TEACHING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

A Q&A SESSION FOR IMPROVED INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE CLASSROOM

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Defining “Non-native Speakers of English”

- Visa students (“traditional” international students)

- Domestic students by paperwork
  - Children of immigrants (“Generation 1.5”)
  - Recent immigrants who are naturalized

- What they have in common:
  - Language issues originating in their native tongue
  - Limited or no prior exposure to academic writing

Remember!
One’s first language is one’s foundation for one’s additional language.
## Int’l Students in Global Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US:</td>
<td>886,052</td>
<td>(4% of university students; 26,406 in Indiana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK:</td>
<td>481,050</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China:</td>
<td>356,499</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France:</td>
<td>295,092</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany:</td>
<td>282,201</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia:</td>
<td>247,093</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada:</td>
<td>237,635</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan:</td>
<td>135,519</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Atlas of Student Mobility (2013)*
As of Fall 2015, IUPUI has 2019 international students.
EAP Graduate and Undergraduate Students’ Countries of Origin in Fall 2012

- China 29%
- Saudi Arabia 41%
- Other 12%
- Russia 1%
- India 4%
- South Korea 3%
- Nigeria 3%
- Qatar 1%
- Iran 1%
- Indonesia 2%
- Iraq 1%
- Thailand 2%
Deficit or Benefit?

Difference and “deficits” stands out

A teacher should:

• Find the similarities and points of contact
• Show interest
• Suspend judgement
• Embrace that L1 and C1 provide a basis for development
Why Interaction?

• Learning is supported when:
  
  • Learners interact with teachers and peers around authentic learning tasks in which they have an opportunity to negotiate meaning-linguistic and content (The Interaction Hypothesis, Long, 1990).
  
  • While interacting, learners receive input and produce output.

WE WANT INTERACTION

Lack of interaction can delay language development and lower the learner’s self-confidence (linguistic and overall).

http://conferences.illinois.edu/facultyretreat/videos.html
Brainstorm (5 min)
Interaction Barrier

- When you’ve studied another language in another country, what was challenging about interacting in class?

- As a teacher now, what do you think is difficult for your international students when they interact with peers and instructors in class? What might cause the difficulties you observed?
What Influences Learning and Participation

- Cultural factors
- Linguistic factors
- Personal factors
Cultural Factors

• Important to be aware of and compare, but do not stereotype. Culture is dynamic and just one of many variables.

• Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions
  
  • High vs Low Power Distance
  • Individualism vs Collectivism
  • High vs Low Uncertainty Avoidance

http://www.geert-hofstede.com/
# Power Distance in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low PDI</th>
<th>High PDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student-centered approach</td>
<td>• Teacher-centered approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Class discussion</td>
<td>• One-way flow of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality of learning dependent on student effort</td>
<td>• Quality of learning dependent on the excellence of the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students ask questions and participate in discussion</td>
<td>• Students remain silent during lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Open office hours</td>
<td>• Instructors are inaccessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Informal relationship</td>
<td>• Formal relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Two-way evaluation process (Teacher ← → Student)</td>
<td>• One way evaluation process (Teacher → Student)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Student → Teacher)
PDI Country Comparison

![PDI Country Comparison Chart](chart.png)
## Individualism & Collectivism in Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualist</th>
<th>Collectivist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Students are expected to speak up and share opinions on their own initiative.</td>
<td>• Sharing personal opinions is normally not done without group sanctioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Many students avoid group work and prefer to work alone</td>
<td>• Students are accustomed to group work, and may not like working on their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students expect to be treated as individuals separate from their background</td>
<td>• Students may expect to be treated a certain way according to their background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Achievement for the self</td>
<td>• Achievement for the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individualism Country Comparison

