

*Professional Development Series*

INTERNATIONALIZING  
LEARNING THROUGH  
LINKED ASSIGNMENTS



AN INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

*by Tom Whalley*



**BCCIE**

INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING  
THROUGH LINKED ASSIGNMENTS:  
An Instructor's Manual

Winter 2000

WITH CASE STUDIES BY THE FACULTY OF DOUGLAS COLLEGE  
EDITED BY TOM WHALLEY

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Tom Whalley  
New Westminster BC,  
September, 2000



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# FOREWORD

## *What is this manual about?*

Imagine Rip Van Winkle as a community college instructor in British Columbia awakened from a 25-year slumber by the Dean. Consider his surprise and confusion as he looks out over the diversity of faces in his classroom—not to mention his reaction to the sex, age and complexion of the bemused Dean! In the past quarter century of his hypothetical sleep, the make-up of communities both inside and outside institutions of higher education in BC has changed beyond recognition. In my own institution, no easily recognized majority type of student exists; there is instead a plurality. Refugees, new and older immigrants, international students, fourth and fifth generation students of older ethnic communities and First Nations students, learners young and not so young, mingle on our campuses and in our classes. These students will graduate to live and work in local and international environments characterized by this same diversity.

If we educators are to provide an experience that matters to such students, what they learn must be relevant in these new environments. Therefore, far from being the problematic factor as it is sometimes viewed, the diversity in our classes, truly unimaginable 25 years ago, is a pearl of great value. All students have the right to an education that honours and recognizes who they are. All educators have a responsibility to relate learning to a meaningful context. Happily these two imperatives are complementary. Recognizing and honouring the pearl, the diversity of our students, creates the alchemy in our classes to produce the knowledge, skills and attitudes that add up to a relevant education.

This manual is about developing strategies to foster inclusion and respect for all learners, to promote good citizenship locally and globally and to integrate an international dimension across the curriculum. It promotes a specific pedagogy—a type of assignment that has become known as a *linked assignment* since it builds in or “links” new dimensions to existing assignments. Linked assignments actively engage learners of different cultural backgrounds in collaborative learning tasks in order to achieve learning outcomes related to what may be described as international or intercultural or multicultural knowledge, skills and attitudes.

This resource was written to provide support for faculty in their efforts to create such linked assignments. It includes general background information on the concept of linked assignments as well as specific information relevant to the design, facilitation and assessment of these assignments. Seven case studies provide model assignments. The final section provides worksheets for systematically working through the design of a linked assignment.

### *Who is this manual for?*

This manual is for all instructors who are committed to providing learning opportunities that respect the diversity of students and that will prepare them to apply new skills and knowledge in multicultural and international environments. It will be especially relevant to instructors whose classes include students from a range of cultural backgrounds and experience. English as a second language (ESL) instructors will find help to design activities that can integrate ESL classes with other types of classes in order to meet mutually important goals.

The broadest audience for this manual is instructors on the lookout for innovative approaches to supporting quality, relevant learning in their classes. Linked assignments have many of the characteristics of good practice as it is evolving inside the idea of the learning paradigm popularized by Barr and Tag (1995) and others. Such good practice is based upon at least three assumptions:

1. Knowledge is created and constructed by learners using existing knowledge as the framework for this creation.
2. Learning is most powerful when students are engaged in active learning through tasks that are cooperative, collaborative and supportive of the engagement of all learners.
3. Good practice is learner-centred; it connects learning to the needs of the learner and honours the resources the learner brings to the classroom.

Each of these three assumptions is embedded within the practice of linked assignments. First, in linked assignments, students' experience of their own culture is recognized as a powerful pool of expert knowledge in the classroom. Second, linked assignments engage learners in a shared task with clear responsibility to contribute their own experience and perspective to the collective in completing the task. Third, the students, not texts, are the central learning resource in the classroom. Moreover, the application of learning is determined by the connections that learners make between new knowledge and skills and their particular circumstances. In this way, the encouragement of learner agency, that is the students' ability to take charge of their own learning, is built into the structure of the linked assignments.

Instructors who are drawn to approach their work with these assumptions in mind must be prepared to shift their roles. Using linked assignments involves a shift from conceiving the instructor's expertise not primarily as a content expert, to conceiving it as a designer of learning activities. Instructors retain, however, a role in encouraging students to think critically and to be thoughtful; this is not an approach that assumes everything said must be accepted as accurate. Such de-centering of instructors as content experts means that they must be prepared to recognize the expertise of their students as a major source of

knowledge in the classroom. This stance places instructors in partnership with students. Since linked assignments often take us into complex and emotionally charged kinds of learning, this different role for instructors is not without its stresses, as the afterword to this volume makes clear.

The most specific audience for this manual is instructors committed to the internationalization of higher education. In BC, this mission is defined by Francis (1993) as “a process that prepares the community for successful participation in an increasingly interdependent world. In Canada, our multicultural reality is the stage for internationalization. This process should infuse all facets of the post-secondary education system, fostering global understanding and developing skills for effective living and working in a diverse world”(p. 5). Linked assignments are an important response to this mission.

### ***How do we make internationalization meaningful at the classroom level?***

The literature advocating the internationalization of higher education has been helpful in providing a strong rationale for this mission but rather less helpful when it comes to making concrete suggestions for ways in which our classroom activities might contribute to this agenda. One result of this lack of direction is that enthusiasm for internationalization among faculty often fails to translate into changes in pedagogy and curriculum content. Almost by default, then, other aspects of the internationalization agenda, such as revenue generation, become much more fully developed in comparison. Jane Knight, a prominent commentator on internationalization, has noted this failure to advance the academic agenda for internationalization and warns, “If improving higher education is the primary goal of internationalization, not the development of international export markets, it is essential to find the balance between income generation motives, and academic ones” (Knight, 1999, p. 8).

Fortunately, this situation is not static. Faculty in BC are developing a number of practices that strike the balance that Dr. Knight believes to be essential. For example, faculty have responded to the challenge of infusing an international dimension into the curriculum by making substantive changes to existing curricula. The British Columbia Centre for International Education’s (BCCIE) Internationalization Innovation Grants and the Internationalizing the Curriculum grants managed by the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) have resulted in substantive internationalization of the curriculum. Examples of work to date can be found in sociology, early childhood education and English literature. In some cases, entirely new courses have been developed. Initiatives of these sorts are major undertakings that require commensurate amounts of time and money. Faculty have also attempted to add an international/intercultural dimension in their classes in less intensive initiatives. For example, some make arrangements with English as a second language classes to engage these students as participants in assignments. Against this backdrop, the idea of linked assignments as a unique strategy to add an international dimension to learning has developed.

### *How are linked assignments a strategy for internationalizing learning?*

Linked assignments are usually evolutionary developments. That is, they arise from an existing assignment when the instructor undertakes to add a very specific new outcome to it. First, the assignment's existing outcomes are supplemented by (or transformed into) international/intercultural/multicultural learning outcomes. Second, the assignment explicitly engages students with diverse backgrounds in collaboration. The structure of the task should involve this diverse mix of students in authentic intercultural communication while completing the assignment. There are two distinct types of learning outcomes involved in this approach. One type of learning outcome is related to the content of the assignment. Here students share their diverse background knowledge with one another. The other type of outcome is related to the relational dimension of the assignment. These latter outcomes contribute to the development of intercultural communication skills. When reflected upon, the experience of communicating in culturally diverse groups becomes a resource for helping learners become more interculturally competent. In summary, these two types of outcomes seek to relate students' learning to the international or intercultural context in which they will apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes they acquire from the assignment.

The case studies in this manual, records of the work of seven faculty members who took part in the Internationalizing Learning Project, provide a rich illustration of the principles and practices of linked assignments. Read together with the material that follows in the next section, these studies will add another level of detail to this short description here and give the reader a fuller sense of what a powerful pedagogy linked assignments can be for internationalizing learning.

### *What is the Internationalizing Learning Project?*

This project has its origins in work that has been done at Douglas College over the last decade. English as second language instructors have frequently had their classes meet with those of colleagues in programs such as the Resident Care Attendant Program, Early Childhood Education Program and others. The purpose of this collaboration was to give the local students access to information about the cultures they might soon work with and to give the ESL students the experience of relating to non-ESL students and information about the experience of being a student in career and technical programs. In addition, the Bilingual Language and Culture Institute, operating for a few years in the early 90s, integrated Japanese, or Mandarin-speaking Chinese students and Canadian students studying each others' language in highly integrated, intensive six-week summer immersion programs.

In the winter of 1997, Gillies Malnarich, Coordinator of Douglas Development (the staff and faculty development office), and I began a series of informal discussions about how an international dimension might be added to courses at the college. We quickly recognized that the kind of pedagogy evolving in the twinning of learners in ESL and other programs might provide a vehicle for this initiative. In contrast to the resource intense

task of internationalizing curriculum, we saw in this emerging pedagogy an approach to internationalization that could focus on transforming one assignment at a time by building in or linking to it, intercultural or international goals. We felt that this might be a more manageable approach to internationalization for faculty. This has indeed proved to be the case. The practice of adding or linking new goals to an assignment and adding the presence of culturally diverse students to the class has led to the use of the name *linked assignments* to describe these assignments. Internationalizing learning has been adopted as a description to distinguish this approach from the larger scale strategy of internationalizing curriculum as a means of adding an international dimension to courses.

Gillies and I soon recognized that efforts to integrate culturally diverse learners at the college and similar activities in other colleges had system-wide significance. As a result, on May 26, 1997, a one day workshop, supported financially by BCCIE and C2T2 and organized by Douglas Development, was held at Simon Fraser Harbour Centre in Vancouver. Drawing together from around the province nearly 30 faculty members who had an interest in internationalizing learning in their classes, this workshop both identified the range of existing practice and demonstrated the widespread interest in more assignments of this nature.

As a follow-up in the fall of 1998, BCCIE provided funds to launch the Internationalizing Learning Project at Douglas College as a means of advancing this work in the province. The project had three phases. First, faculty developed and implemented linked assignments in their classes; they later wrote case studies recording their work. Second, faculty presented the results of their work in workshops for their colleagues at the college and again at the BCCIE 1999 Summer Institute in Victoria, BC. The funds also provided the resources for the third phase of the project, the production of this publication.

Preparation for the work faculty were to do in their classes as part of the Internationalizing Learning Project helped refine the idea of linked assignments significantly. First, it became clearer that linked assignments did not necessarily have to involve an ESL class since cultural diversity is a feature of almost all classes at the college. Second, the distinction between adding new content and adding an intercultural communication dimension to learning also became clearer. Thus the notion of a content and relational dimension emerged. This distinction, as with other parts of the concept of linked assignments, is being refined. The Internationalizing Learning Project continues to evolve through the practice of those who participated and of those who have learned of the idea of linked assignments and tried such assignments in their own classrooms.

*Is the project an ongoing process?*

Yes, the experience of internationalizing learning recorded in the case studies here provides a snapshot of the beginning of a developmental process for the faculty involved. Faculty have continued to, or plan to, develop their practice and refine their skills in using linked assignments in their classrooms. This is a testament to both the power of the idea of linked assignments and the commitment of faculty to give life to the concept of internationalization to benefit their students. This publication has been written in the hope that many more faculty will begin to integrate linked assignments as part of their practice.

# SECTION 1

## CREATING A LINKED ASSIGNMENT: ASSEMBLING THE PIECES

### *Purpose*

The questions addressed here are those that are frequently asked by faculty with an interest in internationalizing learning. The answers offered try to strike a balance between too much detail and too little. This section is meant to provide a clear explanation of the concept of linked assignments and guide you through the process of integrating international or intercultural or multicultural learning outcomes into a frequently used assignment. It also provides tips to help you review the learning activities you will use to achieve the outcomes built into the assignment and finally, lays out some options for assessing students' learning.

### *Objectives*

By the end of the section, you will be able to:

- understand the concept of internationalizing learning
- understand linked assignments and how they help to internationalize learning
- understand the importance of a learning outcomes approach
- organize learning activities to meet the learning outcomes and to assess the outcomes.

## INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING

### *Objectives*

By the end of the section, you will be able to:

- understand what it means to internationalize learning
- understand linked assignments and their purpose
- understand why you should consider using linked assignments.

### *What does it mean to internationalize learning?*

Internationalizing learning can be understood as a pedagogy that seeks to focus students' learning in contexts that are intercultural (or multicultural) and international. The brief reports of learning from students and instructors presented below provide something of the flavour of what it means to internationalize learning.

*I learned that I can interpret things that are said differently from what they actually mean [in another culture].*

*I learned about how to communicate with people who are totally different from me, [culturally] and to understand and communicate with each other and I also learned that verbal communication is not enough; sometimes nonverbal communication is very important.*

*I value the experience I have had learning about diversity and teamwork. I will no longer be afraid to learn about other people's cultures; this will only broaden my lifelong learning.*

*When students are encouraged to bring their culture into the classroom, they may question concepts that are fundamental to the discipline.*

These comments are taken from accounts of students and faculty evaluating their experience in the linked assignments compiled in this volume. The learning reported above points to a number of the broad outcomes of internationalizing learning: a rethinking of basic course concepts from a different perspective; new knowledge from other traditions; the development of broad intercultural communication skills; and the emergence of positive attitudes to people of other cultures.

These four quotes touch on only a little of the knowledge, skills and attitudes that learners will need to function effectively in their personal and vocational lives in contexts which are increasingly culturally pluralistic in nature. Regularly used, linked assignments hold the promise of developing depth in learners' international or intercultural skills.

### *What are linked assignments?*

The term linked assignments derives its name from the fact that these assignments incorporate two linkages. The first of the two links new outcomes—international/intercultural learning outcomes—to the existing assignment. This may mean transforming existing outcomes to include an international/intercultural dimension or it may mean adding a new outcome related to the content of the assignment. The former approach is found in most case studies in this volume. For example the Geography 170 assignment outcome which asked students to produce a competent cartographic design was elaborated to include a condition that the design be culturally appropriate to the community for which it was designed. An example of the latter approach is the Physics 107 assignment outcome which asked students to become aware of and learn to adjust to different expectations for the way teams work in physics laboratories. This outcome was not previously associated with the course; it is an example of an international/intercultural learning outcome added to an assignment.

The second of the two linkages integrates learners in purposeful ways. Groups or teams of students made of up of diverse backgrounds are encouraged to work together collaboratively while doing assignments. The connections that are promoted among learners in linked assignments are intended to achieve diversity in the group. Built into the design of the assignment, then, is the expectation that students of diverse backgrounds will work together while completing the assignment.

### *How do linked assignments help internationalize learning?*

Linked assignments help to internationalize learning in two ways. First, they add international/intercultural content to the assignment and, second, they encourage students with different cultural backgrounds to collaborate in learning and to bring their diverse perspectives to bear on the assignment. The extent to which the students' learning is internationalized depends on two conditions: the depth of the international dimension that can be added to the content of the assignment and the diversity of background experience of the students.

With regard to the first condition, there are obviously some disciplines with greater potential than others. The second condition is especially important in disciplines such as those in the sciences where an international dimension to content is easily developed. Even where the content of an assignment is not internationalized, students working in diverse groups can still meet a variety of international/intercultural outcomes related to their interactions. In cases where the diversity and background experience of students is limited, partnerships with other classes, particularly English as a second language classes, offer some options for addressing this limitation. Electronically mediated partnerships with overseas cohorts are also an option to consider.

### *What advantages do linked assignments have as an approach to internationalization?*

The internationalizing learning approach has a number of advantages. For faculty, it gives their teaching expertise at least as much weight as their content expertise, since student knowledge rather than faculty knowledge is central to the learning experience. Faculty are called to design learning activities and develop a classroom ethos that is student-centred and that supports all students' contributions in the construction of knowledge. Another advantage of this approach is that it requires faculty to focus on a single assignment at a time. It makes explicit the international or intercultural goals that are implicit or latent in existing assignments. Finally, it permits faculty to promote students' diverse cultural backgrounds as a valuable resource.

For students, these assignments are empowering because they reward more than mastery of textbook content alone. Linked assignments recognize students' inherent knowledge and experience of their own culture as the basis for constructing knowledge. They give them permission to talk about their culture and present themselves as *who they really are* in a safe environment, since they provide opportunities for students of diverse cultural backgrounds to work together in a climate of mutual respect. Finally, when students who are culturally outside the mainstream become aware that their difference is treated as an asset and not a liability, their self-esteem is raised and better academic performance often follows.

### *How do I begin to design a linked assignment?*

The process of designing a linked assignment begins with the question: Where is there room within my regular course assignments to integrate learning outcomes related to intercultural/international knowledge, skills and attitudes?

This question has two implications from the outset. First, it implies that you should start with an existing assignment rather than design something entirely new. Second, it implies that you should take a learning outcomes approach to the assignment. Many readers will be familiar with the term *learning outcome*. For those who are not, the definition presented by Stiehl and Lewchuck (2000) is a good starting point for further investigation: "Outcomes are clear statements of what students will be able to do outside the classroom with what they have learned" (p. 51).

Another definition of learning outcomes used by Stanley and Mason (1996) in their work identifying international learning outcomes highlights the link with knowledge, skill and attitudes: "Learning outcomes are statements of the results of the learning process. They identify what the learner is able to do or perform. They may include statements about the learner's knowledge, skills, abilities and values" (p.7).

### *Why should I consider a learning outcomes approach to this work?*

The learning outcomes approach has a particularly natural fit to the work of internationalizing learning. The purpose of internationalizing learning is to enable learners to function effectively as citizens and employers or employees in multicultural communities and international environments. The learning is directed to developing a broad ability that may be described as international or intercultural competency. The learning associated with the international or intercultural outcomes is meant to have very concrete applications outside the classroom. It is knowledge to be used.

Each case study in this volume focuses on the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes that have application in the classroom but that are transferable to parallel situations outside the classroom. Two examples should suffice. The Communications 215 assignment developed knowledge, skills and attitudes related to culture's influence on nonverbal behaviour that the students will apply in their work as certified dental assistants. And through the Office Administration 245 assignment, students developed an understanding of how culture influenced the functioning of multicultural teams. The experience of being part of a multicultural team while doing the assignment provided an opportunity to become effective participants on such teams through the experience of analyzing team dynamics and collaboratively developing strategies to respond effectively.

