

A Rubric for Helping Students Develop Intercultural Sensitivity

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Both the New York State and the National Standards set as goals for students of languages other than English the development of cross-cultural skills and understanding. The State refers to sharing "information, experiences, and perspectives across cultures" as well as effective communication evolving an "understanding of perceptions," among other things. On the national level, the Standards call for students to develop an understanding of the "practices and perspectives" as well as of the "products and perspectives of the culture studied." We are enjoined to help students develop an awareness of "other people's world views," of their "unique way of life" as well as learn about the contributions of other cultures to the world at large. It is stated in the Standards that such awareness will help to combat ethnocentrism. However, many of us have found that attempts to help students recognize differences in world view and to appreciate what is unique about the way of life in some of our target cultures at times may only lead to the expression of more negative stereotypes and occasionally seem counter-productive.

Some research has shown that focusing on similarities between cultures rather than differences brings about more positive attitudes in students toward members of the target culture. Yet, focusing solely on similarities would seem to thwart the purpose of learning about other cultures.

Just as we have learned to better understand the acquisition of a second language as a developmental process, a framework for the understanding of intercultural sensitivity is also needed. The rubric that I offer below is an interpretation of just such a framework described by Milton J. Bennett in 1993. My purpose is to outline the model in order to help teachers to identify characteristics of each stage in their students' attitudes and reactions so that they can adjust their teaching about culture accordingly. It is important to remember that this is a developmental sequence. Students in the "denial" stage will progress to the "defense" stage where stereotypes are more derogatory. This may seem like a step

backward, but it does indicate progress in passage through the ethnocentric stages. Some stages have subcategories; "denial," for example, is divided into "isolation" and "separation." Some suggestions for instruction apply to the stage in general rather than the individual subcategories when the line in the chart does not show a division in the last column.

It is important to remember that individuals must pass through all of the stages because development will be thwarted if one is skipped. "Denial," "defense," and "minimization" are all ethnocentric stages which represent the natural state of affairs. Sensitivity toward other cultures is generally a learned view. Many students, particularly those who are not members of the dominant culture, may already be in some type of "defense" when they arrive in class. There are additional other-culture sensitive stages, which I have not included because they refer to very advanced stages of development. Those who wish to explore the model more deeply should refer to Bennett's article.

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Adjusting Instruction to the Stages of Cultural Learning

Do your students...	They are in...	Increase sensitivity by...
ETHNOCENTRIC STAGE(S)		
think cultural diversity only occurs elsewhere; lack exposure to cultural difference; say things like "Paris was great! It's just like home, it has McDonald's.;" giggle when confronted with cultural differences?	denial/isolation	exposing them to difference; drawing attention to difference; not mentioning contrasts; practicing observing without being judgmental;
avoid contact with members of other cultures in school; keep their distance from foreigners; exhibit <u>extreme</u> nationalism?	denial/separation	acknowledging differences; promoting cultural awareness activities: international night/cultural heritage week; sticking to music, dance, food, arts, selected values and beliefs.
evaluate difference negatively; hold derogatory stereotypes?	defense/denigration	recognizing inevitable temporality of this stage; building cultural self-esteem in face of difference.
emphasize mainly the positive characteristics of their own group; think their own world view represents the acme of development; think difference is something to be overcome?	defense/superiority	emphasizing positive but different characteristics of home and target cultures; realizing excessive discussion of cultural differences in behavior or values may lead to retreat to denigration
denigrate their own culture and embrace the host culture as superior ?	defense/reversal	describing the reversal process; emphasizing commonalities among cultures before focusing on differences.
assume that their own point of view is the best and with education, everyone will see it that way; assume that if you just "act like yourself" in the target culture everything will be OK?	minimization	generating cultural self-awareness; using simulations/ assimilators/ cross-cultural dialogues to illustrate cultural differences in interpretation; using members of other cultures as resource persons (as long as they are not in the minimization stage).
OTHER-CULTURE SENSITIVE STAGE(S)		
recognize that verbal and non-verbal behaviors differ across cultures?	acceptance/ respect for behavioral difference	stressing recognition of difference and non-evaluative respect for variation in verbal and non-verbal behavior.
accept differences in communicative styles; recognize the relativity of cultural values?	acceptance/ respect for value difference	noting behavioral differences before going to values; applying insights to intercultural communication in an active fashion; using application to improve relations with prospective host families, local TL groups.

