

But they don't speak English: Mapping how we teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners

ELLs – Immigrants and Non-Immigrants

The past 30 years have seen an explosion of not only immigration statistics but also a variety of immigrants. This is represented by the 311 different languages spoken in the US, 149 of them by immigrants. Further, immigrants are not restricted to particular parts of the country. Though states like California, New York, Arizona and Texas and New Mexico may have a significant percentage of population that does not speak English as its first language, others like Georgia and Indiana have seen a dramatic rise in the immigrant population. Thus, the population of non-English speakers is more widely dispersed than ever before. The knee-jerk response to this has been 22 states passing an 'English-only' policy in the past 20 years.

The growth in this sub-group has also been reflected in schools. Since 1995, while overall student growth has been about 4%, ELL enrollment has grown 57 percent, totaling 5.1 million ELL students, amounting to more than 10 percent of the total student population. In Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee, growth rates exceeded 300 percent between 1995 and 2005. However, contrary to all beliefs, a majority of ELLs are not immigrants. Currently, 23 percent of the nation's children have at least one immigrant parent, with 75% of them in elementary schools. By 2015, it is predicted this number will rise to nearly one in three, or 33%. (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

The impact of these changing demographics on schools has also been dramatic with the passing of the No Child Left behind Act in 2001. As per this act, a section of students who has so far been invisible, and on whom the schools were not expected to report regarding standardized tests, now had to be taken into account. A complicating factor was that each student was required to be taught by a 'highly qualified' teacher, and ESOL was not indentified as an area for this high qualification. The inclusion model in which ELLs are mainstreamed allowed schools to fulfill this requirement. However, the profile of teachers makes it clear what is lacking. As stated in Chapter 1, most teachers are monolingual and White, with only 15% fluent in a non-English language. Of the 1.2 million teachers in 2002, few had the knowledge and background to teach ELLs only 11% were certified in bilingual education and 18% in ESOL. Though the specific impact of monolingual teachers on student achievement has not been studied (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005), there can be no doubt that a lack of coherence between the student and teacher profiles will not help student academic performance.

State of ESOL in teacher education

It is apparent that teachers have to be prepared to teach the English Language Learners (ELLs) they have in their classroom. However, response by the states in terms of credentialing and by teacher preparation programs has not kept pace with the felt need. While 37 out of the 50 states offer certification or endorsement to qualify teachers to teach ELLs, only 23 of these have a legal mandate for ESL certification. While only 84 percent of the states offer ESL certification or endorsement; only 50 percent offer bilingual/dual language certification or endorsement (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Emergency certification with many states allowing 'exam-only' credentialing with courses taken while teaching is on the rise. It is not surprising, therefore, that approximately 41% of 3,000,000 teachers report they have taught ELL students but only 12% have had a minimum of eight hours training in the past year. Many ELLs receive their instruction from personnel who have not had any training and this hinders academic progress. Further,

teacher education programs do not expect teacher education students to be bilingual or have a foreign language experience (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2007; Tellez & Waxman, 2006).

The subtext of these policies and expectations is that neither culture nor language that is not akin to teachers' own backgrounds is considered an important variable in effective teaching. Given the gap between the profile of teachers and of minority students, it is obvious that cultural mediation is a necessity and that teacher education candidates should be provided opportunities to understand the cultural background of students whose backgrounds are unlike theirs in many ways. Curriculum in teacher education programs approach this in two ways. The more common one is for all students to take a stand-alone course on multiculturalism that introduces basic concepts and theories. The second method is less common but more vigorously advocated by scholars of multiculturalism. This is for the concepts to be subsumed in all the courses in the program and students to apply these in all the experiences they may as part of their curriculum.

The interventions described in this chapter can be implemented in either of the options described above. They focus on both linguistic and cultural understandings that students should acquire in the course of their teacher education program. If teacher beliefs are to be challenged and changed or modified, teachers need to both know and experience the differences that make up this diverse society. Therefore, the following activities designed to make the students think and feel, to address the cognitive and affective domains.

Multicultural Notebook

Description

- Artifacts:
 - Collect a minimum of 10 different examples of how cultural attributes are miscommunicated or unfairly represented in our society.
 - The artifacts must highlight communities and groups of people who are stigmatized for their lack of English language ability.
 - Use examples from popular media such as TV, newspapers and magazines. Song lyrics, video games, internet material, greeting cards, match covers, classroom resources, activities and incentives for students, etc. may also be used.
 - Use a camera to photograph billboards, displays etc. Radio and TV material may be included as excerpts with appropriate references of date, title of program and time of airing. Scan articles neatly.
 - Search out artifacts in which such misrepresentation is not obvious but is implied or covert or is assumed.
- Caption for each slide:
 - Explain in no more than 50 words what misrepresentations or stereotypes you see in each artifact.
 - State the group that is being stereotyped (e.g. *Asian Americans*);
 - State what aspect is being stereotyped (e.g. *All Asian Americans are said to be clever, intelligent and successful*).
- Refuting the Stereotype:
 - Explain briefly (50-100 words) why you think the stereotype is not appropriate.
 - Quote facts and statistics where possible to support your contention (e.g. *Of Cambodians, Hmong, and Laotians, 22% live in poverty and 10% receive public*

assistance, the highest of any group, including Native Americans - <http://www.asian-nation.org/demographics.shtml>).