## **IDENTIFYING INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### *Objectives*

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- identify international/intercultural learning outcomes
- understand the difference between content outcomes and relational outcomes
- understand the danger of students' developing stereotypes.

### *What are international/intercultural learning outcomes?*

The term international/intercultural learning outcome was coined for the purposes of the Internationalizing Learning Project. The more widely known term, *international learning outcome*, appears in Stanley and Mason (1996) who derive the meaning of the term from two sources. One is the working definition of internationalization found in Francis (1993), which concludes that "the process should infuse all facets of the post-secondary system, fostering global understanding and developing skills for effective living and working in a diverse world"(p.5). The other is the definition implicit in Knight's (1996) recommendation that "identifying the competencies which students require to function as citizens and professionals in a more globalized society is an important challenge to us all" (p. 11).

Stanley and Mason's (1996) work identified a range of outcomes in five categories: English and business etiquette; basic skills in an additional language or languages; Canadian and global perspectives; intercultural competence; and coping and resiliency skills. For the most part, these outcomes are proposed as general knowledge, skills and attitudes that graduates should have acquired through a course of studies.

Although their work provides a useful general conception, instructors will need to work at a greater level of detail to identify international learning outcomes when designing a linked assignment. It is usually not necessary to look beyond the outcomes that are already associated with an assignment to identify an international/intercultural learning outcome. In fact, the design of a linked assignment requires instructors to reconstruct the context of their outcomes to see how the existing outcome can be transformed, not replaced. In the transformation, the international/intercultural dimension is added. Communications 125 takes an existing assignment requiring students to identify the criteria for an effective impromptu speech as the basis for developing their own skill, and then expands it to include a requirement that students investigate criteria for effective impromptu speeches in other cultures.

It is my preference to use the term international/intercultural learning outcomes in this publication. In the context of developing linked assignments, intercultural learning outcomes have been given equality of status. While recognizing that BC's economy increasingly provides employment in international firms here and abroad, instructors in BC colleges work for the most part with students who will live and work locally and for whom the focus on multiculturalism is significant. By twinning international and intercultural, I also seek to remind instructors that their outcomes could also have relevance to an international context and to encourage them to imagine ways in which students might use what they have learned abroad as well as at home in the changing BC economy.

### ***Content outcomes and relational outcomes***

Two levels of international/intercultural learning outcomes are associated with linked assignments. Content-related outcomes are those derived from the course content. They refer to the growth of knowledge of the subject area. Relational outcomes are those which are derived from the students' experience of relating to their peers during the assignment. They refer to the experience of communication and describe the growth in intercultural communication skills that can result from this experience. In some cases, the two types of outcomes are closely linked and not easy to distinguish. For example, in the Office Administration linked assignment in this manual, the content level outcome was learning the different factors that impacted expectations for teamwork while the relational level outcome included such skills as learning to adjust behaviour to different team members' expectations.

### ***How can I identify content-related international/intercultural learning***

### *outcomes?*

Since these content-related learning outcomes are best developed out of the existing outcomes, the challenge is to see the assignment from a different perspective. It is important that the existing learning outcome not lose any of its clarity and that adding an additional dimension to the outcome does not make it unmanageable. What is needed, then, is a strategy that can be employed to transform existing outcomes into international/intercultural outcomes that are achievable in the time given and with the assessment method available. The case studies provide examples of manageable outcomes.

To identify content for an intercultural/international learning outcome, we can begin by asking what students need to know to apply the content of the assignment in contexts where there are differences in one or more of the following factors:

- nationality (e.g., Japanese, Mexican)
- ethnicity (e.g., Pan-national: Arab; intra-national Chinese Canadian)
- regional affiliation (e.g., Easterner)
- socioeconomic or social class
- educational level
- religious affiliation
- political affiliation
- age
- sex
- physical ability
- sexual orientation
- organizational affiliation (e.g., university, multinational)
- departmental affiliation (e.g., personnel, accounting).

It is not necessary to develop an exhaustive list of questions covering all conceivable differences (although the list above provides pretty broad coverage of the elements of subjective culture), but it is important to try to imagine the diversity found in the real situations where students will be applying what they learn. This exercise can help us to see how the content needs to be adapted. In many cases, simply making the content relevant to the diverse students we teach will direct us to appropriate new learning outcomes. A commitment on our part to having our students see themselves represented in course content will suggest international/intercultural learning outcomes.

### *How can I identify relational international/intercultural outcomes?*

Relational outcomes refer to the learning that arises from the experience learners have interacting with one another, along with their reflections on that interaction. Many of the learning outcomes associated with the relational dimension may be thought of as unintentional learning, or skills that while learned are never named and never rewarded in the classroom. All students who succeed in completing a task in a diverse classroom have learned something about being an effective intercultural communicator. Building

relational learning outcomes into assignments allows students to focus on broader aspects of learning, intended and unintended, to articulate that learning and to be rewarded for it.

While the content outcomes are unique to the subject areas of the assignments, the relational outcomes will arise from the nature of the students' tasks. As a result, linked assignments in different disciplines may have similar relational outcomes. It is useful to think of this kind of learning as the development of generic intercultural communication skills. Again, the challenge is to create clear learning outcomes that are manageable. As is true for content-related outcomes, an essential feature of manageability for relational outcomes is that they can be achieved within a single assignment and that they be assessable. A strategy is needed to help in the development of these goals. This aid can be a series of categories that will focus our attention on what students can learn from their interaction with each other.

Outcomes can be organized around these themes:

- culture and cultural stereotypes (e.g., adjusting for the influence of elements of culture)
- nonverbal communication (e.g., interpreting the meaning of gesture)
- verbal communication (e.g., varying the expectations for direct or indirect communication)
- diversity-positive attitudes (e.g., welcoming multiple perspectives)
- interpersonal perception (e.g., restraining one's tendency to quick judgment)
- knowledge of self as a culturally shaped being (e.g., being clear about one's assumptions).

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, although along with an investigation of the role of power and privilege, these topics could form the basis of a nearly complete diversity training program. Most of the learning outcomes associated with the relational dimension will be found somewhere in themes listed above. Examples of the kind of learning associated with these categories are developed below.

### **CULTURE AND CULTURAL STEREOTYPES**

Students develop a working definition of culture through the process of being asked to reflect on and describe elements of their own culture and through the process of making it a topic of conversation in class. They become aware of elements, such as nonverbal behaviour and values, which affect intercultural interaction. They have an opportunity as well to see the impact of sex, age, and other variables on creating both inter-cultural and intra-cultural variation.

Students also begin to gain insight into the dynamics of stereotyping as well as insight into the impact of these stereotypes on the effectiveness of teamwork. In some cases, students may learn some rudimentary techniques for avoiding stereotypic thinking.

Working collaboratively in an environment where culturally influenced expectations for work have been made explicit is an excellent experience in this regard. It provides a training ground for students to see how misleading their stereotypic view of a partner's culture might be when given a chance to examine it rationally.

#### **NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Students identify elements of nonverbal communication and learn to interpret both familiar and unfamiliar nonverbal cues. In some cases, the assignment itself provides practice in analyzing alternative interpretations.

#### **VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Students are often made conscious of the particular challenges of communicating with others who are using English as a second (or even fourth!) language. Part of this is learning to distinguish different communication styles and other aspects of communication that transcend strict definitions of fluency. Learning to adapt to different communication styles is required for the success of many collaborative classroom activities.

#### **DIVERSITY-POSITIVE ATTITUDES**

Students come to appreciate cultural differences in groups and learn to assess these differences. They gain insights into how purposeful behaviour can be negotiated among groups. Built into each linked assignment is the basic assumption that diversity is an asset, not a liability, and that the work of doing the linked assignment will provide a positive experience with diversity.

#### **DIVERSE TEAM-BUILDING SKILLS**

Students learn to identify the characteristics of a climate that promotes effective work in diverse teams. They learn to manage difference as a resource and, in the course of completing the assignments collaboratively, they develop techniques that make them effective team members.

#### **INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTION**

Students learn that their perceptions play a powerful role in the process of making judgments. Developing facility with the DIE—describe, interpret and evaluate—model through learning to distinguish these three levels of processing information means they are liable to withhold judgement until the facts are in. Successful collaborative work places a great value on interpreting behaviour in its social or cultural context.

#### **KNOWLEDGE OF SELF AS CULTURALLY SHAPED**

This is a large area of learning and includes such things as understanding how values operate in human societies and what one's own value system might be. It involves learners in the exercise of comparing and contrasting one's own and others' values. This knowledge also extends to understanding what it means to be an outsider and how it feels. In some case studies, for example, increased empathy toward immigrants is expressed. The converse of this, of course is, understanding your own privilege and learn-

ing to act in ways to minimize it. Closely allied to this is insight is appreciating the role of power in diverse groups and learning to share power. By working collaboratively on these linked assignments, students confront these issues directly.

#### THE DANGER OF REINFORCING STEREOTYPES IN REGARDS TO RELATIONAL OUTCOMES

Inherent in the linked assignment is the danger that students may develop stereotypic views of other cultures. There is also the danger of students promoting stereotypic views of their own culture if they are unaware of intra-cultural variation. Two strategies can minimize this. First, build into the assignment a step which requires students to interview others, especially those older than they, and get their views on what might be representative of their culture. Second, have students who share a common cultural background discuss their research and share individual perspectives. Both these activities alert students to intra-cultural variation. To this same end, when students are working in teams, it is often valuable to have two students from the same cultural background on the same team; in this way, the other students can experience the differences between them as well as the similarities.

#### *The developmental nature of the learning associated with relational outcomes*

When approaching relational learning outcomes, it is important to remember that the intercultural communication skills involved are developmental in nature. Over the years, scholars in the field of intercultural communication have conceptualized the growth of these skills in a number of ways. A recent example, the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (Bennet, 1993) theorizes stages from denial of difference through to integration of difference. Questions about which of the several models developed is closest to reality aside, the important lesson for instructors is that *communication skills are developmental*.

Knowing that communication skills are developmental carries several implications for our practice. First, we cannot expect to check a skill off a list as learned and then never return to it again. Second, students will have different degrees of success with outcomes depending on where they are in their own development. Third, students' skills will not develop in a linear fashion. Skill levels will fluctuate in the short term while improving in the long run. Fourth, students in groups will be at differing levels of skill and this will complicate group dynamics. These implications seem obvious, but there are surely other implications as well. Ramifications not listed here will be apparent in the context of different content, different tasks and with different students. We will discuss these implications again when we address the matter of assessment.

## ORGANIZING LEARNING AROUND INTERNATIONAL/INTERCULTURAL OUTCOMES

### *Objectives*

At the end of this section, you will be able to:

- prepare students for the assignment
- determine the diversity of your students
- establish a relationship of trust with the students
- ensure sufficient interaction among students.

### *How can I prepare my students for the assignment?*

The first step in introducing the linked assignment successfully is to anticipate the students' reaction to it and prepare the introduction with this in mind. The case studies that follow show that students' reactions to this novel type of assignment will vary. While many students are excited about linked assignments, instructors should anticipate some resistance. One unanticipated source of resistance reported in our studies was of students being "quite vocal with their discomfort as they perceived this assignment as an opportunity to assume racist perspectives." The students asserted that they treated all people the same regardless of who they were and didn't see where knowledge of cultural differences was relevant. To resolve this issue, review carefully with the students the importance that background knowledge of your partner plays in effective interpersonal exchanges. In the English as a second language (ESL) classes some students objected to the assignment saying that there "was too much cultural stuff." Again, the practical link between this knowledge and the goal of being an effective communicator needs to be drawn.

A second and related source of resistance by students (and some instructors) was reluctance to form groups by selecting membership on the basis of cultural background. Pointing out that the presence of different cultural perspectives on a team facilitated the development of knowledge was often enough to have them accept the criteria of cultural background as central to team formation.

Closely related to both these reactions is the possibility, indeed probability, that some of our students are going to be bigoted and resist any attempt to change their negative attitudes toward those who are different from them, or to move beyond an ethnocentric view of the world and the accompanying chauvinistic view of their own culture. Instructors must insist on the need to acknowledge the value and dignity of each individual and each culture in the class. Students will rally to support one another in the face of prejudice if they can expect firm support from the teacher. As Brenda Read, one of the project's participants, noted of her class, "A very small number of students remained insensitive and inflexible. These individuals ultimately paid the price for their attitude either in formal assessment, or in the relationships and support *not* developed with their classmates." As this makes clear, there are consequences for negative attitudes through the class dynamic.

A third source of possible resistance to the assignment may arise when students resent the reflective writing task, which is an important part of the process of internationalizing learning experience. This is especially true in courses such as physics and other sciences where expectations for written work outside lab reports may be minimal. Reward for effort through bonus marks worked well with the Physics class reported on in this manual.

### ***How can I determine the “diversity” resources that my students bring to the classroom?***

A first step is to create an inventory of the diversity in the class. Before developing this inventory, explain to the students the reason that you are interested in identifying the range of diversity. A useful exercise is talking to the class about diversity and getting them to define and establish criteria for identifying significant difference. Students soon realize that everyone is diverse and that people often meet several criteria for diversity simultaneously. Students can then self-identify with the categories that the class has established.

### ***How can I ensure a trusting relationship between my students?***

Sensitively creating an inventory of diversity allows instructors to lay the foundation for a classroom climate where diversity is valued and celebrated. Linked assignments require that students reveal opinions and perspectives that they are accustomed to keeping to themselves. Many students have experienced racism and other forms of discrimination and may be reluctant to expose real feelings and experiences, preferring to present a safe persona. Before students engage in these assignments, it is important to create a safe environment. In my experience, students will speak frankly about difference only when they are confident that their peers have a genuine interest in them and that they will not find themselves discounted or discriminated against because of the differences they reveal. When linked assignments involve engagement with students from another class, especially an ESL class, it is essential that students build a relationship with each other before they begin the work of sharing differing perspectives.

Most case studies presented here make explicit the role of the linked assignment in integrating students of different backgrounds. In some cases they provide powerful testimonials to a deep sense of solidarity that develops between students and to the dramatic transformations that some students undergo when they are invited to bring their whole selves into the classroom.

### ***How can I ensure sufficient interaction between my students during the assignment?***

Achieving the international/intercultural goals of the linked assignment requires that students engage with one another. Often the content goals require that students explore the different perspective that they bring to the content. With regard to the relational goals, since these are lodged in the experience of a diverse group of students communicat-

ing with one another, the assignment must be conceived of as highly interactive. It is beyond the scope of this section to suggest an array of interactive approaches to teaching and learning, but each of the case studies is a record of activities that are highly interactive.

### ***How can I ensure sufficient interaction between my students during the assignment?***

While interaction is important in linked assignments, so too is reflection. The role of reflection cannot be underestimated in meeting the international/intercultural learning outcomes associated with these types of assignments. These activities typically engage students both emotionally and intellectually, so they need time and guidance to realize what they have learned. Suggesting students keep reflective journals or create group time for reflection or make appointments to talk with you are some ways to encourage reflection. The case studies here also provide examples of reflective practices.

### ***How can I assist students in their learning in linked assignments?***

Working with students in linked assignments shifts the role of the instructor from a content authority to a guide. The appeal of linked assignments is that they tap into the learner's knowledge and place the learner in the position of an authority by virtue of their own experience. In this environment, the instructor becomes someone who encourages students to critically examine their own behaviour and to avoid facile, unreflective interpretations of that experience. The instructor is there to remind learners that they have a responsibility to be thoughtful and must earn the right to be a credible authority. The instructor cannot hope to know as much about the perspective as the student whose life embodies that perspective, so the grounds for an instructor's leadership shift dramatically. As instructors, we must focus on what we know about teaching and learning and clear thinking instead of focusing solely on course content. Being a guide for the critical practice of reflection is also important.

## **ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING IN LINKED ASSIGNMENTS**

### ***Objectives***

At the end of this section, you will be able to:

- understand capstone activities and how to use them
- use self-assessment in linked assignments
- account for the developmental nature of learning in assessment.

Designing an appropriate assessment is an important part of developing successful linked assignments. Although many approaches to assessment are possible, two approaches taken in the case studies presented here, the capstone assignment and self-assessment, are particularly worth considering.

### *How can I use capstone projects or activities for assessing learning effectively?*

Capstone projects are so named because they are projects that are generally given at the end of a course and are designed to engage students in using all they have learned to complete a task. They require the integration of the cumulative knowledge, skills, and attitudes that made up the course. Capstone projects can be quite complex and relate to all the outcomes of a unit or semester. This is a bigger concept than I want to focus on here. To scale down the general approach to assessing in a single linked assignment, I will use the term *capstone activity*. Capstone projects and its smaller scale parallel, the capstone activity, are examples of authentic assessment. This kind of assessment engages students in realistic activities that parallel real world activities in which the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned will be applied outside the classroom.

Two case studies presented here include capstone projects or activities that required students to integrate what they had learned in order to complete a task that was a realistic application of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Susan Smythe's Geography 170 capstone project involved student presentations of the results of their research and the cartographic design process to their fellow students. The students treated the classroom as a public forum and presented their work as they would have in a real public forum were they professionals in the field. Assessing how well their presentations reflected the cultural expectations of their community enabled Susan to determine whether the goal of raising students' awareness of the importance of designing culturally appropriate forums was met. Debra Wolinsky's Communications 215 assignment also included a capstone activity. Her students were required to submit a plan for a culturally sensitive dental office. The students were instructed to think of themselves as consultants and to prepare reports detailing the changes to be made to make offices and their staff more culturally appropriate and aware.

Using capstone projects or activities as assessment involves more than merely identifying an authentic task. Designing effective authentic assessments also requires identification and systematic consideration of criteria for successful performance. By engaging learners in this exercise, the construction of the assessment itself becomes an instance of learning. Checklists and other products are likely to arise from this exercise. Many other assessment techniques are useful for assessing capstone activities and readers will be able to review their own inventories for those that are suited to their capstone activities. It must be kept in mind, though, that assessment for capstone activities should be holistic, since these activities are multifaceted. Finally, it is important that the criteria for the assessment be stated clearly.