¹This sort of behavior is typical of long-term sojourners.

The R's: Recruitment, Refinement and Retention of Teachers A Report on the NYSAFLT/SED Colloquium 2000

Frank Marino and Joan Militscher

Participants in the NYSAFLT/SED Colloquium 2000 were given the opportunity to address an extremely critical issue: the shortage of qualified teachers available in the teacher pool necessary to maintain the Standards in our classrooms. Invited speakers and the participants themselves were asked to discuss how to Recruit new teachers, to Refine and to retrain our current teachers and to Retain those we recruit and retrain.

Recruitment

ACTFL's New Visions in Foreign Language Initiative, ably represented by Nancy Gadbois, a Spanish teacher in the High School of Science and Technology in Springfield, Massachusetts, began the presentations. In her remarks, Gadbois asked us to open our minds to all possibilities of recruitment. She quoted a Chinese proverb: "Insanity is doing the same thing the same way and expecting different results." She said that new teachers will probably be from more diverse backgrounds and suggested opening new pathways to certification, with alternative methods and programs and advocating for teachers in the media. We teachers should encourage the students presently in our classes to think about education in their future and to let them see how enthusiastic we are and how much we like what we do.

The break-out brainstorming session generated these ideas:

As individuals, we must

- encourage students to teach and provide opportunities for them in our class, in other classes in school and in the elementary schools;
- invite college education majors to visit our schools, keeping in touch through e-mail;
- provide real world experiences for students to learn the practical uses of second languages such as those experienced in exchange programs and homestays;
- encourage membership in future teacher clubs;
- invite speakers from business who use other languages in their jobs to speak to classes on the advantages of knowing other languages.

NYSAFLT should

- provide ideas and materials to schools and teachers on how to develop programs for high school students (via web page, at conferences, local workshops and in the *Language Association*

Bulletin;

- work to eliminate the increased hurdles to certification (e.g. getting Master's in three years, costs of education, barriers to native speakers);
- encourage the media to publicize teachers, struggles for certification, respect;
- salary commensurate to other professionals with graduate degrees.

Refinement

Dr. Joseph Tursi Professor Emeritus, SUNY Stony Brook and NYSAFLT Past President) affirmed the importance of the second R and spoke of the responsibilities of teachers presently teaching to refine and retrain themselves as professional duties evolve and change. All foreign language teachers should be proficient in the languages they teach. They should be actively involved in local, regional and state professional associations. They should have opportunities to interact with native speakers and should have graduate degrees and ongoing training in the languages and cultures that they teach.

In applying the 5 C's—Communication, Culture, Connections, Comparisons, Communities—of the National Standards to the refinement and retraining of teachers, Tursi mentioned first Communication and Connections. He said that teachers of higher levels often criticize lower level teaching due to lack of articulation. Vertical communication and connections could be facilitated by teacher or chairperson reciprocal visitation programs to elementary, middle and high school foreign language classes. He emphasized that teachers in the same building should have time to plan lessons together, to visit each other's classes, and to do interdisciplinary planning with art, music and social studies colleagues. The Community "C" could encourage teachers to visit the university and have university teachers visit K-12. Pen pals via high school or middle school foreign language students or high school and college students writing to each other is another way to get people communicating "beyond the walls". Teachers should invite the community into the school to view awards presentations or to attend "International Nights" where students could present what they have learned.

Tursi closed with a 6th C—Curiosity. He encouraged teachers to continue to ask why, how, what...about their teaching, and to explore constantly new ways to teach.

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The break-out group session produced the following comments and suggestions:

- make an effort to contact counterpart in other buildings for articulation;
- try to have time set aside for departmental common planning;
- publicize foreign language accomplishments through festivals, international nights (with funds set aside in budgets);
- make use of display cases in buildings;
- share** with colleagues
- encourage colleagues to attend professional meetings;
- take advantage of available scholarships, grants and incentive awards for professional advancement (NYS AFLT offers many);
- ask for more immersion programs/opportunities for teachers to maintain fluency;
- recognize milestones (awards received, longevity in various professional organizations);
- keep current with methods and technology through professional development offerings by local, state, regional and national organizations.