Analysis

The purpose of this assignment is to document how various stereotypes about immigrants and ELLs are evident in society and how the media unfairly represent (or misrepresent) these individuals or groups.

In the course of this assignment, the negative stereotyping of groups such as African Americans and women is apparent. In stark contrast to this is the lack of visibility of non-English speaking groups in the media; they do not appear on major TV shows, the one exception being *The Simpsons*, which, not surprisingly, ridicules the Asian owner of the 7-11. As a group, non-English speakers are not targeted for commercial purposes by the media. Stories about immigrants in the media are generally negative, in which they are either seen as the problem or which highlight the problems they face in living in this society. Thus the image of a non-English speaker is of one not usually seen as contributing to society but taking away from it.

At the Contact stage, students may expect to have difficulty finding artifacts about stereotypes in general and about immigrants in particular. Comments such as “I think this is going to take a lot of time to find artifacts” should be expected by the instructor. After the assignment is completed, students may move to the Disintegration Stage, where ‘the-blame-the-victim mentality is apparent. Students may say that since most immigrants are probably in this country illegally, immigrants who are legal, and a much smaller number, should not be hurt if they are tarred with the same brush. Students at the Reintegration stage may lump all immigrants into one group and refuse to distinguish between various countries and communities under labels such as Hispanics and Asians. They may choose not to distinguish between the issues of legal and illegal immigrants. Facts such as numbers of illegal immigrants is much smaller than legal immigrants; that illegal Hispanics come mostly from Mexico and not from Latin America; that illegal immigration from Asia is minuscule when compared to the legal immigrants from those countries – these are not likely to impact their opinion. They may also suggest that legal immigrants should police their own communities and weed out illegal immigrants so that their own image is not sullied.

Those for whom this focused analysis of the media is a wake up call are surprised by the number of TV shows and advertisements that show stereotypical characters. They are often taken aback and are never able to see these shows in the same light. Some may even go to the extent of stopping watching some of what used to be their favorite shows.

The lack of positive presence of immigrant groups in the media encourages students in the last two stages of identity development to look for more information about ELLs and search world databases and newspapers for authentic information. Thus is social justice kindled in their hearts.

Reading a book by/about immigrants

Description

- The book must deal with issues of immigrants and immigration, preferably into the US.
- The book could be fiction, a biography, an autobiography or a research-based, non-fiction book.
- The book can be authored by an immigrant or be about immigrants.
- To ensure that the issues dealt with are current, the book should have been published within the last 10 years.
- The reviews of the movie must include

- A summary of the book (300 words)
- An analysis of at least three issues raised in the book (500 words)
- A *reflection*: For each of the issues, explain how you could deal with this in your classroom / school setting (500 words).

Analysis

Though books are a visual medium, and appeal to the visual learner, the processing is in the cognitive domain. Thus, the effect of this activity is mostly in the thinking rather than the feeling areas of the person. While works of fiction such as *The Joy Luck Club* and *Arranged Marriage* may appeal to the emotions, the processing is still a cognitive function.

Students at the first two stages of identify development may not let the activity impact them very much. The issues dealt with in the book may raise awareness in terms of what forces and factors influence the life of immigrants in the US. Books of fiction are unlikely to offer solutions to problems that the readers see in their classrooms.

Watching a movie about immigrants

Description

- The movie must deal with issues of immigrants and immigration, preferably into the US.
- The movie could be a feature film or a documentary.
- To ensure that the issues dealt with are current, the film should have been released within the last 10 years.
- The reviews of the movie must include the following sections:
 - A *summary* of the movie (300 words)
 - An *analysis* of at least three issues that are raised by the movie (300 words)
 - A *reflection*: For each of the issues, explain how you could deal with this in your classroom / school setting (500 words).

Analysis

This activity works on both the cognitive and affective domains. Watching a movie appeals directly through the visual to the affective domain. However, the analysis component of the is a function of the higher order thinking skills or Bloom's taxonomy and discussing the issues portrayed in the movie involves the cognitive domain.

