

"Intercultural communication in the adult EAL classroom: Concepts and classroom practice"

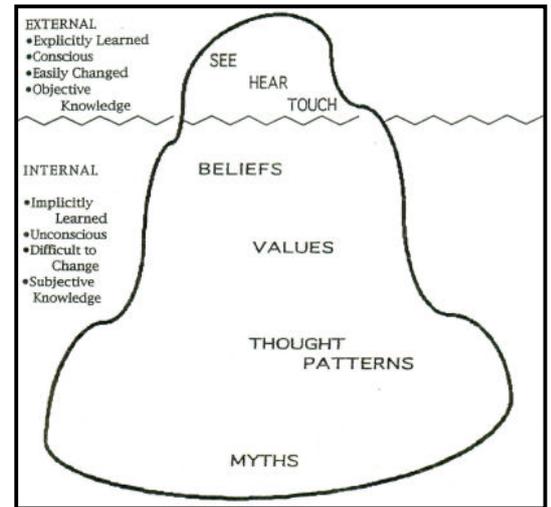
Skye Playsted, QATESOL (University of Wollongong, PhD student)

skyeplaystedtesol.wordpress.com

Creative pedagogies for teaching adult EAL learners, PD Webinar May 2020

Webinar overview

- **Hidden aspects of culture:** so much of culture is below our conscious level of awareness, we often become aware of differences when there is an incident of cultural confusion or misunderstanding.
- **'Big C' and 'little c' culture** (Bennett, 1998):
Big C - observable aspects of culture that first come to mind (art, music, dance, language, clothing, food).
Little c - culture cognitive elements that are not as obvious, but shape us (beliefs, norms, behaviours, worldviews).
- **The cultural iceberg:** (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2011):
Above the surface, the visible aspects of culture are easy to identify: art, music, clothing, language, food.
Below the surface, hidden elements of culture. beliefs and norms about communication, politeness, time, gender roles, personal space, authority, or group and individual roles.
- "Culture influences the way speakers perceive the world and how they use language to communicate" (DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2016, p. 26)
- **Collectivism and individualism:** how we identify ourselves with respect to others. The group or 'collective' is the center point of one's identity"/ identify self in terms of who we are as individuals. Along a continuum, not a hard and fast rule of course!
WEIRD = Western Educated Industrialised Rich and Democratic.
- **Conversational skills as cultural knowledge: High-context communication** – speakers' social roles, gender, age, status and the physical environment in which the interaction is taking place. Subtle **non-verbal** behaviors (pauses, silences, the use of space, and avoidance of eye contact) to **convey a message**.
Low-context communication - communication via explicit verbal messages. Communication is an **independent act** performed between speakers and their listeners.
- **Non verbal communication codes:** 65% of our communication is non verbal. *Think about what is being communicated **non-verbally** to your learners.*
- **Pragmatic 'competence':** A speaker's ability to use and understand language effectively in **natural contexts** has sometimes been defined as pragmatic competence (or failure).
E.g., Students might be **unintentionally** demanding rather than requesting, which could anger a teacher who is unaware of the language-related difference.
Speech acts (and how they are realised) differ from one language to another.
- **Instructional environments:** "In diverse classrooms, lessons that don't work can be the result of a **mismatch of teacher and learner assumptions** about what constitutes good learning" (DeCapua, 2018. p. 109)
E.g., teachers and students can have very different expectations of cooperative learning.
Cooperative learning may be viewed by our students as a waste of time. Teachers are the authorities. It is the teacher's job to deliver the subject matter and it is the students' job to learn. If teachers are not imparting knowledge, why are they in the classroom? (DeCapua, 2018. p. 110)
- **Making the implicit explicit:** Understanding differences in expectations and norms can enrich the learning process. Have an asset rather than a deficit mindset.



Further reading and resources

- More information on work by Andrea DeCapua and Helaine Marshall in the area of intercultural awareness in second language classrooms can be found here:

www.malpeducation.com

www.andreadecapua.com

- Information and resources related to the area of teaching adult students with limited or interrupted formal education:

www.leslla.org

www.proliteracy.org

- I have included a number of links to resources for teachers of adult beginners on my blog: <https://skyeplaystedtesol.wordpress.com/volunteer-english-teaching-resources/>

If you have other links to share, please let me know and I'll include them on my blog. There's a [contact link](#) on the blog – I'd love to hear from you ☺

- The British Council has some useful articles on intercultural learning:

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/intercultural-learning-1>

Some publications available for purchase as ebooks or paperbacks:

- Bennett, M. (Ed.). (1998). *Basic concepts of intercultural communication: Selected readings*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- DeCapua, A., & Wintergerst, A. C. (2016). *Crossing cultures in the language classroom* (2nd ed.) University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, MI.
- DeCapua, A. (2018). *Culture myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*. University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, MI.

DeCapua, A. (2019). *SLIFE: What every teacher needs to know*. University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, MI.

- Newton, J. (2007). *Connecting cultures in the language classroom*. *NZALT Polyglot* 32, 1-2.
- Newton, J. (2016). *Teaching English for intercultural spoken communication*. In *English Language Teaching Today* (pp. 161-177). Springer: Cham, Switzerland.
- Ting-Toomey, S., & Chung, L. (2011). *Understanding intercultural communication* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- New Zealand Ministry of Education report on intercultural communicative language teaching by Jonathan Newton, Eric Yates, Sandra Shearn and Werner Nowitzki:

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/curriculum/76637/introduction>

- NEW WEBINAR BY ANDREA DECAPUA: "Supporting Online Learning for Struggling English Learners and Students with Limited and/or Interrupted Formal Education"**

<https://case.fiu.edu/sehd/ehssd-conference/coronavirus-resources/index.html>

Keep learning and enjoy the journey!

- "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes"* (Proust as cited in Newton, 2007, p. 1).
- "Intercultural teaching relies on an intercultural teacher who models and indeed embodies intercultural values such as curiosity and openness and a willingness to learn alongside the learner"* (Newton, 2016, p. 175).

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Author bio

Skye Playsted is an educator with over 20 years of teaching experience as a second language and music teacher in Australian schools. She has taught English to adult students as a volunteer in community refugee support groups, and has been teaching in vocational colleges and university academic English programs in the Refugee Welcome Zone of Toowoomba, Queensland. Skye completed her M Ed (TESOL) via distance through the University of Wollongong, NSW, and has recently moved to Brisbane with her family. She has been awarded a PhD scholarship through the Australian government research training program, to research reflective practice, teacher cognition and pronunciation pedagogy in beginner adult English language teaching.