Retention

Joanne O’Toole, a foreign language teacher and mentor in Baldwinsville, New York, presented a comprehensive overview of not only the nuts and bolts of teacher mentoring but of the program in her own district in which she has played a very pivotal role. Mentoring programs are important for new teachers for several reasons:

- new teachers are often given the most difficult classes;
- procedures are not often spelled out and expectations are unclear;
- resources are often inadequate;
- new teachers sometimes isolate themselves and do not ask important questions for fear of being perceived as incompetent;
- a role conflict occurs as a new teacher goes from being a college student to a responsible adult in a few months, at a time when the teacher is making many important life decisions;
- reality shock occurs as the optimistic bubble is popped.

New teachers have many needs which, if unmet, can cause insomnia, fatigue, physical ailments, sense of failure, depression, decreased optimism and self-esteem and an increased negative attitude toward children. Fifteen percent of new teachers leave the profession in each of the first two years. Those who stay, develop a survival mentality. They often must be in control at all times and can’t deal with a student-centered classroom, which can have a negative effect on communicative foreign language teaching.

To mentor successfully:

- Be sensible. Don’t just say, “if you have a problem, call me.” Keep on top.
- Work on building trust and nurturing a relationship.
- Define your role and communicate it to the new teacher.
- Determine your limitations and communicate them. Keep realistic expectations.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Act nonjudgmentally. Say, “You did X. What do you think? What are some of the reasons you chose to do that?”
- Find out what your colleague needs and wants and direct him/her to appropriate resources.
- Help him/her to understand the role of the administration and how to go to them as resources.
- Don’t give unsolicited material but offer when asked.
- Ask lots of thought-provoking questions. Never say “Why...?” as it puts people on the defensive.
- Offer alternatives.
- Be willing to revisit topics (curriculum, school rules).
- Be the “guide on the side”. You are not doing things for your colleague but rather guiding him/her.
- Be there for more than the first year. You can continue the dialogue and still nurture.
- Change your rules as the teacher grows and matures.

O’Toole concluded with some possible challenges to mentoring such as:

- a lack of support from colleagues or the administration;
- lack of time or lack of common time;
- differences in communication style (mentors/mentees might have to change midstream);
- a lack of communication by the new colleague who may not want or need mentoring.

Reactions and comments of the break-out group session included the following:

- all mentors meet (once a month) to share concerns, strategies, so all have the same information;
- mentor selection-matching process guidelines should be available;
- state funds and federal funds—where are they? How do we get them? State organizations need to be actively working on this;
- New Teacher Folders containing all of the forms of the school district: where to find them, what they are and which are the important ones that should be available.
- cooperative mentoring program—a “lead teacher” and two others to share the “lead”;

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- how do “traveling” teachers get support?
- team or departmental support by colleagues who have similar preparations;
- meetings for mentor and mentee should count toward clock hours for graduate work, inservice or state mandated professional development;
- contractual language should include creative solutions to time constraints—professional development embedded in the school day;
- share successful models;
- have fair assignment practices/workloads for new teachers;
- make new requirements for paperwork and course overload, shifting the burden;
- have districts seek diverse, qualified professionals...not just those who will focus on raising test scores;
- change the state certification tests for new teachers that are culture-biased;
- provide K-16 mentoring;
- let teachers teach;
- develop compassionate programs for the retaining of teachers. You can recruit and refine them, but if you can't retain them, it's a moot point;
- there should be honest and fair evaluation of accepted/traditional practices (past practices) that are detrimental to the retention of new teachers. Changes/ corrections become contractual language;
- actively involve BOCES, professional associations, unions, PTA, higher education, etc. in working to support new teachers, to look for funding and the best models for their mentor programs.

Before each of the break-out sessions met, the following questions were raised in the general session:

- How can we encourage administrators to allow time for vertical and/or horizontal articulation?
- How are colleges or other organizations going to provide accessible programs/ courses to improve language skills?