### *Using self-assessment in linked assignments*

Self-assessment or, as it is sometimes called, learner agency, is a familiar concept to educators, but perhaps one not understood as well as it could be. The process is not simple and ideally should move students beyond action and reflection to evaluation and then planning for continued improvement. Randall (1999) refers to it as a learning process itself and outlines a number of steps involved:

- reflecting on their thinking and learning
- monitoring and regulating their performance, products and actions
- evaluating the quality of their knowledge, skills and thinking processes
- setting realistic goals for themselves
- developing action plans to achieve these goals (p. 16).

Several of the case studies presented here employ self-assessment. In each case where the linked assignment had taken place over an extended time during the semester, this assessment method was used. For example, Brenda Read's students completed a self-assessment by reflecting on their experience across the semester. Asked to comment on both what they had learned and how they were going to apply this knowledge in the future, her students reviewed a wide range of the semester's activities related to diversity.

Elva Reid's students were also asked to reflect on their experience with the linked assignment. Some of the questions posed to them were quite open-ended and required that they report on what they had learned generally. Other questions were more directed and required that they report specifically on what they had learned about diversity. The most important self-assessment activity required the students to reflect on their experience and respond to the question, "How has this exploration influenced your ideas and feelings about your role as a teacher in a multicultural community?" Jonathon Baylis's students, partners to Elva Reid's students, also went through a process of writing and reflecting on what they had learned.

When designing linked assignments, then, it is important to provide a thorough, explicit framework for the final stages of the self-assessment cycle to be sure that all students work through the complete cycle. We should also recognize that this form of assessment is an integral part of students' learning and we need to remember to build it into linked assignments. Finally, we should note that self-assessment is a rigorous process and requires the same careful attention to criteria that assessing the capstone activity does. As Randall points out, self-assessment is enhanced by having:

- clear statements of expected learning outcomes
- criteria and examples which describe competent performances
- indirect evidence from respected others
- direct evidence from one's own experiences
- appropriate standards against which to judge one's experiences and actions (Randall, 1999, p. 17).

### *How can I, in my assessment, account for the developmental nature of learning?*

In this discussion of assessment, I have not made a distinction between assessing the content dimension of the assignment and assessing the relational dimension of the assignment. I have avoided making this distinction since, with one reservation, I don't think the dichotomy is particularly germane in designing the assessment of a linked assignment. Capstone activities integrate both content and relational goals and both dimensions should be present in the criteria for assessing the learner's performance. Self-assessment similarly can, and should, incorporate learning outcomes related to both dimensions.

The reservation, which has implications for designing assessment, arises from a consideration of the developmental nature of many of the skills and attitudes associated with the relational dimension. Ideally, assessment ought to give learners a sense of where they are in their own development and provide them with the evidence to describe their own stage of development. Concurrently, it should also help learners describe what their next stage of development might look like and then help them determine how to get there. For our part, we need to ask questions such as what it would mean to be able to examine one's assumptions about another culture expertly, how we would know when a learner could do that, or what a novice achievement might look like. Designing assessment then requires careful attention to three tasks: determining which level of achievement of the outcome is possible, identifying the kind of evidence needed to determine that level and constructing the means to gather that evidence.

Since relational dimension skills are developed in the company of peers, it is also important to consider how peer-assessment might be usefully employed. Linked assignments deliberately group together learners who might be expected to face challenges in relating to one another. In this situation, many important lessons may be learned from their peers; therefore instructors need to create an environment in which peers can give each other feedback constructively. Building this assessment loop means creating a classroom culture where students look to their peers for information on their performance, combine it with their own insights, and then look to the comments of an observant instructor to take the measure of their learning. The reward for us and for our students for these efforts is increased learner agency, which allows us to become partners in their growth and development in a myriad of ways.

# SECTION 2

## **LINKED ASSIGNMENTS IN PRACTICE: SEVEN CASE STUDIES**

### *Purpose*

Seven case studies, each introduced with an abstract and arranged alphabetically by subject, form the core of this section. Readers may wish to go through them in order or dip into them in as their interest dictates.

### *Objective*

At the end of this section, you will have a better understanding of the requirement for introducing internationalization/interculturalism into the classroom through linked assignments.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES

### *Objective*

At the end of this section, you will be better able to use the case studies effectively.

### *How the case studies are organized*

The case studies in this volume each include the following information:

- the background to the course
- the rationale for participation in the Internationalizing Learning Project
- the goals of the linked assignment
- a step-by-step description of the assignment's implementation
- a full report of the assignment's outcomes
- a summary sharing the instructor's thoughts on the experience.

### *Who were the students who participated in the assignments in the case study?*

Douglas College is a large urban campus with a highly diverse student population, a third of whom speak a language other than English at home. In addition to a large immigrant student population, international students also enroll in the college's career, technical and university transfer courses. The classes involved in the case studies reported here enrol a wide range of students. Student data for each class has not been provided since the particular mix of students is not germane to the assignments undertaken. The following account of the students in Communications 125 will give readers a clear idea of the diversity in many courses. This is Lin Langley's description of her class.

People from all over the world, young and old, workers, students and the unemployed, enrol in Communications 125. As is true in many Douglas College courses, the class list includes names like Garcia, Rodriguez, Nakagawa, Kawaguchi, Ayala, Di Sibio, Zanatta, Lavigne, Belanger, Woo, Yin, Lee, Harowitz, Schedewitz, Harzega, Merali, Sagabaria, Kinahan, Huyn, Fong, Thingvold, Gill, Pannu, McCarthy, Adams and Phillips. The students come from professional positions, from the business workplace, from amateur and professional sports, from social work, high school and the streets. One or two come from jail.

The make-up of the English as a second language programs that are sometimes twinned with other courses include immigrants from around the world. Jonathon Baylis's description of his class is a portrait of the program's diversity.

Students taking the College Preparatory English as a second language courses come from all continents and most stages of life. The two largest national groups are people from Taiwan and Japan, though significant numbers come from Korea, Iran, Somalia, Hong Kong, China and Poland.

A comprehensive list of the nation-states represented by ESL students would be too lengthy to include here. They are people in transit, some to further studies at Douglas College or other North American colleges and universities, careers either in Canada or their home countries. Others hold degrees in such fields as engineering, sciences, economics, and literature and are upgrading their English skills for work in Canada or their home countries. Many are nineteen and just out of high school, though others are in their thirties, forties, or fifties and preparing to re-establish themselves in Canada. Most are single, some are married, and some of those are bearing and raising children. Coming from diverse backgrounds and in various stages of life, these learners are on the move and keen to progress toward their goals.

It is the extraordinary diversity of the students at Douglas College that makes the use of linked assignments and the internationalizing learning approach to internationalization possible. Although not all institutions are so blessed with this degree of diversity, few student populations or surrounding community populations in BC are without rich reserves of diversity to draw on. Instructors need only to take the time to identify the resources.

### *How can I generalize from these case studies to my own work?*

Each of the case studies has a similar, but not identical, template. Templates are not identical since variations in discipline content influence the formatting of the case study. Reading these case studies will add breadth and depth to the introductory material provided in the previous section. Moreover, they will suggest some ideas for linked assignments that might be possible in your courses. The worksheets in the appendix provide a recipe to follow in the design process.

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CLASS

### ECED 211 Case Study

by Elva Reid

This case study describes a linked assignment that internationalized learning in a Professional Growth and Communication class. Since the students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program were not particularly diverse culturally, this assignment engaged them with an English as a second language class. The content dimension of the assignment focused on understanding the influence of family history and culture of origin in shaping personal values. The relational, or intercultural communication dimension, focused on using the experience of intercultural interaction to develop students' ideas about their role as a teacher in a multicultural community. Outcomes related to ECE students' explorations of the family histories and cultures of their ESL counterparts as well as those related to the growth of students' understanding of their role as educators in a multicultural setting are detailed.

### Early Childhood Education, ECED 211

Fostering professional growth and developing communication skills are the fundamental goals in the training of early childhood education students at Douglas College. Although these are lifelong learning goals, the ECE program offers one course, ECED 211, Professional Growth and Communication, during the second semester in which the students begin to develop the skills, knowledge and understanding needed to become effective, compassionate communicators. The course is specifically designed to help the students grow professionally and to learn about others whose cultural experiences are different from their own.

#### *ECED 211 and the Internationalizing Learning Project*

The links between the course and the broader goals of the Internationalizing Learning Project were substantial. In order to achieve its goals, ECED 211 provides opportunities for students to meet with, to socialize with, and to learn from people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. To this end, the ECE students spend three of the fifteen weeks of the course with the international and landed immigrant students who are registered in EASL 445: College Preparatory Listening and Notetaking for Students of English as a Second Language. The students in EASL 445 represent a variety of Asian and European countries.

## ***The Assignment***

The ECED 211 course requires the students to complete five assignments which reflect the goals of the course. One of the assignments for ECED 211 is entitled "Interview with someone from another culture." The objectives of the assignment as communicated to the students were:

- to document and develop knowledge of cultural experiences different from your own
- to consider the role an individual's family history and culture play in shaping his or her personal values
- to use the knowledge gained from this interview to help define you as a teacher in multicultural community.

The instructions for the assignment were:

Interview a person from another culture. Prepare a written account (essay format) of the information you gather. As a conclusion to your description of the individual's family, community and other experiences, respond to the question, "How has this exploration influenced your ideas and feelings about your role as a teacher in a multicultural community?"

A list of interview questions (modified from those used by Susan Fraser in her research for a master's of education degree at the University of British Columbia) was provided for the students to use. These questions could be changed, deleted or added to, as the students thought necessary.

There were four parts to the assignment.

### **PART ONE: INSTRUCTOR PREPARATION PHASE**

The EASL instructor and I met to discuss the goals of our respective assignments and the links with the Internationalizing Learning Project. We agreed that completing the assignment would require three weeks of class time (each class is two hours long). We felt that it was very important that the students take the time to get to know each other before moving to the personally revealing and sometimes sensitive questions that the interview might include. We further agreed that an interview would be the most effective way for students to learn about each other and to develop skills for communicating with someone culturally different from them. Because the numbers in the two classes were not in balance, the interview was to be conducted in small groups with three ECE students sharing interview questions with two EASL students.

### **PART TWO: STUDENT PREPARATION PHASE**

Because the ECE students were off campus during February and March, it was important for them to know that the interview process would be starting when they returned to campus in mid-March. Therefore, early in February the students were introduced to the topic and to the assignment. They were assigned background reading from their own ECE

texts, which was supplemented by reading from a standard intercultural communication text. They were asked to reflect on their own family histories and its influence on their values after they had done the reading.

### **PART THREE: TWO MEETINGS BETWEEN THE STUDENTS**

The first meeting, which took place in March, was primarily an opportunity for the two groups to socialize together and to establish a relationship that would allow them to interview each other with some comfort at a later time. The students were asked to share the interview questions with each other. The interview questions for the ECE students were developed by the ECE instructor to meet the goals of ECED 211. The EASL students designed their own interview questions to reflect the goals of EASL 445. Instructions were given to share but not ask the questions at that time. This preview helped the students know what to expect and think a little about the questions before they met for the formal interview. This occasion also provided an opportunity to identify questions that were inappropriate or too sensitive and needed to be deleted from the interview. This step can be described as a relationship-building and vulnerability-reduction phase. The ESL students hosted a small lunch on this occasion.

A second class meeting to conduct the interviews occurred a week later. The interviews were conducted in groups which were carefully constructed. Altogether, there were 50 students involved: 30 ECE students and 20 EASL students. The ECE students self-selected their groups of three. The EASL students were grouped in pairs based on their ethnicity. This gave the ECE students an opportunity to explore a specific ethnic group in some depth. The students were asked to write up the results of the interview and to highlight what they had learned.

### **PART FOUR: A THIRD MEETING TO SHARE ASSIGNMENT RESULTS**

The students came back together to share their write-ups of the interviews. This meeting allowed students to check whether the answers to the interview questions had been accurately and correctly interpreted. They were asked to bring additional questions to clarify issues which might have arisen from their reflections on the interview.

Learning how another sees your culture can be quite enlightening. Through this type of exchange, Canadian students who don't normally see themselves as having a culture, come to see that they do indeed have a culture and that they may appear to others as different as others may appear to them. This final session not only ensures that stereotypic conclusions can be challenged, but further builds a relationship that may continue beyond the assignment. For this last session the ECE students hosted the lunch.

### ***Outcomes***

The assignment met its objectives. The evidence for meeting the first objective, "to document and develop knowledge of different cultural experiences" and for the third, "to use the knowledge gained from this interview to help define you as a teacher in a

multicultural community," was easy to document. The second objective, "to consider the role an individual's family history and culture play in shaping his/her personal values," was not so easy to document, but conversations with students indicated that they began to understand individuals in a broader social and cultural context than they might have before the assignment.

The outcomes related to objective one "to document and develop knowledge of different cultural experiences" are discussed in relation to five questions that were asked as part of a post-assignment assessment.

### **1. WHAT DID YOU LEARN DURING YOUR TIME WITH THE EASL STUDENTS ABOUT THOSE STUDENTS?**

Students identified lots of the things that they have in common with the EASL students as well as some differences. Students expressed a sense of solidarity with their culturally different peers writing comments such as, "We share a common ground. For example: trends, humour, morals and values." They achieved some insights into the more dependent relationships between parents and children when they discovered that international students' education costs are covered by their families.

### **2. WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT DIVERSITY?**

The students generally developed a positive attitude towards diversity responding to this question with answers such as, "We learned that diversity is important because it gives us a chance to see past the 'what' people are to the 'who' we are." Perhaps because the students worked with two and three members of a single cultural group, they were able to be more sophisticated about diversity and see cultural groups as not overly homogenous. As one student wrote, "Everybody is an individual. There is diversity in every culture. They can only speak from their own experiences, not for their whole country."

### **3. WHAT, IF ANY, CHANGES WOULD YOU MAKE TO THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS?**

One of the objectives of this assignment was to develop students' intercultural interview skills. They learned something about the logistics of interviewing people in their second language by noting, "The questions may need to have simpler terms for ESL students to understand." They also thought carefully about the kind of information they might want to ask when getting to know someone. They identified new questions: "To ask about the preferred greeting." "To find out about..... personal space." "Level of language. For example: informal and formal and when to use these types of questions."

The fourth and fifth questions, "what went well" and "what suggestions do you have for improving the social event," related to assessing the event in general, especially the social side. Student comments really underscored the importance of establishing good relationships between the ECE and ESL students. One student commented on the ice-breaker which included students' making a paper airplane together, "Their ability to laugh with

us included them into our conversation right away.” With regard to the social dynamic, students made some thoughtful comments recommending optimum group sizes: “Instead of groups of two or three, maybe start with a group of six and then break down later. It is easier to talk to a stranger in a larger group.”

### *Reflecting on their role as teachers, was this assignment useful input?*

With regard to the final objective of the assignment, two responses in particular to the assigned question are quite representative of the effectiveness of the experience of the linked assignment. Asked the question, “How has this exploration influenced your ideas and feelings about your role as a teacher in a multicultural community,” two student groups answered:

We now can understand how difficult it must be to learn a new language and lifestyle. Being a teacher in a diverse community has made us realize how important it is to teach about diversity.... This interview has benefitted us all by helping us be more aware of the similarities and differences among cultures at a deeper level. (Vicky, Sherry and Cyndi)

The knowledge we gained from this interview will affect our role as ECE educators in that we will be more aware of difference in the children from other cultures and attempt to find ways to make childcare settings inclusive for all cultures. In addition, we see our role as a teacher as one who can help children to become aware of different cultures—the foods, the celebrations, and the customs. Another teacher role is that of a facilitator of intercultural dialogue with the parents of students in the childcare setting. We see ourselves as representatives and a bridge between two cultures. Thus, the knowledge we gained today will help us facilitate understanding between both cultures. (Corrine, Teresa, Shannon)

These responses clearly reflect the students’ learning. They demonstrate the increased understanding of both diversity and of individuals, and the growth in their ability to empathize with immigrants. They write about their growing knowledge of cultures in a community where multiculturalism is a fact of life. They clearly express their desire to integrate what they have learned from this experience into their professional practice.

### *Concluding Observations*

Participating in the Internationalizing Learning Project through this linked assignment was a very successful project for the students and me. We all grew in our understanding of the uniqueness of each person. Our respect for each other as individuals with a culture and a language, with values and traditions that make us human increased significantly. To experience diversity, to meet with students from a different culture, to eat, laugh and sing with a variety of individuals, and finally to reflect upon the experience through discussion and writing are arguably the most effective ways for students to grow and

learn about each other, about our communities and about our world. These strategies make the project and the assignment most effective. People learn and grow individually and in groups. We know this from Dewey's writing, Piaget's research, and Vygotski's theories. The project provided every avenue for learning to occur and for the learning to be effective.

Would I repeat the project? Very definitely, yes. Students need many opportunities to be involved in learning about our diverse community. We need to encourage students to get to know each other, to learn more about each other and to try to understand each other's point of view. By providing the experience of linking assignments with other classes, we can encourage these experiences and let students explore in a safe, and welcoming environment the vast variety of cultures and points of view that currently make up our international community.

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

### ECED 211: Assignment - Interview with Someone from Another Culture

#### *Objectives*

1. To document and develop knowledge of cultural experiences different from your own
2. To consider the role an individual's family history and culture play in shaping his or her personal values
3. To use the knowledge gained from this interview to help define your role as a teacher in a multicultural community.

#### *Task*

Interview a person from another culture. Prepare a written account (essay format) of the information you gather. As a conclusion to your description of the individual's family, community and/or other experiences, respond to the question: How has this exploration influenced your ideas and feelings about your role as a teacher in a multicultural community?

#### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(If you add or delete questions, please explain your reasons for doing so in the paper.)

1. What is your concept of family? What are the roles of different members of your family?
2. What are some of the child-rearing practices in your culture, e.g., how do you handle discipline, reward, punishment etc.?
3. What expectations do parents have for their children, e.g., academically, socially, following cultural traditions?
4. What festivals are important? What rituals are important?
5. In a social situation, what attitudes do you have to silence? To loud speech? Toward male/female relationships? To withdrawal?
6. Do your religious beliefs influence your lifestyle?
7. Have you ever encountered discrimination or prejudice?
8. Do you speak a language other than English at home? How important is it for your family to preserve this language in your home?