The choice of the movie could dictate the stage at which could work. Most feature films that deal with issues of immigration portray discrimination and should illuminate issues for students at all stages. However, unless the issues are dealt with sensitively, teacher education students who are at the first, second or third stages may find their ideas affirmed rather than challenged. On the other hand, a sensitive movie like *Babel* could surface many issues about the responsibility versus rights of immigrants, and how language inconsistencies between two parties can weigh the balance of power. Foreign language films or documentaries may need to be accessed for students to move into the state of autonomy for few movies made in the US portray other cultures or sub-cultures with authenticity. However, care should be taken in the movies that are recommended. For instance, while *Slumdog Millionaire* may be an authentic movie about a certain section of Indian society, teachers in the US are hardly likely to meet or have to teach students belonging to that stratum, since they are unlikely to emigrate to the US legally or illegally. Thus, recommending that movie would only serve to affirm negative stereotypes about Asian Indians that students may have and, worse, stereotypes that would not fit the immigrants or their children from the sub-continent.

Interviewing Immigrant Families

Description

- The purpose of this activity is for you to appreciate the whole child, and to understand the background of the immigrant students you will be teaching and advocating for.
- The interview is designed to further your investigation of schools in the U.S. and how particular socio-cultural and political climates may impact schooling experiences, perhaps contrasting this with beliefs and practices in the immigrant's country of origin.
- Procedure
 - Identify an immigrant family that has been in the US for *less than five years*.
 - The family must have at least one child who is in a K-12 school in the US.
 - Interview the family in their setting, preferably at their home when all the members of the family are present. The interview must last between 60 and 90 minutes. Take notes during and immediately after the interview. It is not necessary to tape it in any way.
- The write-up should be 1500-2500 words.
 - Briefly summarize the interview (500 words).
 - Critically analyze at least three issues as seen in the interviews. (500-1000 words)
 - For each of the issues, explain how you could deal with this in your classroom / school setting. (500-1000 words).
- Prompts: These prompts are only a starting point, not a complete list. You may ask any/some/all of these or add to them, depending on what you want to know. You will need to ask probing questions to get at some more subtle aspects.
 - Where is your family from, and how long have you been in the United States?
 - Before moving here, what were your perceptions of Americans? Now that you are here, have those perceptions changed?
 - What brought you to America?
 - Were there any driving factors to move to the U.S. other than education?
 - How hard was the process of moving to America? How long did it take? Was it worth it? How and why?
 - Did you have any preparation for the American language and culture before immigrating to the US?
 - What has been the most difficult aspect of the American style of living to which you have to adapt?
 - What is the easiest aspect of the American style of living to which you have to adapt? What aspect of life in the US is similar to life in your country of origin?
 - What is the one thing you find most unusual/odd about the American people?
 - Have you found it difficult to keep your culture and values as an important aspect of upbringing of your children as they adapt to the US?
 - Has your child been able to relate/identify and become friends with children not of his/her ethnic background at school?
 - Do you feel like your child's school provide adequate services to enable your child to learn in a school that speaks English instead of?
 - Does your school provide a language specialist for you or other immigrant students? If not, do you feel they need to invest in one?
 - How do academic expectations here compare to those from your country of origin?

- Do you think your child is receiving a better education here than he/she would have in your country of origin?
- Is school more or less expensive financially here compared to your country of origin?
- Have you found any ways that your child is at a disadvantage as compared to other non-immigrant children?
- What learning activities (or strategies) do your children find most helpful, and does this in any way come from your cultural background?
- Do you feel that your school is promoting multiculturalism/diversity? If so, how?
- In what ways do you feel that the school could be better supporting your child as a minority student? If you feel your child is very well supported by the school, why?
- Are there in ways in which you feel that the policies/procedures of the school are contradicting an aspect of your culture/family values?
- Have the parents/community of the school system treated you any differently because you are an immigrant?
- Has the school / teacher made an effort to be in regular contact with you? Do they offer any kind of extra communication outlets for you because you are an immigrant?
- And specifically for the student
 - Do you feel accepted by other kids at your school? If not, is there anything your teachers could do that might help?
 - What do you miss the most?
 - What have you learned in school that was not directly taught from the teacher?
 - Do you feel like you are learning anything + or - from the other students in your new school?

Analysis

Most schools do not actively encourage, if not directly discourage, teachers from visiting the homes of the students. The teachers, who are mostly middle class and white, are unfamiliar with the lifestyles and values of immigrant families. Their only contact with them are probably when parents visit the school, and these are usually at the behest of the teachers who wish to communicate with the parents. At these times, parents are usually at a disadvantage, in unfamiliar territory, at a time and place not of their choice, and they often feel they have been called to account for their child's misbehavior or lack of achievement. On the other hand, teachers are on their homeground and in a position of power, usually backed by an administrator. This task sets out to change all these conditions.