- Is the mentoring program defined in the teachers' contract? Are mentor teachers given fewer classes?
- Is it ever permissible to break confidentiality when a serious or persistent problem exists, e.g.. discipline, problems with a colleague?
- Does “New Visions” have any specific plans for actively recruiting older potential teachers from different walks of life?
- Do you think a twenty-year retirement allowance like the military or state police would be an attractive incentive to go into education?
- What can we learn from Europe in the way they treat teachers and in the way they structure learning and life goals? Is what we are doing in this country in the so-called “comprehensive” high school the way to go in the 21st century?

UPDATE

At its June 2000 meeting, the New Visions in Foreign Language Education initiative addressed the issue of political action. A position paper entitled “Talking with National, State and Local Candidates...Discussion Topics on K-16 Foreign Language Education” was developed. It was shared with NYSAFLT members at the October 2000 Annual Meeting by Judy Martialay and Louise Terry, our Public Advocacy co-chairs. A copy of that position paper is available through our Public Advocacy Committee.

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Smaller Learning Communities: The Language Institute At Prospect Heights High School

Dr. Deborah M. Isom

In September 2001, Prospect Heights High School will be redesigned into 3 smaller learning communities. An institute for law and legal studies, an institute for the culinary arts and a language institute will be established. Members of the staff have been meeting to discuss the structural design and curriculum of these institutes. The second language teachers have been involved in the interdisciplinary, cultural, and career oriented activities that will take place in the language institute. One of the goals of the language institute will be to provide students with the opportunity to use their native and acquired linguistic skills in school to work in professional careers. Another goal will be to improve the social, linguistic, academic, and cultural literacy levels of the students who attend Prospect Heights High School.

Approximately 2,000 students attend Prospect Heights High School and the majority of these students come from low socioeconomic single-parent households whose caregivers are immigrants from Bangladesh, Haiti, the Caribbean, and from Spanish speaking countries. Research shows that poverty negatively affects student achievement and the effect that a school's size has on the performance of the students is directly related to the level of poverty in the community that the school serves. (Fowler & Walberg 1991). Studies also suggest that the negative effects that poverty has on student achievement are significantly reduced in smaller learning communities (MacGregor 1991).

The students enrolled in the language institute will benefit socially and academically from this smaller learning community in many ways. They will be encouraged to continue their study of foreign languages beyond the state requirement. French, Spanish, and Latin are the languages that will be offered, in addition to native language arts and advanced placement language and literature courses. Interdisciplinary courses will be offered in the areas of bilingual court reporting, international law, bilingual information technology systems, and

international travel and tourism. The students will participate in international student exchange programs, school to work internships, and virtual bilingual business enterprises. Technology-based projects involving distance learning, global key pals, and foreign cultures and cuisines will also be integrated into the curriculum.

Some aspects of the language institute at Prospect Heights High School are in place while other aspects are still "works in progress". The roles and responsibilities of second language educators are changing, and if second language instruction is to play a key role in 21st century learning environments, we as second language educators and administrators must begin to work collaboratively with our colleagues in "other" departments to explore and to implement interdisciplinary approaches in teaching second language skills. Our proficiency-based methodologies must move to the next level and teachers must now focus on how to effectively teach their students to use their second language skills in the 21st century work place. The language institute at Prospect Heights High School is just beginning to make that "transitional leap" and we look forward to a successful program.

Deborah M. Isom is assistant principal of second languages at Prospect Heights High School in Brooklyn, NY and adjunct associate professor of education and foreign languages at Long Island University.

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An Overview of a Web-Based Application for Second Language Instruction: Blackboard

María José Alvarez-Torres

With the rapid and growing explosion of the World Wide Web (WWW), there is an overwhelming number of materials that provide multiple opportunities for learners to immerse themselves in the target language and culture and interact with native speakers, and for schools to collaborate in language projects. Although the web is an extraordinary tool for language teaching, searching for the adequate materials or developing activities that support language learning in this environment can become extremely time consuming. With the unique situation of each classroom context, the use of other teachers' resources may call for adaptation. On some occasions, the teacher may opt to develop her own materials instead of adapting other resources. In these cases, it is very likely that the teacher will need some computer programming skills. Acquiring these skills involves time and dedication to the pure technological aspects that the teacher may simply not have.

Some partial solutions in the form of multiple functional, content-free, web-based applications have recently emerged in the WWW to overcome situations like the ones described above. They seem to be an attempt to account for the need to design more flexible and effective technology that applies to a variety of teaching situations and teaching practices. This article provides a brief overview of a free application, Blackboard (www.Blackboard.com), an example of a web-based tool that reflects new trends in e-learning.