## *Guidelines*

Your report is to include:

- an introduction to the assignment
- your rationale for the interview
- information you found from answering the questions
- your response to the questions above in the task section
- appropriate grammar and spelling.

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LISTENING CLASS

### EASL 445 Case Study

by Jonathan Baylis

This case study describes a linked assignment that internationalized learning in a College Preparatory English as a Second Language Listening and Notetaking for students of English as a Second Language class. The skill dimension included listening and notetaking abilities, specifically the interview skills necessary to succeed in English language university classes. The relational, or intercultural communication, dimension included raising awareness among international students and new Canadians of the cultural differences in attitudes and practices related to the raising and care of pre-school children. The assignment required students to prepare a questionnaire, to interview Canadian students in the Early Childhood Education program, to write a report on their findings about the differences between Canadian culture and their own and to write a reflective evaluation of their learning during the project. Outcomes related to listening and notetaking, cross-cultural interviewing and intercultural understanding are discussed. Comments by students on their learning about Canadian family life and culture in general and instructor comments on three aspects of the value of internationalizing learning conclude the study.

### **English as a Second Language, EASL 445**

EASL 445, College Preparatory Listening and Notetaking for Students of English as a Second Language, is the last in a series of four courses focused on developing English listening skills. EASL 445 prepares students to understand university lectures and academic discussions, including explicit and implicit content. Students in EASL 445 listen to native speakers both in and outside of class. They interview native speakers and listen to news broadcasts, take notes and present summaries. They receive regular evaluation on their notes and reports and take tests both from memory and using notes. Successful completion of the course requires demonstrated mastery of the listening and notetaking skills.

### *EASL 445 and the Internationalizing Learning Project*

The missing link for most English as second language learners studying in English-speaking countries is, ironically, contact with native speakers. On the one hand, ESL courses held in countries where English is widely spoken are designed with the expectation that students will practice and use their new linguistic skills outside of class; in-

structor and course designers share this expectation with the students and their families who spend large amounts of time and money to place themselves in an English-speaking country. On the other hand, a clear majority of ESL learners find themselves ghettoized in communities that share a common first language other than English. Despite their heavy investment in positioning themselves in the new culture, these students do not enjoy regular meaningful contact with native speakers. Many learners struggle, falter, and fail to learn English well enough to meet their goals largely because they lack the English-based interpersonal contact through which to develop and apply their skills. Linked assignments ameliorate this situation by providing a structured activity that engages ESL and non-ESL students as partners in learning. A mutual task, such as the interview about child-rearing practices used in this case, ensures that the two groups will interact and learn together.

### ***The Assignment***

The linked assignment was introduced as the “Early Childhood Education Project” in the first class and carried out in the last three weeks of the semester. An integral part of this project was three class meetings with Early Childhood Education students. (This process is also described in the ECED 211 case study.)

The assignment was designed to meet three goals:

- to develop knowledge of Canadian culture related to family life
- to develop intercultural interviewing skills
- to meet Canadian students and to learn to collaborate with them to complete assignments.

The ECE project was divided into five steps: The first two steps provided the background knowledge needed to engage in the task.

#### **STEP ONE: WATCHING A VIDEO**

Students viewed two videotapes about child-rearing in different cultures, took notes, performed analyses, identified (perceived) inaccuracies, checked for cultural bias, discussed similarities and differences in principles and practice in different cultures and compared these with their own experiences.

#### **STEP TWO: DEVELOPING CROSS-CULTURAL INTERVIEWING SKILLS**

Students were introduced to cross-cultural interviewing skills and asked to design questionnaires for eliciting knowledge about Canadian child-rearing principles and practices. They were also asked to work with classmates from the same cultural background to answer the questions themselves and note when there was consensus on their answers and when there was not.

Steps three, four, and five involved the students in three meetings with their ECE counterparts.

### **STEP THREE: MEETING TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER**

The ESL students met their ECE student counterparts and shared their questions with them. The most important function of this first meeting was to establish a rapport between the two groups. The ESL students hosted a luncheon for the ECE students and the students spent time chatting and getting to know each other through a series of ice-breakers. Only near the end of the session were students asked to share their questionnaires with each other. The purpose here was simply to give advance notice of the questions and to weed out any that were unclear or inappropriate.

### **STEP FOUR: MEETING TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS**

The ESL and ECE students conducted hour-long interviews with each other, taking notes in preparation for a written report. The organization of this session was very important. Altogether, there were 50 students involved: 30 ECE students and 20 ESL students. Students were grouped in teams (with one more ECE member than ESL member) of five or six so that the interviews would not be too stressful. In addition, the ESL students were paired with classmates who shared the same cultural background. This was done so the Canadian students could witness that answers were not always consistent and gain some sense of the variability within, as well as between, cultures.

### **STEP FIVE: MEETING TO SHARE INTERVIEW REPORTS**

Students reviewed their reports with their ECE student interviewees for verification of accuracy, then wrote their reflections on the interviewing and reporting process, including any changes they would make to their reports. The primary purpose of this activity was to make sure that students did not write stereotypic accounts; the watchful eye of the informant on the final account had the effect of getting students to take care with their descriptions of the other's culture. Students were encouraged to identify questions they still needed to ask in order to develop a more unambiguous account of the other culture.

### ***Outcomes***

Students met the goals set for the assignment. Nearly all students took interview notes sufficiently well to write a detailed report on the knowledge gained. All student participants wrote reports citing at least two aspects of Canadian culture related to family life which they had learned from their interactions with the ECE students. Students managed the intercultural dimensions of their interviews sufficiently well to give and receive information accurately and not only avoid offense but to create and maintain what ECE students and instructors judged to be a warm, congenial atmosphere. The ESL students completed their tasks in collaboration with their ECE student counterparts and submitted insightful reports. The ESL students provided sufficient information to ECE students to enable them to also write insightfully. Students demonstrated their skills and knowledge on a written test. ESL and ECE students reported very positively about the experience.

These outcomes are illustrated more fully below based on comments from students on their final evaluations.

#### **LEARNING ABOUT CANADIAN CULTURE**

##### **i) Family life: Parent and child relations**

Several perceived differences between family life in Canada and in the students' home cultures emerged in the comments. Students noted that Canadian parents and teachers praise the children in their charge. This practice struck some as very different from their own child-rearing practices. Others noted the use of nannies and baby-sitters as an aspect of Canadian culture which contrasted with their culture of origin. Also noted was the fact that the topic of divorce and its effect on children had been discussed frequently. This surprised them.

##### **ii) Youth culture: Education and autonomy**

The fact that Canadian university students choose their own electives and majors spoke to the international students of the Canadian emphasis on individuality. As one student wrote, "Individuality is another outstanding aspect of Canadian culture, e.g., students choose their own electives and majors." Further on the same theme, there was the discovery that many, if not a majority of Canadian students, attend university without financial support from their parents. Another evidence of the independent Canadian spirit was the observation that some Canadians choose to opt out of the public school system and home school their children.

##### **iii) Values**

Students reported learning about Canadian values of honesty, gender equality and independence. They were particularly struck by the lack of concern over the gender of babies. One student concluded, "Expectant parents don't prefer a gender. They treat boys and girls the same way." They noted that children are brought up to be independent and cited evidence for this.

#### **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

##### **i) Cultural awareness of Canada**

Several students reported that the collaborative project with their ECE counterparts had helped them to become more conscious of Canadian culture. More than one commented on the uniqueness in their own experience of this extended and in-depth encounter with a Canadian person. They wrote that had they not participated in this project, they may have returned to their home country without seriously discussing any issue with a Canadian other than their instructor.

ii) Cultural self-awareness

While learning about Canadian culture, students also reflected more deeply on their own. With culture as the topic of conversation, students were able to gain a new level of objectivity about their own culture and to cite this in their reports. As one student wrote, "It was not only a good opportunity to know Canadian culture, but also a good opportunity to think about our own culture. I felt like I saw my culture from the outside."

iii) Ability to suspend judgment

An important skill for people who wish to become interculturally competent is the ability to suspend judgment and *not* jump to quick conclusions about the meaning of behaviour that does not conform to expectations. Students began to reflect on their own stereotypic views of others and to gain some insight into the necessity of collecting background information before making judgments. One student reported learning this when she wrote, "These meetings helped me to learn and to understand more about Canadian culture. Indeed, if you meet [strangers] in public, you are often too fast to make up your mind about other people. But these meetings gave me some background information and enlarged my point of view."

### ***Concluding Observations***

Linked assignments add a necessary element to the ESL student's language education. Sadly, the opportunity for academic involvement with the majority of native-speaking students in the institution is absent from the design of most ESL courses. Restructuring of ESL and non-ESL courses in such a way as to encourage interaction between the two constituencies has universal advantages. There are three effects of this collaboration worth noting: the increased motivation for study, the enhanced social experience, and the opportunity to study language in its cultural context.

Collaboration among ESL and native-speaking students to achieve course goals serves to increase students' motivation to study. Such integration subtly changes the nature of the experience. While ESL students are often visitors to academic courses, hosts of guest lecturers or interviewers of willing native speakers, and thus reapers of benefits, they do not necessarily contribute significantly. In contrast, linked assignments encourage a sense of reciprocity by meeting the learning needs of native speakers through marshalling the resources of ESL students and vice versa. The experience naturally raises the motivation from a simple commitment to study to a commitment to international social action.

A second effect is social. Through natural and significant contact with fellow students who are members of the host culture, the language learner's social experience of learning is enriched. Through these interactions students create valuable friendships which con-

tinue beyond the time of the project. The ECE and ESL students involved in this project met for lunch as a group at least once after the semester and some members of the classes have continued their friendships.

A final effect of collaboration worth noting here is that the cultural component of language learning is enhanced. Language is a subset of culture and, as such, it must be learned in its cultural context. The language class that excludes native speakers of the target language has the inherent challenge of connecting its members with the members of the host culture. Language instructors devise many and varied means of bringing their students into contact with native speakers, but linked assignments provide one of the most comprehensive, mutually beneficial and intense ways to facilitate this contact.

This cultural context is important to language learning and use in several ways. But for a non-native student, intercultural communication is even more important. Even at the introductory level, teaching intercultural communication skills enhances the university experience of the international student in every way. This linked assignment created the opportunity to effectively introduce some basic intercultural communication skills. Such learning experiences produces an awareness in students that can lead to further learning of these basic skills and a more effective term of study.

For all the reasons above, linked assignments deserve to be more widely instituted.

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

### **EASL 445: College Preparatory Listening and Notetaking for Students of English as a Second Language - Early Childhood Education Project**

#### *The Assignment*

This assignment gives you the opportunity to work with students in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Program at Douglas College. You will meet three times with them to discuss ideas about how culture influences family life and share observations about how children are raised in different cultures. The goals of the assignment are:

- to develop your ability to use knowledge from videos in discussions
- to improve your ability to take notes and to record responses to interview questions
- to develop your knowledge of family life in Canadian culture
- to develop your intercultural interview skills
- to meet Canadian students and learn to work together co-operatively.

#### **STEP ONE: WATCHING A VIDEO**

During the first week, you will see a video on the topic of culture and childhood, *Preschool in Three Cultures*. The focus of the video is on childhood in Japan, China and the US. You will discuss the video and critique it in class. To critique means to identify inaccurate information and identify biases. This requires you to develop critical listening skills.

You will also identify additional information that you think Canadian students need about childhood in your culture in order to balance the impressions created by the two videos.

Students whose cultures are not represented in the videos will be asked to give presentations to their classmates as a way of sharing their knowledge. Later you will share this information with the Canadian students.

#### **STEP TWO: DEVELOPING CROSS-CULTURAL INTERVIEWING SKILLS**

After you have watched the video, you will design a questionnaire to gather information about Canadian culture and how it affects families and children. This questionnaire should be fairly long since you have an hour to interview a Canadian student later. As you are developing your questionnaire, you will also develop a checklist of things to keep in mind when interviewing people of cultural backgrounds different from your own.

### **STEP THREE: MEETING TO GET TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER**

During the second week, you will meet with the ECE students for a “get-to-know-you event.” This is a chance for you to learn a little bit about each other and to do some preparation for the interview assignment. Your class will be asked to host the gathering by having each person bring a food or beverage to share with classmates and ECE guests. You will:

- share your interview questions with each other to make sure that all questions are acceptable and understandable
- discuss the video together (so come prepared to share your opinions).

You will not do the interviewing on this day. Each group of students will take the interview questions home to think about.

### **STEP FOUR: MEETING TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS**

During the third week, you will meet again with your partners in ECE and conduct interviews with each other. Following this class, you will write a report on what you learned about Canadian culture in the family context. You will also write a self-assessment of your interview and notetaking skills. You have only one week to complete this assignment.

### **STEP FIVE: MEETING TO SHARE INTERVIEW REPORTS**

During the fourth and final week, you will meet one more time with your partners in ECE to share your self-evaluation of your interview skills and the report on what you learned about Canadian culture in the family context with them. The Canadian students will also share their self-evaluation and report on your culture to you. It is particularly important that you have a chance to review each other’s reports and make sure that no wrong impressions have developed out of the interview.

Following this session, you must write a brief reflection on your self-evaluation and report, stating any changes you think you should make to your report after discussion with your ECE student partner. This reflection is due no later than the end of week five.

### ***A Unique Opportunity***

I realize that, because the meeting times are different from your usual class times, this assignment means that you must make adjustments to your schedule. However, it is a unique experience for you and I am sure you will find it well worth a little inconvenience. It is also an opportunity for you to contribute your unique background to the college community. For the ECE students, this opportunity to learn about the cultures of the children with whom they will be working in BC’s multicultural early childhood education centres is invaluable. The contribution that you will make to the college is deeply appreciated.

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN A COMMUNICATION CLASS

### CMNS 125 Case Study

by Lin Langley

This case study describes a linked assignment that internationalized learning in an Oral Presentations class. Content dimensions of the assignment include identifying criteria for effective impromptu speeches; relational, or intercultural communication, dimensions include raising awareness of the nature and effects of cultural differences in impromptu speech practices. The assignment required students to develop criteria for effective speeches in their culture, share it with classmates and then reflect on the role of their expectations in shaping reactions to and evaluations of impromptu speeches. Outcomes related to course content, criteria for effective speeches, the significance of audience analysis, and cultural variation in views of “good” practice, audience response, and speech anxiety, are discussed. The study concludes with comments on the effect of the assignment in raising students’ awareness of intercultural communication on integrating diverse learners into the classroom activities.

### Communications, CMNS 125

Communications 125, Oral Presentations, is a university-transferable course on public speaking that provides students with opportunities to develop vocal, verbal and nonverbal speech delivery skills. Students in CMNS 125 learn how to gather and organize information, present a speech using informative and persuasive strategies, and complement their presentations with visual aids. Working together in small groups, they examine and apply course concepts and they speak in every class, beginning with the first session. Students take turns chairing a speech session, and they also evaluate their own and their classmates’ presentations using criteria developed in class.

#### *CMNS 125 and the Internationalizing Learning Project*

International and intercultural knowledge is important in CMNS 125 because of cultural variation in audience response. For example, Caribbean audiences may applaud enthusiastically and cheer, while Asian audiences may nod their heads and clap lightly after a speech. Likewise, cultural differences are apparent in preferences for how feedback is given and speeches evaluated; they are even apparent in the way speech anxiety is manifested and managed. Knowing about and understanding cultural differences helps students prepare audience-appropriate speeches as well as better understand speakers who

construct their speeches using unfamiliar persuasive styles. They learn to understand the roots of their own reactions to such speakers and gain an ability to modify that reaction when appropriate.

### ***The Assignment***

The assignment, set at the beginning of the term, focused on impromptu speech practices across culture.

The purpose of the assignment was to allow students:

- to examine the verbal and nonverbal elements of an impromptu speech as a way of reflecting on public speaking norms in their own culture
- to develop an awareness of culturally influenced expectations in speech practice
- to increase understanding of how culture affects the expression, interpretation and evaluation of verbal and nonverbal speech behaviour.

The assignment was composed of three parts:

#### **PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING IMPROMPTU SPEECHES**

Students identified when and where people in their culture make impromptu speeches, who gets asked to speak, and how one accepts or declines a speaking invitation. They also identified the verbal and nonverbal elements considered effective in speeches in their culture and explained how the audience would likely respond.

#### **PART TWO: INTERVIEWING ELDERS**

Students interviewed an elder or elders from their culture to research the elder's views on these topics.

#### **PART THREE: CONSTRUCTING CRITERIA FOR IMPROMPTU SPEECHES**

Students used their reflections and their research to construct criteria for evaluating impromptu speeches in CMNS 125.

Students had two weeks to complete their work.

### ***Sharing Assignment Results***

On the due date, students were to work in culturally mixed groups of four for one hour. Time allocations were initially as follows:

- Step one: 30 minutes for individuals to share their personal reflections and their research on impromptu speaking
- Step two: 15 minutes to brainstorm the elements of a good impromptu speech
- Step three: 15 minutes to present these criteria to the class.

The reality was somewhat different. So engrossing was the step one activity that students resisted the schedule and lobbied for more time to hear each other out. Reluctantly reassembled later than expected, the students next lobbied for an alternative to the spokesperson approach to reporting out; all of the bicultural students wanted to address the group on an individual basis. Students' learning was rich. For example, they learned from the Japanese student that in Japan, one begins a speech by apologizing for its poor quality. From their Rom (Gypsy) classmate, they learned that sex and death are never mentioned in speeches. On their exit slips for the evening (index cards used to indicate what students learned in the class and what content they would like to understand better), students wrote almost entirely about the exercise on culture.

### ***Outcomes***

The cultural background assignment proved a valuable vehicle for addressing both oral presentations and intercultural communication objectives. From the oral presentation perspective, the assignment allowed students to identify and use focused criteria for evaluating impromptu speeches, appreciate the value of audience analysis, and understand the need for adapting speeches to audience interests. From the perspective of intercultural communication, the assignment helped students to understand some cultural differences in oral communication, and to gain awareness of the concept of intercultural communication. It also helped to integrate students of differing cultural backgrounds into the classroom group.

