>
<td>Parse a piece of writing to produce a style/structure template for new writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not using discipline-specific vocabulary</td>
<td>Lexical Notebook – see Dowling, 2004</td>
<td>Focus on acquiring new language instead of correcting word choice errors. Record new language in ‘chunks’ by always including example phrases.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

