Cultural Differences and Teaching Philosophy: Recommendations for Practice

Emily Dahlen, Associate Director
Dr. Melanie Brown, Director
Academic Skills Center
 Agenda

• Cultural differences
• Impact & perceptions of cultural differences
• Supporting international students’ learning
• Teaching philosophy: Reimagining & revising
Goals

• Understand how cultural differences can impact the classroom
• Explore pedagogical and classroom management strategies for supporting international students
• Discuss how teaching philosophy can impact student experience in light of cultural difference in the classroom
Chat

How have you experienced cultural differences in your teaching?
Cultural Differences

**Hofstede’s Frame** (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010)

- Power Distance Index
- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Masculinity vs. Femininity
- Uncertainty Avoidance Index
- Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation
- Indulgence vs. Restraint
Power Distance Index

• **High Power Distance** – hierarchies and inequalities between people are accepted
  – Ex. China (80), Saudi Arabia (95)

• **Low Power Distance** – hierarchies and inequalities between people are not accepted
  – Ex. Norway (31), Iceland (30)
Individualism vs. Collectivism

• Individualism – focus is on what benefits the individual and the individual’s immediate family
  – Ex. United States (91), United Kingdom (89)

• Collectivism – focus is on what benefits the most people in someone’s “in-group”
  – Ex. Taiwan (17), Chile (23)
Masculinity vs. Femininity

• **Masculinity** – values material rewards, achievement, and desire to be the best
  – Ex. Japan (95), Italy (70)

• **Femininity** – values cooperation, enjoying what you do, and modesty
  – Ex. Netherlands (14), Chile (28)
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

• **High UAI** – rigid expectations of behavior; intolerant of differences in beliefs
  – Ex. Greece (100), Turkey (85)

• **Low UAI** – comfort with uncertainty; more lax in acceptance of difference in beliefs
  – Ex. Denmark (23), Singapore (8)
Long-term vs. Short-term Orientation

• **Long-term Orientation** – keeps both the past and present in view; pragmatic approach to problem-solving
  – Ex. Belgium (82), Japan (88)

• **Short-term Orientation** – change can be challenging; time-honored traditions are prized; normative thinking; focus on Truth
  – Ex. U.S.A. (26), Finland (38)
Indulgence vs. Restraint

• **Indulgence** – prioritize leisure time and having fun; optimistic
  – Ex. Nigeria (84), Mexico (97)

• **Restraint** – people think they should control their desires; less focus on self-gratification;
  – Ex. Morocco (25), Czech Republic (29)
Potential Impact of Cultural Differences

Students feeling alienated are less likely to contact faculty or staff for academic resources for help (Redden, 2007)

Miscommunication increases with greater perceptions of cultural differences (Reeder, Macfadyen, & Chase, 2004)
## Students’ Perceptions of Cultural Differences (Liu, Liu, Lee, & Magjuka, 2010)

### Issue Affecting Learning

- Application-based assessments
- More interaction; info overload
- Asynchronous communication clearer; time zones disruptive
- U.S.-focused examples do not apply to different countries
- Reading takes 3x as long
- Severe penalty for first use of incorrect citation formatting

### Potential Solution

- Use multiple kinds of assessments
- Identify key points from discussion
- Set live chat sessions to answer real-time questions from students
- Provide or ask students to share examples relevant to other countries
- Urge students to start early; answer questions before/after reading is due
- Turn incident into teaching moment; refer student to [academic integrity course](#) & [citation resources](#)
Supporting International Students’ Learning

Be explicit: “What does a student need to do to succeed in this course?”

- You expect them to ask questions if they don’t understand
- You value differences in student experience
- Point out important dates in the course calendar
- Be aware of time zones if giving students short notice to reply
Supporting International Students’ Learning

• Provide examples of good practice
  – Writing a discussion post & a reply to another post
  – Avoid idioms, figurative language, puns, and jokes

• Set a short participation learning curve before students earn/lose points

• Tell students to read for main points, not memorization or recall (as apropos)

• Refer students to evaluation rubric before due date
Teaching Philosophy

1. Articulation of your beliefs, values, & attitudes about teaching & learning

2. Description of how your beliefs, values, & attitudes in action in the classroom
Teaching Philosophies (Chavez & Longerbeam, 2016)

1. Faculty are responsible for student learning and success: Faculty engage students and try alternative approaches until something works.

2. Faculty are responsible for weeding out bad students from good: Students are responsible for their own learning and success; they must adapt or move on.
Reimagining Teaching Philosophy for Cultural Differences

Self-reflect culturally

• **10 Questions Guide for Self-Reflection: Creating a Culturally Inclusive Classroom**

Develop cultural competence

• **Activities for self-reflection from APA**

Explore aspects of teaching across cultures

• **Culture shock, cultural intelligence, & teaching approaches**
Revising Teaching Philosophy


Walden Resources

Center for Faculty Excellence
(http://faculty.waldenu.edu)

International Student Academic Advising team

Academic Skills Center support in time management, reading, study habits
References


Questions?

AcademicSkills@waldenu.edu

Thank you!