Intercultural Communication in the Classroom

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WHAT IS CULTURE?
DEFINING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

NO EXACT DEFINITION BUT....

- **Culture** can be considered as something belonging to every individual formed by material (dress, gastronomy etc.), social (language, social institutions etc.), and subjective (values, practices etc.) resources” (Council of Europe)  

- **Intercultural Communication**: exchange of meaning through verbal and nonverbal interaction between persons of different cultural backgrounds
**APPROACHES TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE**

“FUNCTIONALIST”: HOFESTEDE’S 6 DIMENSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More Egalitarian</th>
<th>POWER DISTANCE</th>
<th>Embraces Hierarchy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collectivist</td>
<td>INDIVIDUALISM</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nurture Emphasis</td>
<td>FEMINE/MASCLINE</td>
<td>Power Emphasis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comfortable with ambiguity</td>
<td>UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE</td>
<td>Ambiguity creates anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Put short term goals first</td>
<td>LONG-TERM ORIENTATION</td>
<td>Put long term goals first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happiness can be bad</td>
<td>RESTRAINT or INDULGANCE</td>
<td>Happiness is always good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Diagram showing Hofstede's 6 dimensions of culture](image)
BEWARE OF “ESSENTIALISM”

“Applying a particular feature, behavior, communication style or pattern to all people in that culture or group”

- Groups are porous, flexible, and constantly shaped and reshaped
- Globalization and Economic processes have melded cultural boundaries and culture cannot be mapped according to national boundaries
APPROACHES TO INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE

“INTERPRETIVE”: DEARDORF & BYRAM

Uses attitudes, knowledge, skills, and critical cultural awareness both externally through interaction and conversation and internally through personal reflection and self-awareness.
CRITICAL APPROACH
Emphasizes power relations in intercultural interactions and views culture as a battleground where one dominant force prevails. Examples:

- Feminist approaches
- Post-Colonial approaches
- Equity for marginalized groups
- Culture preservation, especially language
- Justice for culturally oppressed groups
Threads v. Barriers

“Small culture formation can be defined as “the everyday business of engaging with and creating culture” (Holliday, 2013, p. 56); and it relates to the underlying universal processes that we all take part in on an everyday basis forming and re-forming culture as we go. We encounter and learn to position ourselves with small cultures such as family, school, other families, all the groups and institutions that we join or interact with. We carry this intercultural competence with us to apply to new cultural locations”

Adrian Holliday’s article: Revisiting Intercultural Competence: Small Culture Formation on the Go through Threads of Experience
• Open Attitude
• Self Awareness
• Awareness of Others
• Cultural Knowledge
• Cultural Skills
“We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are.”
- Anais Nin
Classroom strategies
BUILDING
Culture and Identity
• What are some strategies at the classroom level?

• What about at the school level?

• Does your school/community already implement any strategies? What kind of strategies would you like to see implemented?
Case Example

Teaching North Korean refugees who were resettled in South Korea

Barriers

• National Prejudice
• Socio-economic
• Language
• Capitalism v. Communism
• Conservative v. Liberal

Threads

• Women
• Learning/Teaching English
• Expats
• Career Interests
• Love of coffee and food
• Hobbies: museums etc.
What Questions Do You Have?
Contact Information
For questions, concerns, and resources

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Thank You!