The graph compares individualism scores across different countries. The countries included are U.S., U.K., China, Arab World, West Africa, Mexico, India, and Iran. The U.S. has the highest individualism score, followed by the U.K., with China, Arab World, West Africa, Mexico, India, and Iran having lower scores.
## Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) in the Classroom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low UAI</th>
<th>High UAI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| - Open-ended learning situations  
- Broad assignments  
- Flexibility  
- Instructors will often admit to not knowing the answer  
- Many different answers could be considered correct. | - Highly structured learning environment  
- Detailed assignments with strict timetables  
- Students rewarded for accuracy  
- Teachers are gurus with all the answers  
- There is only one correct answer |
UAI Country Comparison

![UAI Chart]

- U.S.
- U.K.
- China
- Arab World
- West Africa
- Mexico
- India
- Iran
What Influences Learning and Participation

- Linguistic factors
  - L1 transfer
  - Low proficiency
    - General
    - Academic

- Cultural factors
  - Beliefs about
    - teacher’s role
    - student roles
    - conversation
    - classroom interaction

- Personal factors
  - Personality
  - Motivation
  - Holistic vs. detail-oriented
  - Other?
Linguistic Factors

PROBLEM

- L1 negative transfer
- Low proficiency
  - General
  - Academic

SOLUTIONS

- Offer resources: EAP, OIA, University Writing Center, Bepko Learning Center, tutors in the community
- Support learning: class notes, written instructions (clear and concise), lists of key terms, websites, visual aids
- Make time for quick self-assessment exercises in class
- Organize problem-based pair- and group-work in class
- Invite students to office hours
- Adapt the way you speak
- Universal design
Real Language

- John: Jaheetyet?
- Ann: No, joo?
- John: Well then, letsavlunch.
- Ann: OK, wherdawannaeeet?
- John: Howbout Starbucks?
- John: I knowhacha mean, butheyav good sanwiches.

Group Activity

• After watching a few minutes of this Macroeconomics lecture, discuss the following in your groups:

  • What aspects of the lecture you think might be challenging for non-native English speaking students?

  • If you were giving this lecture, how might you modify it to better accommodate non-native English speaking students?

Listening

• Listening is not a passive skill
  • Requires concentration
  • Complex cognitive processes are at work when we listen: activation of prior knowledge, decoding of linguistic code and information about the topic
  • In academic contexts, we often read or take notes as we listen

• Challenges for successful listening
  • Noisy or distracting environments
  • Content or language beyond the listener’s current level

• Real spoken language is very messy

LISTEN AND WRITE DOWN WHAT COULD CAUSE TROUBLE
What We Teach NNSs About Listening Challenges

“Real spoken language is real messy”

- Contractions
- False starts
- Slang
- Linking & reduction
- Fillers
- Ellipsis & assimilation
MICASE

• Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English
  
  • Transcripts of lectures, advising sessions, study session, seminars, etc.

  • http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?c=micase;page=simple
Contractions & Fillers

Contractions

• Classic
  • can’t, won’t, shouldn’t
    • This “t” is often unpronounced
  • Unexpected/infrequent
  • …that book’ll explain it…
  • …these methods’re essential to understand…

Fillers

• Um, er, uh,…
• Words or phrases can also become fillers, like “like” or “actually”
False Starts

“No it's not being we don't, yeah. we don't believe it's coming from the mitochondria because the calcium occurs before the gradient changes…we haven't triggered the permeability transition and, the calcium can…we can prevent the calcium response with extracellular key layers.”

Less common in lectures (based on lecturer experience) and more common in advising sessions.

Examples from MICASE
Slang
We write academically, but we speak *communicatively*…for native speakers, which means we use slang very frequently.

• “…once you retook the class you did perfectly well. [S3: okay ] which i think might be an important thing to demonstrate to the medical schools but i'm gonna pass the buck and…” (advising session)

• “well the um, the uh effective, constituents, are uh phosphates, which *work up to* about two hundred and fifty C, chlorides which *work up to* about four hundred, and sulfides which *work up to* about four hundred and thirty.” (Engineering Seminar)

• Examples from MICASE
Linking: when sounds at the end of one word connect to the beginning of the next
  • “I seethatyou’re focusing on Nietzsche…”

Reduction: loss of sounds or words in naturally occurring speech
  • wanna, (a)bout
Ellipsis & Assimilation

Ellipsis: loss of major grammatical parts of sentence
  • How bout this approach?
  • What of this theory?