Values and ideas of diversity are most affected by direct experience, which is the focus of the task. This direct interaction with people affords learning in both the cognitive and affective domains. A major learning that happens is living by another set of cultural rules. The culture of most teachers make them hesitant to invite themselves to their interviewee's homes; it feels too much like intrusion and is perceived as impolite. Students at the first three stages especially are likely to bristle at the idea of having to break one of their rules of polite behavior. Realizing that most immigrants will be very willing to open their homes and share their stories is an eye opener to a different set of values and how a community is formed and community members are treated. When they see how people from other cultures live, students at the Contact stage understand that different lifestyles exist, that the role and responsibilities of a guest is perceived differently in various societies. The stories of hardship, survival, and sacrifice that immigrants have may make students at the Disintegration stage concede that bias exists while those at the Reintegration stage

may identify factors and forces that act on immigrants, changing their mind about holding the ‘victim’ responsible for the ‘crime’ of being an immigrant.

For those in the Pseudo-independent and Autonomy stages this is an excellent opportunity of expanding their cognitive understandings. They could increase their contact with the target culture and build relationships with people from another community. They gain an ‘Insider’s’ view of immigrant life. They increase their knowledge of a particular culture and society and open venues to participating more fully in that community by being invited to community functions and celebrations and expanding their social circle of friends and acquaintances.

Mapping Community Resources

Description

- Make a list of the countries of origin of the ELLs in your school.
- Identify the following in your area that represent these countries/ groups.
 - Social organizations e.g. Latin American Association
 - Health centers, hospitals, sweat lodges, ethnic medicinal entities
 - Places of worship that are particular to the groups e.g. Hindu temples
 - Welcome centers for immigrants
 - Restaurants that serve ethnic foods
 - Grocery stores
 - Movie theaters that show foreign language films
 - Sports clubs and sport arenas e.g., cricket teams
 - Bookstores that stock relevant foreign language books
- List the services that each offers e.g., Language classes; Translation; legal help
- For each country/ group represented in our school, create a database filling in the following table. Add rows as necessary. (There may be more than one restaurant you would recommend!)

	Contact person	Address	Phone	E-mail	Services offered
Social organization					
Health centers					
Place of worship					
Welcome centre					
Restaurant					
Grocery store					
Movie theatres					
Sports clubs/arenas					
Bookstores					

Analysis

This activity appeals mainly in the cognitive domain. This task raises awareness of the needs of a group to connect with its community and is more likely to contribute to the learning of students at the initial stages of cultural awareness. It will also raise questions about the differentiated needs of various groups. For instance, in an area that has many churches of various denominations but no temples or mosques, a Korean family that is Christian may find a religious

home more easily than a Hindu or Muslim family. Thus, for the students in the Contact and Disintegration stages, the row *Places of Worship* that is blank in the table for the Indian subgroup may highlight the religious isolation experienced by the latter.

Lesson /Unit plan - Language objectives; rationales

Description

- Create a unit plan with at least 5 lesson plans of 50 minute each.
- You may use any format of plan.
- The unit plan should contain:
 - Subject
 - Grade levels
 - Demographic details of our students (gender, special education, proficiency level of your ells, etc.)
 - Goals
 - Methods and strategies, especially accommodations for special education students and ells
 - Unit assessment
 - Rationale and
 - Review.
- Each lesson plan will include:
 - General objectives
 - Language objectives
 - Standards
 - Teaching materials (technology, multimedia tools, resources, etc.)
 - Specific procedures (especially accommodations for special populations)
 - Assessment
 - A written report (700 -900 words) which includes the following:
 - The skill(s) your lessons address
 - The strategies you employ
 - Description of how your lesson meets the standards and goals you have selected
 - A reflection on the success of the planning and implementation of the lesson.

Analysis

For teachers, translating knowledge into the classroom, connecting theory and practice is the most important consideration of valuing what they have learnt. Infusing knowledge of ELLs into their planning and implementation is a cognitive activity which is at the pinnacle of their professional thinking. Having teachers write language objectives focuses them on the essential content that needs to be learnt and the vocabulary that is needed to learn that content. teacher education candidates who are at the Contact stage and claim to be ‘color blind’ may be unwilling to invest the energy into this activity. Those at the Disintegration stage may move towards understanding that ELLs have issues with language that other proficient speakers of English may not have and those at the Reintegration stage may acknowledge ELLs as students who need to be taught, not as students who are a problem. ELLs will benefit most by students at the Pseudo-

independent and Autonomous stages who will work on this in the cognitive domain. Such students may be encouraged to learn about the linguistic differences between the ELLs' first language and English and use that knowledge to teach the content-specific language.

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