Each of these outcomes is discussed more fully below.

### **ORAL PRESENTATIONS' COURSE CONTENT**

#### **i) Criteria for effective impromptu speeches**

The discussion of cultural differences in impromptu speaking highlighted many important elements of speech delivery such as tone of voice, rate of speech, volume, use of gestures, eye contact, etc. Students seemed able to "own" these criteria because they came from their own experience instead of from a lecture or a list in the textbook. Peer evaluations also showed students' ability to recognize the elements of good and less-good verbal and nonverbal delivery in the speeches of their classmates.

#### **ii) Audience analysis**

The assignment underlined the benefits of audience-based writing and speaking, and helped students gain an understanding of the need to adapt content to the interests and values of the audience. As an example, an Indo-Canadian student from a farming background decided not to speak about the machinery used to harvest berries on the basis that the unfamiliar subject would be of little interest to the audience. Instead, he chose to speak about how poor students could make money for tuition through farming in family collectives.

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

### i) Differing views of “good” speech practice

Students learned that perceptions of good speech delivery vary across and within cultures. For example, students were surprised to discover that in some cultures, the display of strong emotion through tone of voice, volume and rate of speech is frowned upon, whereas in others such a display of affect is considered an accomplished skill.

### ii) Differing views of audience response and its effect on speech anxiety

Students gained an appreciation for the diverse ways that audiences respond to speakers and their speeches. This awareness of differences proved to be a valuable tool for speech anxiety management. For example, one student wrote on her exit slip that she was “greatly, *greatly* relieved” to learn that Asian audiences may be subdued in their response. Likewise, another wrote she “always thought a Jamaican student was being sarcastic” in his sometimes enthusiastic applause and cheering. “I asked him straight out and he said he means to show genuine appreciation. He likes my speeches. What a relief!”

### iii) Raised awareness of intercultural communication

Perhaps the class’s awareness of the concept of intercultural communication and of the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes often referred to as “intercultural communication competence” is best summed up by one student’s comment: “We *aren’t* the same. We are really, really different, and taking those differences into account is a real challenge.” This comment was greeted with many nods and murmurs of agreement.

### iv) Student integration

Student responses to questions on the course evaluation indicate that they found CMNS 125 a “safe environment in which to take risks.” At the final class, several students commented that they had “really gotten to know one another” in class. One commented that this was unusual in a course that is not a component of a particular program. A Japanese international student formally thanked the group for making her feel welcome and for allowing her to practice her English skills, and an Italian-Canadian thanked people for not “putting down” his nervous fidgeting when at the podium.

The assignment on culture seemed to give permission to students to talk rather freely about their culture in the classroom and, given the opportunity, they did so at great length. In addition, some students experienced a shift in attitude towards second language speakers in the class. A number of indicators point to these conclusions.

## STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

### i) High student interest

The class exercise that required students to share research about good impromptu speech practice in their culture illustrates this point. Students worked enthusiastically for an hour and forty minutes discussing speech practices of each person's culture.

### ii) Speech topics reflect cultural background

After the assignment, students chose speech topics that reflected their cultural background: for example, a First Nations (Shuswap) student talked about the earth houses of the Shuswap People; a Rom student provided a brief history of the Rom people; a Jamaican student explained the challenges for black athletes in professional sport; and an Indo-Canadian student discussed the HIV virus in Indian society.

### iii) Willingness to question mainstream speech practices

When students are encouraged to bring their culture into the classroom, they may question concepts that are fundamental to the discipline. For example, in CMNS 125, First Nations, Japanese and Indo-Canadian students took exception to the common Western practice of providing one's credentials or explaining one's competence as a way of establishing credibility with the audience. They explained that such a practice is inappropriate in their cultures since it is seen as self-promotion.

## ATTITUDINAL SHIFTS

### i) Greater empathy toward second language speakers

Some students in CMNS 125 described their increased appreciation for the difficulties of speaking a second language. As one student said, "I am terrified every time I come to the podium. I can't imagine how ESL students feel up here. I need to remember this when [a Japanese student] is struggling for words in her speech."

## *Concluding Observations*

The final class in CMNS 125 is set up as a speech banquet. Students are required to make a speech of tribute about one of their peers and to deliver a speech of acceptance for the tribute they have received. They are also asked to describe the significant learning they are taking away from the course. The banquet is informal and these final speeches are not evaluated.

Interestingly, students often make their best speeches at the last class, and they seem to speak enthusiastically about their regard for peers and their experience, positive and negative, in CMNS 125. Many expressions of appreciation are offered at the banquet and it is a gratifying time for both students and the instructor. This year, several students

mentioned culture in speeches about their significant learning. One Indo-Canadian student said, "My culture is a big part of me and it's good that there is room for it in the classroom." A Euro-Canadian said, "I learned to my great relief that I am not alone in my anxiety, though anxiety is expressed differently across culture. Some of you are the strong silent type." The very last woman who spoke, a First Nations woman from the Shuswap Nation, said, "I love learning about other cultures and I thank you all for sharing your culture. It's been rich." "Thank *you*," several people replied.

And those were the final words spoken.

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

### CMNS 125: What Makes a Good Impromptu Speech?

#### *Introduction*

The following assignment is designed to help you recognize similarities and differences in speech communication and gain awareness of others' cultural traditions around public speaking and equip you to adapt to both speakers and audiences whose cultural affiliations may be different from your own.

#### *Purpose*

The purposes of this assignment are:

- to examine the verbal and nonverbal elements of an impromptu speech
- to reflect on public-speaking norms in one's own culture
- to develop awareness of culturally influenced expectations in speech practices
- to increase understanding of how culture affects the expression, interpretation, and evaluation of verbal and nonverbal speech behaviour.

#### *Instructions*

Your job in this session is to reflect upon the influences of culture on speech practices, to collect information about what makes a good impromptu speech, and to use this information in developing criteria for evaluating impromptu speeches in this class. Remember that an impromptu speech is a speech that one gives at a moment's notice at various gatherings. Because of the spontaneous nature of impromptu speeches, people usually have little or no time to prepare them; they must think on their feet and speak off the cuff.

#### **PART ONE: REFLECTING ON SPEECH PRACTICES IN YOUR CULTURE**

In a diverse society, people normally identify with a number of different cultures, all of which affect how they think, feel, and behave. Cultural groups may relate to such things as racial or ethnic background, gender, profession, marital status, political views, sports interests or technological know-how.

- a) To begin this assignment, choose and briefly describe one culture you identify with.
- b) Then explain the role of impromptu speaking within the cultural community you have described. Respond to the following questions:
  - i) When and where do people in your cultural community tend to make impromptu speeches?
  - ii) Generally speaking, who gets asked to give an impromptu speech in your culture? What is the influence of age, status, sex, role and/or expertise in the selection of impromptu speakers?

- iii) How does one accept an invitation to give an impromptu speech in your community? If one wishes to decline an invitation to speak, what does he or she say and do?
- c) Next, respond to the following questions about the effective elements on an impromptu speech.
- i) What are the verbal elements of an effective impromptu speech in your culture? In other words, what a speaker ought to say or not say related to:
- requesting an audience
  - addressing the audience
  - acknowledging others
  - beginning the speech
  - using formal or informal language
  - presenting main ideas
  - expressing emotion
  - calling for action
  - ending the speech.
- ii) What are the nonverbal elements of an effective impromptu speech in your culture? That is, what a speaker ought to do or not do related to:
- eye contact
  - facial expression
  - posture
  - gestures
  - body movement
  - pitch and tone
  - volume
  - rate of speech
  - pauses
  - silence.
- d) Then respond to the following questions about audience responses to impromptu speeches.
- i) How do audiences show approval for an impromptu speech?
- ii) How do they show disapproval—or do they?
- iii) What degree of speaker-audience interaction is appropriate in your culture?
- e) Write a one-page summary of your responses to a, b, c, and d.

#### **PART TWO: CONDUCTING RESEARCH**

- a) Next, interview some members of your culture (employers, parents, church or community leaders, grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) and find out their views about the above questions. Record their responses.
- b) Write a one-page summary of your findings to a.

### **PART 3: USING RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Be prepared to share your responses to the above questions with other students in CMNS 125. We will use your research to define criteria for developing impromptu speeches in this course.

#### **Learning Criteria**

In evaluating your work on this assignment, the instructor will look at your abilities to:

- collect information about impromptu speech practices from a variety of sources
- identify impromptu speaking norms in your own culture
- describe a variety of effective verbal and nonverbal behaviours in impromptu speech practice
- articulate criteria for impromptu speech evaluation appropriate to your culture
- identify implications of culturally different perspectives on impromptu speech practices for the preparation, delivery, and evaluation of speeches in CMNS 125
- identify implications for expectations of audience response to speeches in CMNS 125.

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN A COMMUNICATION CLASS

### CMNS 215 Case Study

by Debra Wolinsky

This case study describes a linked assignment that internationalized learning in an Interpersonal Communication for Dental Assisting Students class. The content dimension included identifying the elements and significance of nonverbal behaviour. The relational, or intercultural communication, dimension included understanding how culture influences the use and interpretation of nonverbal communication. The assignment required students to observe and record nonverbal interactions both of and with dental patients, to share their data with classmates, and to reflect upon how culture influences the encoding and decoding of nonverbal messages. Outcomes related to course content include increased awareness of the significance of the nonverbal component of interpersonal communication, greater capacity to respond empathically, and enhanced ability to self-evaluate skill sets; strengths and deficiencies are discussed. Outcomes related to the intercultural dimension, such as the greater appreciation of culture as a significant variable in understanding interpersonal communication and the mindful integration of cultural diversity in class discussions, are also examined in the study.

### Communications, CMNS 215

Communications 215, Interpersonal Communication for Certified Dental Assisting Students, focuses on the understanding and acquisition of effective interpersonal skills in the workplace. It is a required course for all students in the ten-month Certified Dental Assisting (CDA) Program and is offered early in the program so that skills acquired in the course facilitate effective patient care, and to help establish relationships among the students in their team settings. Core course components address the nature of helping, team and group dynamics, micro-communication skills (empathic responses, paraphrasing, summarizing), listening, asking facilitative questions, managing conflict effectively, and interacting with special patient populations. The discussion-based course is self-reflective and experiential.

#### *CMNS 215 and the Internationalizing Learning Project.*

Components of Communications 215 relate specifically to the kinds of international or intercultural knowledge that the Internationalizing Learning Project takes as its objective. While focused experientially, the course is designed to examine underlying communication theory as students self-explore and assess their own skill sets, build on their

strengths, and address those areas in which they are deficient. Throughout the course, intercultural communication is freely and frequently discussed not only in the context of nonverbal communication, but also in regard to interpersonal communication in general.

Nonverbal communication, in and of itself, is a critical component of interpersonal behaviour. Its importance is magnified in the world of dentistry as patients are unable to articulate their messages while receiving dental care, since dental instruments and practitioners' hands are in the patients' mouths. Since one role of CDAs is to facilitate patients' comfort during the dental procedures, it is necessary for them to interpret patients' needs regardless of the mode in which they are transmitted. Thus, CDAs must observe, interpret, and respond to nonverbal messages with ease, accuracy and efficiency. And they must do so while working with patients in a multicultural setting where superficially similar features of nonverbal communication may have quite different meaning.

### *The Assignment*

The assignment, an analysis and self-evaluation of interpersonal skills in practicum and clinic settings, focused on nonverbal and culture. There were three objectives to this assignment:

- to develop and refine one's ability to successfully attend to and accurately perceive nonverbal messages in clinical settings (clinical settings are defined as community practicum and Douglas College's on-site dental clinic)
- to explore how culture affects the expression and understanding of nonverbal messages
- to critically examine one's skills and challenges, and identify ways in which one might better manage these challenges.

The assignment was subdivided into two sections:

#### **PART A: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA**

Students collected and analyzed data based on their clinical experiences. They were asked to recall the interactions that they had with patients and, focusing on categories such as general appearance and dress, body movement and orientation, body posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, paralanguage (voice), personal space, time and silence, to address questions such as:

- What nonverbal messages were sent by you and your patients?
- How were these messages sent?
- What interfered with or facilitated the sending and your understanding of those messages?
- How did cultural similarities or differences affect the sending of and the receiving of messages?

## PART B: REFLECTING ON PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES

Students addressed the following questions:

- Briefly describe your culture and its implications on interpersonal communication in general and on nonverbal behaviour in particular. (You might consider talking with family members or elders from your cultural community to help you prepare this discussion.)
- What did you learn about nonverbal communication as it relates to your role as a CDA?
- What were some of the challenges you experienced as you communicated nonverbally, both as a receiver and sender? What might you have done differently to have better managed those challenges?
- What were some specific cultural differences you became aware of and how did you manage those differences?

In this section, students also completed what might be called a capstone activity in that it brought together learning in an applied way.

- Assume that you are responsible for developing a culturally sensitive dental office. What specific recommendations or guidelines might you set to accomplish this task? Ensure you include aspects of nonverbal behaviour.

### *Sharing Assignment Results*

Students shared the part A data with a classmate from another culture. The rationale for this task was two-fold: to garner new insights about one's own process and to offer ideas about culture and communication to another learner. Students submitted to the instructor their written responses to parts A and B as well as comments offered by the classmate.

### *Outcomes*

Feedback from the students was quite varied; some found the assignment helpful while others did not. This outcome might be reflective of many course assignments. One of the more conscientious students spent a great deal of time researching cultural issues on the Internet and in the library. Her patient population was primarily Korean, a group with whom she had previously had minimal contact and thus minimal information. She found the assignment quite useful as she reduced her prejudgements, enlarged her knowledge base, and improved her observational skills.

For some students, the nonverbal component of the assignment was more significant than the cultural aspect. This outcome may be the result of the population with which students interacted and/or the ways in which the cultural aspect of the assignments were presented. Nonetheless, the assignment was useful in several ways.

- It encouraged students to be more mindful of nonverbal communication and behaviour.
- It increased students' awareness of culture as an operating influence in communication.

- It enhanced students' ability to be empathic towards those who are culturally different.

Each of these outcomes is discussed more fully below.

#### NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION COURSE CONTENT

**i) Understanding the importance of nonverbal communication**

Students noted enhanced observational skills through watching for nonverbal behaviours and reported that, although they had known of the impact of nonverbal communication, they now understood "just how important nonverbals are." The course content became real for students in the context of this assignment. As one wrote, "It allowed me to really take a look at how real the content in this course is."

**ii) Increasing the capacity to empathize with patients**

Students commented that it helped them to "understand people better." On the whole, it made students better observers of detail, and one student said, "I learned to be an observer and see little details around me." Such capacity for observation is the foundation of empathy in particular and effective communication in general.

**iii) Increasing learners' ability to assess their own skills and learning**

An important goal in this course is to improve learners' ability to self-explore and assess their own skill sets, build on their strengths, and address those in which they are deficient. Comments, such as the assignment "helped me analyze my practicum and made me more aware of culture" and it "put into perspective the things that we already know, see and use everyday," suggest that learners are taking an inventory of what they are learning.

#### INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Students had the opportunity to begin to see culture as a significant variable in understanding communication. Although their experience with patients of different cultural backgrounds was one source of information for them to explore this new understanding, a more powerful resource, perhaps, was the interactions amongst and disclosures by students during class discussions. Many students had not examined culture as a factor in communication from either theirs or others' perspective. As one student noted, "I didn't have a lot of encounters with different cultures but from discussions in class, I can see that everyone reacts and thinks differently." During one such discussion, three Indo-Canadian students from different religious backgrounds (Sikh, Muslim and Christian) indicated that although their complexion was of a similar hue, their perspectives on the world were dissimilar. Their comments about diversity within similar cultures provided a good lesson for all the students in the class. Students also had written resources available

to them. The assigned course textbook was William B. Gudykunst (1998), *Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication*, and a reserve item, *Multicultural Manners* by Dresser (1996), was also available.

### ***Problems with the Assignment***

Although many students felt that the assignment was good and one student described it as the “best part of the course,” there were some problems with the assignment.

#### **i) Problems with data collection**

When presenting the assignment in class, some students indicated that they were uncertain about data collection. As well, assumptions that students would engage with large numbers of patients during their practicum turned out to be inaccurate. Students were often involved with only one or two patients. These circumstances limited the pool of information from which the students could draw.

#### **ii) Problems with interpreting difference**

Some students were quite vocal with their discomfort as they perceived this assignment as an opportunity to assume racist perspectives. They indicated that they “treated all people the same” regardless of cultural similarity or difference. This was addressed in class by other students and the instructor highlighting that different doesn’t mean better, but rather, that understanding differences facilitates effective interpersonal exchanges.

#### **iii) Problems with patient population**

Another concern was that some patient populations were thought to be homogeneous, meaning Caucasian and Canadian, which would eliminate the cultural aspect of the assignment. Students were encouraged to move beyond the obvious and pay attention to other differences that might impact interpersonal exchanges. If, in fact, students couldn’t reflect upon cultural issues, their focus could solely be on nonverbal communication.

### ***Concluding Observations***

At the outset, it was difficult to anticipate accurate outcomes or know what to fully expect from this assignment. I anticipated that students would increase their awareness and sensitivity to intercultural issues in the context of interpersonal communication. For some, this expectation was met while others appeared to have benefitted from becoming more cognizant of nonverbal behaviours in general, an equally valuable learning outcome.

Students’ responses to the capstone activity in part B (develop a culturally sensitive dental office) were very interesting and showed evidence of considerable learning. Responses included ensuring that nationalities and spoken languages of dental staff are reflective of the patient population, waiting room reading materials (magazines, newspa-

pers) are in a variety of languages, art work is international, staff avail themselves of workshops on intercultural issues, and dental professionals reduce judgments and assumptions based upon first impressions or what is most obvious (age, complexion, accent).

Although the assignment was fraught with some uncertainty, it was a worthwhile learning tool. Regardless of the students' ease or discomfort in responding to the assignments questions, based upon class discussions and comments, it is apparent that students in CMNS 215 increased their mindfulness about intercultural issues, a valuable by-product of this assignment.