At first sight, one of the many advantages of these environments is their easy accessibility. Because applications such as Blackboard are web-based, they avoid the potential problems of differences in hardware and software among computers available at the school or with other schools. In addition, it allows for the integration of multiple functions so that teachers and learners do not have to use various applications to achieve different tasks. No programming language expertise is required. Blackboard simply provides the platform to be filled with the content of the teaching materials. As a matter of fact, the platform allows the teaching of a complete course on-line and it can easily be used as an integrated on-line support environment for an existing language course that meets regularly in a classroom.

Blackboard has a number of main functions and components that provide the teacher with tools to develop and manage the teaching of a language course. The course site provides a user-friendly

navigation tool that offers the following selection to the students: announcements, course information, staff information, course documents, assignments, discussion board, communication, external links and student tools. In addition, there is a link to customized resources relevant to the content of the course. It lists:

- The announcements, together with the course information, course documents and staff information are content management tools to assist the learners with information such as daily updates in the form of posted messages, reading lists, the course syllabus, etc. The teacher can either type in templates or use existing files, including audio and video files to illustrate or supplement information in these sites.
- Classroom assignments as well as quizzes can be posted and completed on-line. For instance, students may have a weekly writing assignment for their language course. These assignments can be posted on the assignment section; in addition, a reminder can also appear on the announcements section. Students can create a word document and send it to the teacher using the drop box in the student tools.
- The communication center provides both asynchronous (e-mail and discussion board) and synchronous tools (virtual chat and white board) as potential forums for class or group discussions with or without the presence of the teacher. Students and teachers can share and exchange ideas in these forums. They may use the communication center in a variety of situations and for diverse purposes. For instance, it may simply be used for specific questions to other students or the teacher. It may serve as the arena for a more formal debate or open discussion or it may simply serve as a means for students to manage and complete a group project. Another interesting option in the communication center is the development of personal or group homepages.
- In the student tools, learners have access to a variety of information. Among other things, they can check their grades, submit assignments, edit their personal homepage or simply check their own calendar.
- The external links are on-line resources selected by the teacher that may assist the learners in the learning process. This could include all type of materials in the target language.

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—The resource center provides further on-line tools such as dictionaries, other discussion boards and virtual chats. The teacher has the option to customize the resources available to meet the specific needs of the content of a course.

As mentioned in the introduction, an immediate advantage of web-based generic tools, such as Blackboard, is accessibility. Technology constraints in hardware and software compatibility are largely reduced. Moreover, this type of application is multifunctional in nature; that is, from a single application, diverse learning tasks can be completed. Audio, graphs and text can be managed and exchanged in synchronous or asynchronous communication. Learning is no longer constrained to the physical environment of the classroom or limited to the period of face-to-face instruction. Learners can access the course materials at any time from any computer station.

The flexibility of tools like blackboard accommodates multiple teaching approaches as well as multiple learning contexts. For instance, some teachers may emphasize the use of the communication center section. They may favor the exchange of ideas and information with other communities by participating in discussion boards or chats with learners in distant communities. Flexibility also means the possibility of identifying specific classroom needs for the development of a course. For example, a language course for bilingual high

school learners may take a completely different shape than an adult or college-level foreign language class. Yet, the same application can successfully fulfill the needs for both of these contexts.

Blackboard is probably one of the most successful commercial web-based applications for educators. The company reports that it reaches more than 3.5 million people in 70 institutions worldwide. As in other web-based applications such as, TELEweb or quia.com, the key seems to lie on the features that characterize it as a generic tool. To learn more about this and other features, visit www.blackboard.com. Readers can either download some overview articles (available as pdf files) or simply navigate a current course as a guest.

The introduction of this article is partially adapted from an article titled "Web-based applications for the Foreign Language classroom: eWeb & TELE-Web" originally published as Alvarez-Torres, M.J & Tan, S. in the CLEAR Newsletter, Spring, 1999.

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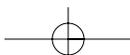
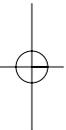
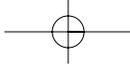
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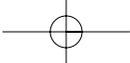
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