Assimilation: when sounds are lost AND words are merged
  • “…so the things that you find underneath the cortex really will tell you a whole lot about how the brain's put together and how it works. wow. okay. it's gonna hafta be four to a brain.”

Brief activity!
Some Key Strategies We Teach NNS

- Listening for stress in spoken language
- Logical organizers/transitions
- Recognizing redundancy
- Honing in on the main idea
- Mapping in notes
- Prediction
- Using other students as a resource
- Asking permission to record lecture
- Being prepared
Strategies Professors Can Implement

In lectures:

- Build in clear transitions
- Build in pauses
- Build in redundancy
- Enunciate
- Mark main ideas (use gestures, intonation, and introductory phrases)
- Design visuals that are clearly labeled and uncluttered
- Interact with visuals while lecturing (ex: point)
- Allow students to record lectures (even suggest it)
Strategies Professors Can …

In answering questions during lectures:

- Scaffold for students in trying to get a clear answer instead of just asking them to repeat an entire question.
  - I understood everything until the words “…be applied to _______,” but I didn’t understand the words after that.
- You want to know how this method can be applied to what?
Strategies Professors Can …

In office hours

- Use text interactively
- Diagramming/drawing

- What other strategies do you implement?
- What other challenges have you encountered?
Ways to Help – Class Discussion

https://cmu.app.box.com/s/n8og5nrp0cp7wckg3xltikjkoa9x5om3 (min 5:20)

Do:
• Explain the value of discussion-based learning
• Foster inclusion by infusing international examples into the curriculum. Provide background on local examples.
• Encourage int’l students to share their specialized knowledge
• Allow enough time for the student to collect their thoughts if you call on them directly.

Don’t:
• Avoid calling on an international student because you are afraid you won’t understand them.
• Expect int’l students to represent their entire country or culture
Ways to Help – Group Work

Do:
• Clarify when group work is expected and when it is not allowed
• Explain the value of hearing the opinions of classmates who are not subject experts.
• Assign groups for discussion – students tend to gravitate to other students who are like themselves.
• Give clear instructions on group work goals.
• Make clear to the whole class the value of diverse perspectives

Don’t:
• Put all of the international students together in a group for a discussion or project.
Ways to Help – Reading

Do:

• Pre-teach vocabulary and basic concepts, or provide a glossary of terms.
• Provide a list of “key questions” to consider when reading
• Tell students which parts of the readings are the main focus
• Tell students what you hope for them to gain from the readings – memorized facts or general concepts?
Ways to Help – Assessment & Feedback

Do:
• Provide various opportunities/methods for students to demonstrate knowledge of a topic
• Consider allowing extra test time for non-native speakers of English
• Be explicit in explaining grading practices.

Don’t:
• Offer cryptic feedback on term papers, such as “develop this” or “?”.
• Focus only on grammatical problems, unless you are teaching grammar.
• Assume that students know how participation affects their grade.
Ways to Help – Writing

Http://writing.umn.edu/sws/voices.html

Do:
• Provide clear instructions
• Offer models
• Break down long assignments into smaller ones
• Provide feedback
• Explain expectations (clarity, genre, length, plagiarism)

Don’t:
• Be vague
• Prohibit L1 use in early stages of writing
• Get hung up on form (grammar, punctuation)
References & Suggested Resources


References...


References…

- Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English. Accessed from [http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?cmicase;pagesimple](http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?cmicase;pagesimple). (MICASE is an interface to the on-line, searchable part of the collection of transcripts of academic speech events recorded at the University of Michigan)
- Student Writing Support: University of Minnesota. Accessed from [http://writing.umn.edu/sws/voices.html](http://writing.umn.edu/sws/voices.html). (The website includes videos in which Minnesota’s multilingual writers share their insights about learning to write American Academic English.)
thank you