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

### CMNS 215: Analysis and Self-Evaluation of Interpersonal Skills in Practicum and Clinic Settings

As discussed in class, your role as a Certified Dental Assistant (CDA) is very important in helping patients feel comfortable in dental situations. As an effective communicator, you are expected to attend and respond to both the verbal and nonverbal messages patients send you. There will be many occasions in which patients are unable or unwilling to verbally express their needs or concerns; thus, they will rely on their nonverbal behaviours to convey their messages to you. Often nonverbal messages are used to communicate things that are too direct or potentially too embarrassing to put in words. Your challenge, then, is to *listen* not only with your ears but with your eyes, too!

Although people around the world experience similar feelings, the ways in which feelings are expressed nonverbally can be quite different. Most nonverbal behaviour is learned and varies from culture to culture and within cultures. For example, in Japan, gifts are usually exchanged with both hands. Muslims, however, consider the left hand unclean and do not eat or pass objects with it. In Canada, crossing one's legs is a sign of being relaxed; in Korea it is a social taboo. Arab men often greet by kissing on both cheeks while in Canada, we shake hands. Canadians stand up when a superior enters the room whereas people from Tonga sit down. Factors such as age, sex, socioeconomic status and personality affect the use of nonverbal behaviours.

#### *The Purpose*

- to develop and refine your ability to successfully attend to and accurately perceive nonverbal communication messages in clinical settings
- to explore how culture affects the expression of nonverbal messages
- to explore how culture affects the understanding of nonverbal messages
- to critically examine your skills and challenges, and identify ways in which you may better manage your challenges.

#### *The Process (how to complete this assignment)*

This is a personal reflection assignment.

#### **PART A: COLLECTING AND ANALYZING DATA**

This assignment focuses on your clinical experiences; in your community-based practicum and in the dental clinic on campus. You will reflect upon about six clinical experiences. After each of these experiences, you need to recall the interactions you had with patients, paying particular attention to the nonverbal messages you received and/or sent. Take some quiet time and respond in writing to the following questions:

- What nonverbal messages were sent by you and your patients?
- How were these messages sent?

- What interfered or facilitated the sending and your understanding of these messages?
- What did you do when the messages appeared to be incongruent, that is, the verbal and nonverbal messages didn't agree with each other?
- How did cultural similarities or differences affect the sending and the receiving of the messages?
- What kinds of challenges did you experience during these nonverbal interactions?
- Overall, how did the nonverbal communication component of the interaction affect interpersonal communication?

You should have at least six separate entries focused on these reflections. Categories of nonverbal behaviours that you might pay attention to include general appearance and dress, body movement and orientation, body posture, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, touch, paralanguage (voice), personal space, time, and silence.

Once you have completed the six entries, share your findings and ideas with a classmate who ideally is from a culture different from yours. Record any significant comments offered by this person.

#### **PART B: REFLECTING ON PRACTICUM EXPERIENCES**

Using your personal reflections and comments from the classmate with whom you reviewed your entries as resources, in thoughtful and non-defensive ways, respond to the following:

1. Briefly describe your culture and its implications for interpersonal communication in general and on nonverbal communication in particular. (You might consider talking with family members or elders from your cultural community to help you prepare this discussion.)
2. What did you learn about nonverbal communication as it relates to your role as a CDA?
3. What were some of the challenges, in both receiving and sending, that you experienced as you communicated nonverbally? What might you have done differently to have better managed those challenges?
4. What were some specific cultural differences you became aware of and how did you manage these differences?
5. Assume that you are responsible for developing a *culturally sensitive* dental office. What specific recommendations or guidelines might you set to accomplish this task?

### ***Evaluation Criteria***

You must demonstrate the ability to:

- reflect upon your skills in conveying and receiving nonverbal messages
- become aware of culture as it influences interpersonal communication in general and nonverbal communication in particular
- explain the value of nonverbal communication in your role as a CDA
- integrate what you have learned by developing a set of guidelines that might increase cultural sensitivity in the dental field.

You must submit:

- all of your personal reflection entries
- comments made by the classmate with whom you shared your entries
- your responses to the questions in Part B.

Other important information:

- Complete this assignment in approximately 1000-1500 words.
- Hand write or type (word process); double space and include a cover sheet.
- Staple or securely bind it; a paper clip won't do.

**Value: 15 %**

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN A GEOGRAPHY CLASS

### GEOG 170 Case Study

by Susan Smythe

This case study describes a linked assignment that internationalized learning in an Introductory Cartography class. The assignment required that students develop a cartographic design process around the subject of locating a homeless shelter in a neighbourhood with a particular ethnic composition. Beyond the usual cartographic techniques, the content dimension was enhanced by asking students to describe the influence of this ethnic composition on both the research process and on the shaping of a subsequent public presentation of their results. The relational, or intercultural communication, dimension included raising students' awareness of the role that knowledge of local cultures can play in a successful cartographic design and presentation process. More specific outcomes included matters like understanding the cultural bias in common public forum practices, such as the use of an open microphone. Students also reflected on lessons learned as part of a culturally diverse work team.

### Geography, GEOG 170

Geography 170, Introductory Cartography, is taken by students who will graduate as geography majors or minors or who will work in environmental fields. While most people commonly communicate through words and numbers, geographers often communicate through maps—graphic representations of the cultural and physical environment. The art, science, and technology of map-making is known as cartography. Geography 170 provides an introduction to this field.

#### *GEOG 170 and the Internationalizing Learning Project*

It may not be immediately apparent why this course would have a connection to the Internationalizing Learning Project. There is, however, a strong case to be made for linking cartography and cultural awareness and other aspects of intercultural communication. Because cartographers necessarily represent only a small portion of the complexity of the real world on the two-dimensional page, they must select the data to be shown, and classify, simplify, and then symbolize the information. Such cartographic generalization can quickly reveal the cultural biases of the map maker. In addition, if the designers are asked to prepare maps for a particular audience, they should be aware of the cultural lenses through which that audience will view the maps. In their work in multicultural communities, cartographers and other kinds of geographers must be skilled intercultural communicators to interact effectively with the public they serve.

## ***The Assignment***

The final assignment of this course, a team project based on a cartographic design process, was developed into a linked assignment by adding a component that made explicit the identification of the cultural bias at the community research and public presentation stages involved in the task. In addition, students were also directed to reflect on their experience of working in culturally diverse teams to complete this project. The cartography final assignment is a capstone activity that incorporates many of the skills and abilities students have learned and developed throughout the semester. Students working in teams must divide their labour, assume different roles and responsibilities within the team, and rely on each other to complete all facets of the assignment.

Locating a homeless shelter, a community issue, forms the basis of the research question and thus makes explicit the links between theoretical knowledge and the real world beyond the college. Teams must approach the research question, "Where is the best location for a homeless shelter in this community?" through a cartographic design process which goes through several stages from problem identification, data collection, design and design testing, to finally the creation and public presentation of their maps.

The goals of the assignment were:

- to apply knowledge of the basic cartographic design skills learned in the course to a realistic community issue
- to demonstrate a knowledge of some of the fundamental cultural biases to avoid in the cartographic design research in the community
- to demonstrate a knowledge of some of the fundamental cultural biases that can creep into the process of public presentation and follow-up
- to reflect on the benefits to the research process of working with a culturally diverse team.

Students were directed to address issues of culture explicitly in a three-stage process.

### **PART ONE: PRE-PRESENTATION OR RESEARCH STAGE**

Four key questions are addressed here. (Prompts for subset of questions are in parenthesis.)

- What is the language capability in the community? (Are interpreters needed? Do documents need to be translated?)
- What are community attitudes to homelessness? (Is this seen as a social problem? An individual responsibility? A family matter? Of spirit significance?)
- What community groups can be helpful? (Are there ethnic community organizations concerned with homelessness? Who are the community activists within the ethnic communities?)
- What traffic patterns exist in the community? (Are there religious or cultural institutions that may be busy unexpected times?)

## PART TWO: PRESENTATION STAGE

Students were asked to respond to four key questions when designing public presentations.

- Is the scheduling of the meeting appropriate? (Have ethnic or religious calendars been consulted?)
- What communication styles or preferences exist in the community? (Are all people comfortable presenting individually at open microphones? How can small group presentations be accommodated?)
- Do the media present represent all groups in the community? (Have ethnic media been invited?)
- Does the presentation take into account the language capability of the community? (Are interpreters present? Are complex materials—graphs, charts, statistics, etc.—presented clearly?)

## PART THREE: POST-PRESENTATION STAGE

Many public processes have a follow-up. Two questions guided student thinking about culturally sensitive follow-ups.

- Do the follow-up materials take into account the language capability of the community? (Is there provision for materials in languages other than English?)
- Have the cultural expectations of different groups been considered in the post-presentation follow-up? (Will the follow-up be directed only to individuals or will community groups be included? Have community activists been involved in the feedback design?)

### *Focusing students' attention on group dynamics*

An important part of this linked assignment was to encourage students to reflect on the group process as a resource for learning about intercultural communication. Some of the questions that guided this exploration were:

- Did you utilize your team members' cultural background knowledge for information relevant to the questions of homelessness?
- Did you utilize your team members' background knowledge for information relevant to the cultural makeup of the communities you were working with?
- Did you reflect on the differences in expectations for the process involved in teamwork?
- Did you make provision for accommodating different strengths in your team?
- What have you learned about diversity in the workplace?
- If a future employer asks you in an interview whether you are able to work effectively as a member of a culturally diverse team, what could you point to in this assignment as evidence that you have learned some skills to do so?

## *Outcomes*

The first goal of the assignment, applying basic cartographic skills, was well met by the students. It is the other goals, however, that are more germane to this case study.

The next three goals (awareness of potential cultural biases in cartographic design research and in the format of community and in public presentations, as well as awareness of the benefits of working in culturally diverse teams) are related and are discussed together below.

### **STUDENT INTEGRATION**

As students initiated their research and began to see the diversity of language and culture represented in their assignment, they began to recognize what a valuable resource their teammates were. Students who spoke and read the languages of those communities being studied and who interacted with those community members were seen as being able to provide a small but precious glimpse into the audience for the project. Instead of thinking of the final presentation as only the last stage of the assignment, the class began to view it as an engaging challenge to previous assumptions regarding appropriate public communication.

### **DIFFERENCES IN TEAMWORK PRACTICES**

Students discussed different approaches to teamwork. They recognized that differences occurred within cultural groups as well as between groups and were reluctant to attribute particular approaches to groups of people. Significant differences in teamwork practices were identified, however, by non-native English speakers who said that in contrast to other classes where they are often reluctant to speak out in class or in their teams, they felt especially valued for their “expert” perspectives in this project. In consequence, they experienced greater enthusiasm for the project and worked harder to communicate their ideas.

### **INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES AND COMMUNICATION**

At the research stage, students began to determine the language characteristics of their study community not just for the purpose of documenting statistics, but as important background that would inform their map construction and presentation methods. Religious and cultural institutions and ethnic community organizations were identified and visited as part of the fundamental data gathering. Class presentations took audience diversity into account. Recognizing that significant members of their audience would be non-native English speakers, students drew upon the abilities of their teammates and produced pamphlets and maps in more than one language. Using open mike sessions for feedback from the public was popular, but students also offered alternative routes for feedback, such as postage-free feedback forms in Cantonese that participants could mail in after presentations.

Students recognized that each individual filters information through the lens of his or her own experience, and that each one of us has a bias in our way of seeing the world. They remarked that they would never approach another project without first thinking about their own perspectives, as well as those of others, in order to establish a context for their investigation.

#### PERMISSION TO TALK ABOUT DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES

The addition of intercultural perspectives to this assignment gave students permission to talk to one another about sensitive issues. There was some reluctance to associate attitudes to homelessness with cultural categories, but students were able to engage in rich cross-cultural discussions about topics they might not otherwise have felt confident enough to broach. The added intercultural dimension of this assignment fired the imaginations of some students who were interested but not passionate about learning cartographic techniques. These people, who had submitted adequate, but not inspired, work throughout the semester performed at a significantly higher level in this assignment.

#### *Concluding Observations*

The students who seemed to benefit most from this project were those from visible ethnic backgrounds who perhaps were seeing themselves in the class content for the first time. Some people were inspired to seek out more information about intercultural communication, going well beyond class objectives.

To an instructor teaching in the science and technology field, the idea of incorporating intercultural aspects into an assignment was daunting. Students in the course were from such diverse backgrounds, however, that recognizing and celebrating such diversity seemed important. In addition, the field of geography necessarily examines regional and global inter-relationships, and the interaction of humans with their environment. Explicit cultural additions to the project brought a more complete human perspective to cartography than had previous capstone assignments. Moreover, students were challenged to shift their assumptions about research and communication. Intercultural aspects will continue to be welcome additions to class assignments.

The next time an intercultural dimension is added to a cartography assignment like this, students will be asked to keep a reflective journal to help them sort through aspects of their intercultural learning more effectively. In addition, more time will be left at the end of the course to allow in-class discussion of issues and ideas that emerged from the research and presentations. The international/intercultural components of this project were added after the original design of the assignment. In future, they will be integrated in a more effective manner from the outset.

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

### GEOG 170: Cartographic Design Process - Locating a Homeless Shelter

#### *Purpose*

One purpose of this final project is to pull together many of the skills you have developed throughout this course. You will work in teams (as you will during employment after college) to complement and build on each other's strengths and good ideas, and to effectively divide the labour. A second purpose for this final project is to bring your attention to the role that culture plays in the different communities you may find yourself working in later. As part of the Internationalizing Learning Project, you will be asked to address the influence of culture on the decisions you make as you develop your cartographic design process to locate a homeless shelter.

#### *Your task*

You and your team members work for a small consulting firm specializing in social science issues. You have been hired either by the Municipality of Richmond or by the City of New Westminister to determine the "best" location for a homeless shelter in each community. Ultimately, you will present your findings to a meeting at the Municipal and City Halls (really to the rest of the class) on December 2. Teams 1 and 2 will examine northern Richmond while teams 3 and 4 will look at southern Richmond. Teams 5, 6 and 7 will examine New Westminister.

Look closely at the descriptions below, then decide among yourselves who will be responsible for each specific role. Although there is some flexibility, each person will have a primary function within the team. Please pitch in and help others when your major responsibilities haven't reached high gear!

#### ROLE AND TASK

Designer	Given classification, simplification and generalization concerns, designs the layout of the documents the team decides to present to the audience. Creates prototype documents/layouts and "tests" them with potential viewers. After all feedback has been assessed and final decisions have been made by the team, creates paper and overhead copies of the presentation.
Statistician	With other team members, examines the project goals and their data requirements. Spearheads the collection and analysis of data. Considers the nature of the data and suggests appropriate symbolization to the team.

- Researcher      Assesses the nature and make-up of the community in the study area, and, hence, of the theoretical audience the results are presented to. Examines the major population characteristics (cultural, socioeconomic, etc.) of the study area and suggests designs and presentation techniques that may engage the interest and support of the audience.
- Project Manager   Ensures that each stage of the Cartographic Design Process is followed and documented. Articulates a rationale for the team's project assumptions. Works collaboratively with all team members to make decisions about layout and presentation. Develops and makes copies of any handouts for the class. Co-ordinates the presentation to the class/ audience. Organizes discussion to determine who will present what information to the audience in what time frame, and co-ordinates practice sessions.

It is beyond the scope of this course to examine every socioeconomic factor that could be taken into account in determining the best location for a homeless shelter. For the purposes of this assignment you are asked specifically to investigate the following:

General land use pattern including:

- Residential property
- Commercial areas
- Service centres
- Recreational land

Socioeconomic indicators, such as:

- Average household income
- Two others (your choice)

Proximity to:

- Medical services
- Public transit

Cultural background, e.g.:

- Language spoken at home
- Two others (your choice)

As a team, you must determine what "good" criteria and "bad" criteria are with respect to the location of a homeless shelter for each of the indicators to be investigated. For instance, you should consider whether it is a greater advantage to locate a homeless shelter near residential property, service centres or recreational land. You must be able to provide rational arguments for your choices and to state them clearly as your working assumptions for the project. When you have determined where each "good" area is for each criterion, overlay all the information to find the best overall site.

One suggestion for organizing your class time is as follows:

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| November 18 | Develop team goals. Brainstorm mapping purposes and data requirements.  |
| November 23 | Collect and analyze data. Brainstorm symbolization/generalization methods. Choose appropriate thematic map types. |
| November 25 | Create working prototypes and perform "market testing" with them. Refine ideas.                                   |
| November 30 | Create final documents and layouts. Develop presentation, overheads and handouts.                                 |

You will be supplied with:

- digital base maps of the study area that can be shaded or textured in a paint program
- locations of medical facilities and public transportation routes in each study area
- overhead transparencies for use with the Apple colour ink-jet printer (but note that you may also use any PCs you have access to outside of class)
- paper, transparencies, and photocopier time to create overheads and handouts for your presentation.

### ***Internationalizing the Project***

Internationalizing the project requires you to pay attention to the aspects listed below at each stage of the project.

#### **PART ONE: PRE-PRESENTATION OR RESEARCH STAGE**

- Identify the dominant cultural groups in your study area.
- Identify local activists and advocacy groups in each of those cultural communities.
- Determine the location of, and public use patterns around, cultural areas such as churches, temples and other cultural centres.

#### **PART TWO: PRESENTATION STAGE**

Examine different cultural traditions of public presentations and responses. Design your presentation in a way that respects and welcomes interaction and feedback from the dominant cultural groups in each community.

#### **PART THREE: POST-PRESENTATION STAGE**

From what you know about the cultural communities in your study area, what process would best acknowledge the feedback given by the citizens of the area?

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN AN OFFICE ADMINISTRATION CLASS

### OADM 245 Case Study

by Brenda Read

This case study describes a linked assignment that internationalized learning in an Introduction to Employability Skills for Office Personnel class. The assignment required students to identify elements of teamwork, establish criteria for assessing performance and reflect on their performance as team members in projects undertaken during the semester. Outcomes related to the content dimension included identifying how approaches to teamwork might vary across cultures. The relational, or intercultural, dimension involved observing classmates of varied cultural backgrounds interacting as teamworkers and thus becoming aware of and sensitive to differences in cultural practices and dynamics when working together. Other relational outcomes included students' ability to practice/model techniques for positive, productive interaction with members of other cultures, an employability skill that is especially important in the program.

