Aspects of Cross-Cultural Communication

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August 19, 2008
Culture

The mental programming of members of a group to include ways of doing things and ideas which make this group different from other groups. It includes

• artifacts—arrowheads, plates, bombs
• concepts—beliefs, values, superstitions, etc.
• and behaviors—concepts put into practice
Cross-Cultural Communication

• attempts by members of one group from one culture to recognize other groups inside or outside this culture;
• attempts by members of one group to express itself to members of the other;
• attempts by members of one group to respect the differences expressed by members of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} group
Understanding Cross-Culture Communication in US Classroom

- to increase ability to establish relations
- to aid in communication with minimal loss or distortion
- to achieve a high level of compliance among those involved
ITAs @ WPI

- Two-thirds of all teaching assistants are international.
- Some departments have a majority of ITAs from one particular country.
- Departments with wide variety of ITAs tend to receive fewer complaints.
- Departments that screen for ESL abilities get better speakers.
Objectives of Exercises

• sensitize TAs to presence of students from other cultures in classroom participation
• enhance understanding of the dynamics of cross-cultural communication in classroom
• learn management skills to promote effective teaching
• give TAs experienced in cross-culture opportunity to share insights
Cross-Culture Workshop

- Introduction (5 mins)
- Group formation (4) (5 mins)
  (NAmerica/SAmerica)+(Europe/India)+(neighbors/East Asia)
- Scenarios
  1. Image & Stereotypes (10 mins)
     -- Report Presentation (3 mins X 4)
  2. Typical Classroom (10 mins)
     -- Report Presentation (3 mins X 4)
Do/Don’t in Cross-Cultural Communication (1)

• International Students
  1. Write and pronounce your name carefully
  2. Explain in details; give examples
  3. Explain more than with your compatriots
  4. Ask questions when not sure
  5. Show active interest
  6. Learn idiomatic English
  7. Go outside your comfort group often!
Cross Cultural Communication (2)

- **US Students**
  1. Avoid idiomatic English when possible
  2. Avoid reference to TV/sports idioms
  3. Speak more slowly and loudly
  4. Emphasize and repeat what is important
  5. Be friendly and show interest
  6. Get to know internationals
In the Classroom

• use plain language
• offer benefit of the doubt
• appeal with a variety of leaning styles
• be descriptive more than judgmental
• provide statistics and verification
• listen, observe and learn
• speak slower and clearer....
Surviving the Multi-cultural Classroom

• Know your own cultural values/identity
• Not confuse avoidance of uncertainty with avoidance of risk
• Shy away from stereotyping
• Respect values even if….
• Increase respect for human rights
Resources