### Office Administration, OADM 245

Office Administration 245, Introduction to Employability Skills for Office Personnel, is a requirement for Office Assistant Citation students and Administrative Assistant, Legal Secretarial, and Financial Certificate students. It is one of the first courses taken and is used to develop a foundation of skills and attitudes on which students can build throughout their program. It also provides a setting for students to learn the discipline's (and industry's) expectations for the quality of work and the amount of time and effort needed to be successful in their chosen program and career.

### *OADM 245 and the Internationalizing Learning Project*

The learning outcomes associated with OADM 245 explicitly state that issues of multiculturalism will be interwoven into all the employability skills being developed in the course. There is thus, an explicit link that can be made to the broad concerns of the Internationalizing Learning Project. The ability to work effectively in teams is a fundamental employability skill in almost every work environment graduates will find themselves. While the diversity in any team may cover aspects such as age, sex, sexual orientation, and culture to name a few, cultural diversity is likely to be the most complex aspect of diversity on most teams, especially in workplaces in urban BC. Moreover, cultural diversity is also a conspicuous feature of our classrooms.

## *The Assignment*

The twin objectives of the linked assignment relate to the dynamic of working in teams:

- to become aware of and sensitive to differences in cultural practices and dynamics when working together
- to practice/model techniques for positive, productive interaction with members of other cultures in order to be successful in the workplace.

Achieving these objectives requires both self-reflection on the students' own cultural practices and careful observation of fellow students with different cultural backgrounds as they work together in teams.

Some pre-organization was needed to prepare the class for the assignment. First, teams of five or six students were randomly created within the first two weeks of the course. (In other instances, it may be important to construct the teams to ensure a culturally diverse membership.) Second, textbook readings and general discussion on all types of diversity were planned for the first two or three classes. Students were also encouraged to be proud of their differences and to assess differences in terms of positives and opportunities.

The assignment may be described in four steps. The first two established the knowledge-base necessary to complete it.

### **STEP ONE: LEARNING ABOUT MULTICULTURAL TEAMS**

In step one, the multicultural teamwork-related material was introduced in the second week. First, I explained the objectives and the method of self-reflection and participant-observation that would be needed to complete the assignment. The teams then had 10 to 15 minutes to discuss the topic and the assignment. During this class, the students were asked to read the chapter "Diversity Variables that Impact Team Functioning" in Gardenswartz & Rowe (1995). A set of questions was provided to help them probe the culturally influenced expectations they held regarding how teams work. Both activities were to be completed for discussion with their team, for the next class.

### **STEP TWO: DISCUSSING PERSONAL CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS FOR TEAMWORK**

Step two began in the next class with a 30- to 40-minute team discussion on their answers to the questions assigned during the previous class. This was followed by each team sharing with the whole class the major issues raised in their team discussions.

The two steps above, set the stage for the most substantial part of the assignment that might be described as the team member-observer component.

### **STEP THREE: OBSERVING THE EFFECTS OF EXPECTATIONS IN PRACTICE**

In step three, students were engaged in an exercise that required them to apply their new awareness of varying expectations of teamwork, observing and commenting on the effect of these on team dynamics. Throughout the course students were regularly reminded to be sensitive and flexible to the needs of individuals from cultures other than their own and to discuss openly related opportunities and concerns with each other.

### **STEP FOUR: SHARING ASSIGNMENT RESULTS**

The final and fourth step provided a capstone activity in which students could summarize what they had learned about their own and others' expectations regarding how effective teams should work.

Upon completion of the major team project presentation, the students completed the required peer presentation and team member participation assessments. In addition, they were asked to complete a "reflective self-assessment on cultural diversity."

### ***Outcomes***

The cultural diversity assignment successfully met the twin objectives set. Students became aware of and sensitive to differences in cultural practices and dynamics when working together. They also had the opportunity to model productive interactions with members of other cultures. In addition to these two outcomes, students also reported an increase in confidence in many situations, and increased knowledge of how their teamwork expectations and behaviours are influenced by their culture, as well as other aspects of their lives. These outcomes are detailed below using comments from the students' final evaluations of the assignment.

### **AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL PRACTICES THROUGH TEAMWORK**

#### **i) Differences in teamwork practices as a general feature of culture**

Students generally became aware of the existence of different approaches to teamwork. As one student wrote, "After doing a handout on diversity in teamwork and then discussing it among our group, we all noticed how differently teamwork was regarded by other cultures." Another wrote, "I realized people with different cultural backgrounds have different views."

#### **ii) Differences in teamwork practices specific to a given culture**

Depending on who was in their group, students learned some of the specifics regarding the way the cultures represented by their classmates might vary. For example, one student wrote, "Some [cultures] thought that the group members should be equal, and others thought there should be one leader." Another noted a difference in whether one should voice a differing opinion: "Some cultures prefer to avoid conflict by not sharing their opposing views." Yet another student learned something about culture's influence on communication styles: "Some of us, based on cultural background, are very expressive and some of us are very quiet."

### iii) Development of self-knowledge

A very powerful aspect of learning involves students coming to understand how their life is powerfully influenced by their cultures. "It [the assignment] helped me learn a lot about myself—how my culture is related to my life, whether it be school, career or friendships." Another said, "I increased my knowledge of different cultures and, in return, I understand myself better."

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

### i) Effective communication attitudes and strategies

Students developed a constellation of attitudes and strategies to ensure that the diverse teams they worked in operated smoothly. One wrote, "I came to feel free to offer different perspectives. I also learned to respect people's opinions regardless of their age, culture or abilities. Moreover, I learned that in teamwork it is important to take care that everyone is comfortable with the way the team is working." A lot of learning here is attitudinal: "Interacting with people of different ages and cultural backgrounds depends on patience, understanding and the will to compromise in order to get along and to come up with a solution."

### ii) Development of diversity-positive views

In addition, to the specific attitudes and strategies described above, students developed a positive orientation to diversity, coming to see it as an asset rather than a liability. "Each member of the team has a different point of view, which can be helpful to the group" typifies this insight. Students did not, however, have a naive view of diversity. They recognized that "it can cause conflict, but also enhance the quality and perspective of things." The final word here can be left to the student who wrote, "The truth is that we need to celebrate our diversity instead of being afraid that ever increasing numbers of people around us do not look or dress the same. This should be exciting not frightening."

## STUDENT INTEGRATION

### i) Breaking down barriers between students

Students in the classroom bonded very closely. "I have never had such a feeling of comfort and well being than I do with these classmates." Other students spoke of the effect of sharing the stories of their culture: "By sharing our stories and being willing to learn from one another, our group became fast friends." For students who come from cultural minorities, this assignment invited them to emerge from their own culture and participate in a broader community. As one said, "I thought that I should socialize just with people from my own country; I felt uncomfortable with differences. I appreciate being given an opportunity to learn how to become confident and comfortable with people from different cultures, especially native speakers."

ii) **Increasing student confidence**

Shy students in the class gained the confidence to speak out, either because they realized that they weren't sharing when others were, or because they felt significant levels of support to venture an opinion. "I am a quiet person, but I am pleased that someone said, 'What do you think, Saki?' during the team activity. I realized I hadn't shared my ideas with them." Learning to speak out will have longer ranging effects: "In the future, I believe I will be less frightened to speak in front of people." A final effect of the assignment was the loosening of students' inhibitions about socializing with students from other cultures. One student wrote, "Working successfully in a team of such diverse cultures has given me the confidence to socialize more so I can learn more about other cultures."

### *Concluding Observations*

This assignment successfully met the immediate goals. It also had longer range outcomes in that students were quick to see the future application of their learning: "[In the future,] I will consider the new information and opinions of others. I strongly believe that I need to have the ability to co-operate with diversity in order to succeed in my life." In some cases, an unintended consequence of the assignment was that learning about other cultures became an important goal for them. One student wrote, "I value the experience I have had learning about diversity and teamwork. I will no longer be afraid to learn about other people's cultures; this will only broaden my lifelong learning." Some students made direct reference to career contexts when identifying the future application of their new knowledge and skills: "Working as a team has shown me how to embrace everyone's differences and to establish good working relationships. This will greatly aid my future in a law office, where teamwork is essential." Others expressed similar opinions.

As their comments testify, the students were very positive and open to this assignment. Students in the teams became cheerleaders for each other when members had to do things individually. However, students needed to feel that they were in a comfortable and non-threatening environment to risk opening up and actively participating in the activities. A very, very small number of students remained insensitive and inflexible. These individuals ultimately paid the price for their attitude, either in formal assessment or in the relationships and support that they did not develop with their classmates. I do not believe this attitude was necessarily culturally based. Interestingly, this assignment made the majority of students more sensitive to all, not just those who were culturally different. They became more open-minded in general.

My own feelings about this assignment are also positive. This assignment required me to rethink my place in the classroom. When I look back on the assignment, I realize that initially I feared being unable to assist effectively in the learning of students with so many cultural backgrounds. In the end, I gained much personally from interacting with

the students during this project. My perceived lack of a specific expertise turned out to be less than I thought and was, I believe, a double win situation for me and the students. In order, however, for this victory to happen, there had to be a shift in my role. It was necessary to shift from being the expert in charge to becoming an enthusiastic mentor, mediator, motivator and to use praise liberally. I also needed to make sure we were openly celebrating the big and small achievements or events. This latter activity is essential to creating the atmosphere for a linked assignment such as this one to succeed.

On the organizational side of the ledger, it was important to give students sufficient time to do the assigned readings and assignments as many needed time to interpret and understand the language used in the assigned work before putting the information into the appropriate context. Adjusting the level of English appropriately was important to support students feeling a sense of achievement rather than frustration. Since the success of an assignment like this relies so much on the quality of participation of those who may speak English as a second language, it is imperative that the material be well understood by all.

It was a very satisfying experience personally to do this assignment with students. I'll leave the final words to one of the students who summed up the experience thus: "I have gained stories, memories, little pieces of others' lives and most of all friends from working in my group."

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

(Instructions were given to the students verbally so this document has been created after the fact.)

### OADM 245: Understanding Teamwork Practices Across Cultures

The goal of this assignment is to help you improve the effectiveness of your work as members of culturally diverse teams, such as are found in many offices. This assignment provides an opportunity for you to learn about teamwork practices in different cultures. You will increase your awareness of your own cultural values, and the ways your culture approaches work in groups. You will also teach others about your culture and learn about theirs.

#### *The Task*

##### STEP ONE: BACKGROUND READING AND REFLECTION

Read the chapter, "Diversity Variables that Impact Team Functioning," in Gardenswartz & Rowe (1994). Next, in order to determine the more common characteristics of teams in your culture, work through the handout titled "Some Questions for Reflection on Teamwork-Related Cultural Practices." If you are having difficulty understanding the meaning of the two key words or phrases that identify different choices, please read the related questions. These questions help clarify the meaning of the key ideas.

##### STEP TWO: PAIR AND SHARE WITH SOMEONE FROM YOUR CULTURE

Share your conclusions about the characteristics of teamwork in your culture with another student from your culture. If there are big differences, try to see if you can agree on how most people in your culture would answer.

##### STEP THREE: PAIR AND SHARE WITH SOMEONE FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE

Discuss within your teams the expectations for teamwork practices that are common in your culture.

##### STEP FOUR: KEEPING A JOURNAL

As you work through your projects, each time you encounter a problem or an advantage that arises from the diversity on your team, make a note of it in a journal. Ideally, this should be a split-page journal. Simply divide each page in half lengthwise so you have two columns on the page. Use the right-hand column to make your initial entry and the left-hand column to make comments every couple of weeks as you learn more and reflect on your earlier entry. You will be asked to submit the journal near the end of the course.

This assignment was followed by a self-assessment, using the following model.

## OADM 245: Reflective Self-Assessment on Cultural Diversity

Throughout this course, many types of diversity have been discussed. We have paid particular attention to how such diversity impacts on working together. Specifically you have:

- interacted with classmates of different ages and cultural backgrounds in your teams and as a member of the class as a whole
- completed readings both from your text and from a handout
- completed questions on cultural differences as they related to team activity
- discussed the responses to those questions in your team
- kept a reflective journal.

Using these interactions, readings and discussions, please respond to the request below. The quality of your responses will be considered in your employability skills grade. Therefore, be thoughtful, creative and sincere.

In 10 to 20 sentences, please:

- outline what you feel you have gained/learned from the above-mentioned activities
- identify how you will use/apply this learning in your future.

The questions that were assigned along with the reading are reproduced below.

### Oadm 245: Some Questions for Reflection on Teamwork-Related Cultural Practices

Instructions: After reading the chapter "Diversity Variables that Impact Team Functioning" in Gardenswartz & Rowe (1995), use the questions below to determine some of the expectations for teamwork in your culture. Be prepared to share these insights with your classmates.

#### *Egalitarian - hierarchical*

- 1a. Are team members generally all equal, or is there a hierarchy?
- 1b. If there is a hierarchy, is it ordered by age, sex, position in the company, seniority or other factor?
- 1c. Is the relationship with the team leader usually formal or informal? For example, is a first name or a title used?

#### *Direct communication - indirect communication*

- 2a. Do team members offer differing opinions frankly?
- 2b. Do team members raise objections to team decisions frankly or less directly?
- 2c. Do team members prefer communicating with others face to face, or are they comfortable communicating through such means as memos and phone calls?

*Emphasis on individual - emphasis on the group*

- 3a. Do individual members take credit for their part of the team's work, or do members generally consider everything a team effort?
- 3b. Do team members often socialize after work and continue to discuss work-related matters?
- 3c. Are teams usually rewarded as teams, or are individuals usually singled out for special praise?

*Linear/logical - lateral/intuitive*

- 4a. Do teams work logically through a series of steps, or decide the order of tasks by how the members might feel is the best approach at the time?
- 4b. Is the agenda for teamwork set by the leader, or is it determined by the group?
- 4c. Are quick insights into problems valued by team members or are members generally nervous about quick solutions to problems?

*Task focus - relationship focus*

- 5a. Do teams begin to work quickly, or do members socialize a little before the work begins?
- 5b. Do members take care that everyone is comfortable with the way the team is working together?
- 5c. Do teams put priority on the tasks of the team or on the relationships among team members?

*Confrontation in conflict - preparation for harmony*

- 6a. Do teams deal directly and frankly with interpersonal conflict or do they try to ignore issues of interpersonal conflict?
- 6b. Do teams regard differences of opinion as valuable or as a problem to be avoided?
- 6c. Do teams seek to have similar people as members or are different kinds of people sought out as members?

*Change oriented - Tradition oriented*

- 7a. Do teams generally strive to be seen as innovators or as people who respect a more traditional way of doing things?
- 7b. Do teams openly strive to do things better than teams in the past, or other teams, or do they try to play down the differences between their performance and other or previous teams?
- 7c. Do teams embrace new ways of approaching tasks or do they worry about the acceptance of new approaches?

*Strict time consciousness - elastic time consciousness*

- 8a. Do teams operate on the principle that "time is money" or do they take as much time as is needed to complete the task?
- 8b. Do team members take pride in keeping to a brisk pace or are they willing to take a relaxed approach to the work?
- 8c. Are deadlines treated as a top priority or are deadlines treated as flexible and other matters given priority?

## INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING IN A PHYSICS CLASS

### PHYS 107 Case Study

by Jennifer Kirkey

This case study describes a linked assignment which internationalized learning in a Introductory General Physics I class. The assignment required each student to identify elements of teamwork, describe their culture's approach to this way of working, and discuss this information with fellow students. This discussion illuminated their own expectations of teamwork, led to a recognition that others do not share these, and helped lend insight into ways to negotiate differences. Unlike other case studies in this volume, the content dimension was not related to the subject of the course—physics—but rather to the lab work required in the courses. Students work in teams to complete a number of laboratory assignments; the teams are frequently made up of culturally different individuals. This case study details relational outcomes associated with the process used to raise student awareness of how differing cultural expectations for lab work might affect the quality of their work in teams. Students also learned ways to negotiate successful resolutions to potential conflicts.

#### Physics, PHYS 107

Physics 107, Introductory General Physics 1, is a typical laboratory science course, and focuses on concepts such as work and energy, momentum, rotational motion and related topics. A five-credit course, Physics 107 includes four hours of class in a lecture style classroom as well as three hours of laboratory time a week. Working in a laboratory room devoted to physics, a total of 18 students complete lab assignments in groups of two or three (lab work usually requires at least two people; one might be needed to hold something while another measures it, for example). A supervisor is present.

#### *PHYS 107 and the Internationalizing Learning Project*

Since science is not usually an area that comes immediately to mind when thinking of internationalization, readers might ask why internationalize learning in a physics class. I invoke two perspectives, one global, one local, to respond to this query.

The answer from the global perspective is that science is an international activity that requires collaboration. Science is performed in teams, often with people who have received their training in different places around the world. In fact, no matter where they may have received their first training, it is expected that a professional scientist will do some of her or his training and work overseas. Thus, working well together in groups with people of a different culture is an essential skill for scientists. As a colleague of mine

comments frequently (quoting a labour study) “you are hired for your qualifications, promoted for your performance and fired for your lack of interpersonal skills.” We, as educators, need to provide students with more than adequate technical qualifications.

The answer from the local perspective is that we need to promote good working relationships in the lab groups where students must work to complete experiments. Over the years my colleagues and I have noticed that some lab partners do not work well together due, in our opinion, to failure to successfully navigate cultural differences. On at least three occasions, I have witnessed, and had to intervene in, situations in which culturally different lab partners exchanged accusations of incompetence. I believe the source of these conflicts was a failure to accept a different way of doing things on the part of one or more partners in the lab team. While conflicts rarely get that intense, tensions between lab partners are common and these tensions make the lab partnership difficult, affecting the whole class. A large number of these tensions can be decreased, if not eliminated, if the lab partners know what practices are expected. The key to resolving these conflicts is frequently understanding culture.

### ***The Assignment***

The twin objectives of this assignment relate to the dynamics of working in diverse lab teams:

- to become aware of and sensitive to differences in cultural practices and dynamics when working together
- to identify/practice strategies for minimizing difficulties arising from differing expectations for conduct during lab work.

The assignment is divided into five steps.

#### **STEP ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE ASSIGNMENT**

Students were informed that the purpose of the assignment was to improve their understanding of team dynamics and their ability to function well in diverse teams, a necessity in a successful scientific career. The students were told that this was in addition to their regular lab work and that they would be awarded a grade equal to one lab (about 2 percent of their overall grade for the whole course) for the work done. The students were presented with an overview of teamwork cultural values and practices that was derived from reading the chapter “Diversity Variables that Impact Team Functioning” in Gardenswartz & Rowe (1995). This overview was used to create an inventory of eight variables related to teamwork.

#### **STEP TWO: SELF-REFLECTION IN CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS**

Students were asked to identify where they would place themselves on the eight continua of values and practices presented. For example, considering the contrasting values of emphasizing the individual versus emphasizing the group, students were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 to 7 where they thought their values might sit. This required them

to ask themselves whether, all things being equal, I put my interest first (emphasis on individual) or my the group's interest first. They were later asked to repeat the exercise answering for an imagined "average" person from their cultural background.

### **STEP THREE: SHARING RESULTS WITH SOMEONE FROM YOUR CULTURE**

Students were instructed to talk with a member of their own cultural group to see if their judgements were consistent with other's views about how the "average" person in their culture might respond to the inventory.

### **STEP FOUR: SHARING RESULTS WITH THE WHOLE CLASS**

This stage is extremely important since it builds the knowledge base about how diversity functions when it is operationalized. The next lab period, the class as a whole spoke briefly together sharing some of what had been learned. The written scale helped different people to talk about their feelings. It was a very interactive discussion. The lab supervisor and I could see the light bulbs turning on as students realized that not everyone liked to work in the same manner.

### **STEP FIVE: THE LAB MEMBER-OBSERVER COMPONENT**

Each time the students got new lab partners, which happened fairly regularly, they were asked to make their expectations for various aspects of lab work explicit. Students were asked to keep a brief reflective journal (see table below) about working in teams. In order to help the students, we came up with a short, half page, fill-in-the-blanks assignment. They were to think about and record their experience each time they worked with a new lab partner. They were asked to record what strategies they used to work successfully together.

Teams in my culture:

Do ...

Do not ...

Like it ...

Hate it ...

These journal entries were handed in twice during the last half of the 14-week semester.

### ***Outcomes***

For the most part the assignment achieved the goals expected. It was a different experience for students to undertake such activities in the physics lab. While novelty is often enjoyed just for the sake of novelty, the self-reflection aspect really helped students understand some of their own resistance to working in groups as well as giving them a viewpoint into other people's ways of learning. Several other outcomes are detailed below using the students' own comments from their final evaluation forms.

## AWARENESS OF DIFFERENCES IN CULTURAL PRACTICES IN LAB TEAMWORK

### i) Differences in teamwork practices as a general feature of culture

The process of sharing the teamwork practices of their culture with their classmates led students to see multiple models of teamwork. The checklist of criteria for approaches to teamwork produced was quite comprehensive and the process of sharing practices correspondingly detailed.

### ii) Differences in teamwork practices specific to a given culture

The process of sharing with partners from different cultures also yielded knowledge of specific differences in teamwork-related cultural practices. Statements like, “My partner felt free to offer differing opinions [and they]... put a lot of emphasis on team effort” and “in my culture teams do not socialize during the work; ... we do not want to delay the work,” hint at the richness of the contrastive analysis occurring here.

### iii) Development of self-knowledge

This is a particularly rich area of student development. After completing the first self-reflective part of the assignment, the students were encouraged to move around the room and compare their comments. Two students (one male, one female) who, unknown to me, were from the same culture, had a very animated discussion. I could see evidence of new insights as one participant very excitedly asked me whether he could change one of my answers. I assured him that he could and told him that the point was to think about culture rather than find a “right” answer. This student later informed me that he had never thought about such things before, and realized he was somewhat different from others in his culture, as he admitted others may also be.

A comment that I heard over and over again as the students worked in small groups was “I didn’t realize that I do [x] and that most people from other cultures don’t do that.” Some journal entries echoed this opinion. I observed a greater self-awareness from students for the rest of the semester as to why they might have difficulties working with others.

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

### i) Effective communications attitudes and strategies

Some students reported that their teams “worked well together” and that they “helped each other out.” Others commented that, “We didn’t socialize much about anything else but the lab, but that’s only because it was our first time working together.” While some students need more time to relax and get to know each other and de-stress with socializing, this custom may not sit well with other, more task-oriented students. Being aware of the differences

in style (or cultures) helps students deal with this. I sensed that the discussion and raising of awareness really helped develop a more positive attitude.

**ii) Development of diversity-positive views**

Curiously, one source of evidence of a more diversity-positive view among students was that there were more jokes about culture. I don't refer here to any stereotypical labeling of "you do that because" type, but rather to more self-directed, gentle humour along the lines of "people in my culture like to have lots of coffee breaks and eat chocolate .. that is just the way it is," delivered in a light, humorous tone. I was pleased to observe that such comments often led to "serious" discussions during class breaks.

**STUDENT INTEGRATION**

**i) Breaking down barriers between students**

As a result of the diversity-positive views mentioned above, I observed that students became less hesitant in asking questions about things that struck them. For example, they might ask, "What are you eating?" or "Why aren't you eating [during Ramadan]?" Barriers between students must be lowered dramatically before students will risk such sensitive questions.

**ii) Increasing student confidence**

Shyer students gained the confidence to speak out about substantial personal matters as a result of this assignment. For some the explicit discussion of differences depersonalized the challenges, allowing students to share their feelings safely. "People in my culture hate it when they are not allowed to finish their sentences," said a normally unassertive female student (Iranian culture) to her two male teammates (from German and Slovak backgrounds). Several students have told me things like, "I could never have told Chris to be quiet, but he really listened when I said how teams in my culture need to quietly talk the task out first." Revelations of differences also leads to questions like "how do you manage?" and some very good learning tips are exchanged. The atmosphere of the room improves and even the shy students begin to participate and share some very personal information.

***Concluding Observations***

I like doing this intercultural work for many reasons; I'll make note of two in conclusion. One is that it gives me a way to explain to my students something about my personal style. In the small community I grew up in, we tend to avoid direct eye contact, not finish our own sentences, and finish other people's sentences. I was not personally aware of this until I moved from a rural area in another province and then began going back home over the last ten years. These communication-related habits of mine drive many of my students to distraction (they are most often cited on feedback questionnaires about my teaching)

and while I have been changing these habits over the years, this assignment gives me a venue to mention them, in part by way of apology (I am not being disrespectful by not looking at you, in my culture I am being respectful) and in part to show my students that people can change ingrained habits if necessary.

A second reason I like this assignment is that it makes a big difference in the functioning of the individual groups and the morale of the whole class. We are all more open to comment to the things that are important to us. I have also discovered that there are lots of ways to celebrate diversity and create a sense of inclusion in my classes. For example, being sensitive to important dates in the religious and cultural calendars of groups represented in the class is an occasion to create a sense of inclusion in the class. In addition to the dates I am required to add on my course outlines, I now add dates from each of the five major cultural groups in the community to that list and I am prepared to be flexible around them. When the final exam in December 1999 fell during Ramadan, a Muslim holy month, I suggested that anyone celebrating Ramadan and not eating before sunset tell me so I could schedule the exam after sunset. We also celebrate and acknowledge the equinoxes and solstices, the full moons and the new moons as we talk about calendars and astronomy. This science discussion is tied into the celebrations of many cultures.

The lasting result of doing an assignment like the one reported here is that I am more open to talking about my culture and how it affects the ways that I work with my colleagues and the students. This assignment was worth doing for that reason alone.

## ASSIGNMENT HANDOUT FOR STUDENTS

### **PHYS 107: Developing Awareness of Teamwork Practices Across Cultures**

The goal of this assignment is to help you improve the effectiveness of your work as a member of a culturally diverse team such as a lab partnership or small discussion group. This assignment provides an opportunity for you to learn about team or group work practices in different cultures. You will increase your awareness of your own cultural values and ways your culture approaches work in groups. You will also teach others about your culture and learn about theirs.

#### **STEP ONE: LEARNING ABOUT CULTURE AND TEAMWORK**

Work through the handout, "Some Questions for Reflection on Teamwork-Related Cultural Practices that may Affect Lab Partnerships," in order to determine the more common characteristics of teams in your culture. If you are having difficulty understanding the meaning of the two key words or phrases that identify different choices, please read the related questions since they will help clarify the meaning of the key ideas. You have another handout, "Summarizing Teamwork-Related Cultural Practices that may Affect Lab Partnerships and Group Work," where you can summarize your thoughts about your cultures' preferences on a scale of 1 - 7.

#### **STEP TWO: CHECKING IN WITH OTHERS FROM YOUR CULTURE**

Check your conclusion about the characteristics of teamwork in your culture with another student from your culture. If there are big differences, try to see if you can agree on how most people in your culture would answer.

#### **STEP THREE: MEETING WITH NEW LAB PARTNERS**

Every time you meet a new lab partner or work in a new group, share what you have learned about the characteristics of group work in your culture by going through the list. Note the differences.

#### **STEP FOUR: WORKING OUT DIFFERENCES**

Be frank about the differences with your partner and determine how you will work together. You may have to agree to follow the model your instructor or lab assistant expects you to. If you are in doubt about this, ask. Although flexibility is valued, in most cases you will need to do things in the way the instructor or lab assistant requires; you are now working in teams in a Canadian multicultural environment.

#### **STEP FIVE: KEEPING A JOURNAL**

Keep a short reflective journal. You will be asked to write a paragraph or two describing the teamwork style of your culture. Describe how this is different than the Canadian model which your instructor, or lab assistant, might want you to use. Each time you have a lab partner or group member who is culturally different, record the differences you

notice in teamwork practices in each other's cultures and the things you do to work successfully together. If you weren't able to work together very well, please note that too. Use the form below to record your data.

Teams in my culture

Do ...

Do not ...

Like it ...

Hate it ...

Remember to also record the things you did to work successfully together:

#### STEP SIX: SUBMIT THE JOURNAL

Your journal is due a week before the end of the course.

### PHYS 107: Summarizing Teamwork-Related Cultural Practices that may Affect Lab Partnerships and Group Work

Listed below are eight pairs of opposing values that may be reflected in the way people of similar cultures work together. Of course, cultures are rarely at one extreme in each pair, but many cultures show a tendency to prefer one side or the other on the choices below. For example, many (but not all) Canadian teams will be relatively egalitarian while many (but not all) Japanese teams will be relatively hierarchical.

*Circle a number on the scales below to indicate the balance between the pairs of values as reflected in teamwork or lab partnership practices in your culture. Write the name of the culture you are thinking of in this exercise here: \_\_\_\_\_*

#### 1. Egalitarian - hierarchical



This distinction refers to the difference in the way members on teams or lab partners regard each other. Egalitarian simply means the team members aren't aware of rank; members are equal. Hierarchical teams are conscious of rank differences; some members have higher or lower status.

2. *Direct communication - indirect communication*



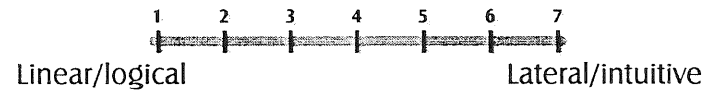
This distinction refers to the difference in the way team members communicate. Direct communicators say what is on their mind frankly and quickly. Indirect communicators say what is on their mind less directly and take care to pick a time and place to share their thoughts.

3. *Emphasis on individual - emphasis on the group*



This distinction refers to how the group members see themselves. Do they put their interests first (emphasis on individual) or the group's interest first?

4. *Linear/logical - lateral/intuitive*



This distinction refers to the way work proceeds on the team. Do members like to work through things in a linear fashion according to a set agenda (linear/logical) or do they go through the task in no particular order (lateral/intuitive) to get it done?

5. *Task-focused - relationship-focused*



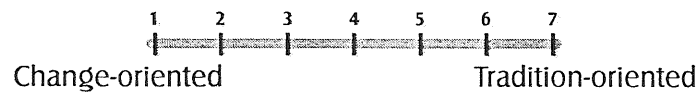
This distinction refers to both the way members relate to each other and the way the team approaches work. Task-focused teams tend not to spend a lot of time socializing; rather they just get together and begin to work. Relationship-focused teams like to socialize at all stages of the task and regard the relationships and tasks as equally important.

6. *Confrontation in conflict - preparation for harmony*



This distinction refers to the way groups deal with conflict. Do members freely talk about conflict and try to resolve it, even at risk of group harmony? Or do members tend to hesitate to talk about conflicted feelings in order to preserve group harmony?

7. *Change-oriented – tradition-oriented*



This distinction refers to the way groups see their role in the broader context of the work. Are they comfortable with and trying to create change (change-oriented) and innovation? Or do they value their traditions and try to avoid challenging them (tradition-oriented)?

8. *Strict time consciousness - elastic time consciousness*



This distinction refers to the way the team or lab partners regard time. Are they working to the clock and trying to meet deadlines (strict time), or are they more relaxed about time and work along without too much attention to the clock (elastic time)?



# SECTION 3

## WORKSHEETS FOR DESIGNING A LINKED ASSIGNMENT

### *Purpose*

Before beginning to develop a linked assignment, it is useful to share lessons others have learned. The following recommendations, adapted from lessons learned by Brenda Read while participating in the Internationalizing Learning Project, provide a good framework for orienting yourself to the task of designing a linked assignment before you begin to do so.

### *Objective*

By the end of this section, you will understand some strategies for developing linked assignments.

## POINTS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE DESIGNING A LINKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Start small and select one assignment you feel can be expanded to include an international/intercultural dimension.

*The value of this approach is that it requires instructors to focus only on internationalizing one assignment at a time, an achievable goal.*

2. Incorporate international/intercultural learning goals into the assignment with clear learning outcome statements.

*International/intercultural learning outcomes in general should not be treated as separate from your usual content. This internationalizing learning approach is most successful when the outcomes are integrated into the assignment.*

3. Clearly and regularly identify the value of understanding issues such as diversity, equity, and other such topics as they relate to the course and to the learners' field of study.

*It is important that learners recognize that issues related to international/intercultural learning are central to their fields of study. If we fail to develop a commitment on the part of students to take these issues seriously, we risk perpetuating an older order where these issues were ignored. We have the opportunity through linked assignments to assert the dignity and worth of each individual and to embed this perspective in our practices throughout the education system.*

4. Introduce the assignment and associated international/intercultural outcomes early in the course.

*Achieving these outcomes requires that an inclusive, non-threatening environment be built into the classroom community. By alerting learners early to the sensitive nature of some of the work, the motivation for creating a trusting, risk-positive climate will be enhanced.*

5. Openly declare that it is a co-operative learning situation for both the instructor and the learners.

*The particular advantage of the linked assignment approach to internationalizing learning is that it shifts the traditional dynamic in the classroom from one where the teacher is the expert to a new dynamic in which everyone has expertise by virtue of their life experience. It is important that instructors create a climate in which all*

*participants are seen as both experts and learners. The most important reason for designing linked assignments is to draw on the expertise of a diverse student body, especially the international and immigrant students in our classrooms.*

**6. Use a team or other collaborative approach to the work of the assignment.**

*Not only is this approach less threatening than others, it is also essential for a linked assignment to work. The relational dimension of linked assignments hardly exists unless students have an opportunity to interact with one another. For this reason, planning the cultural mix of the work groups is especially important. Diversity has many aspects, so you need not feel constrained by any one aspect of diversity as you assign students to working groups.*

**7. Design assessments that are self-reflective and focus on both the students' current learning and its future application.**

*Assessment of international/intercultural learning outcomes has some particularly challenging aspects. The relational goals are associated with the development of intercultural communication skills. This learning is essentially experiential learning and therefore developmental and complex. Self-assessment and peer-assessment are two options that are particularly suited to assessing the learning that is occurring.*

**8. Be prepared for misunderstanding and conflict to occur.**

*Because they encourage authentic intercultural communication, linked assignments are contexts where authentic intercultural conflict may occur. An important subset of international/intercultural learning outcomes are those that relate to conflict resolution. By being forthright about the possibility of conflict, the stage can be set for discussing strategies for conflict resolution and later perhaps for practicing them.*

**9. Pay careful attention to the level of English used for any assignment.**

*A major reason for developing linked assignments is to integrate landed immigrants and international students more fully into classroom activities. One obvious characteristic of many of these students is that their language skills are still developing and therefore they may need support for some activities. Scaffolding, the practice of breaking tasks down into smaller units and supporting learners through a series of increasingly complex and complete activities, is often very helpful for these learners. You may wish to work in partnership with an ESL specialist when designing these assignments.*

SHOULD YOU BE CONSIDERING AN INTERNATIONALIZING LEARNING FOCUS FOR A PROGRAM AS WELL AS A COURSE YOU MAY WANT TO KEEP THESE RECOMMENDATIONS BELOW IN MIND.

10. Select a course within a program in which to integrate selected international/ intercultural learning outcomes comprehensively. From this experience you can begin to weave international/ intercultural learning outcomes throughout the remaining courses in the program.

*Like all complex learning, international/intercultural learning is multifaceted and developmental. Learners will develop skills and knowledge much more effectively if the material is presented in numerous related contexts.*

11. Require that international/intercultural aspects be considered, just as ethics might be, when students complete any assignment or participate in discussions.

*Although you may only be able to internationalize one assignment at a time in a systematic way, students can attend to the international/intercultural aspect of all assignments they do. One advantage of this is that you will be able to learn from them what possibilities exist for other linked assignments.*

12. Make provision for assessing efforts to internationalize learning in all program evaluation exercises.

*Evaluating efforts comprehensively in this way ensures that they will not become marginalized. Moreover, a comprehensive review of this aspect of your program will allow you to extend and improve it.*

## **WORKSHEETS TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH THE PROCESS OF DESIGNING A LINKED ASSIGNMENT**

To orient yourself to the task, begin with the question: *Where is there room within my regular course assignments to integrate learning outcomes related to intercultural/international skills, knowledge and attitudes?*

1. **Identify the course.**  
(Sociology, Child Care Worker, Biology, etc.)
2. **Identify or write one intercultural/international learning outcome.**  
(Identifying differing cultural values, etc.)
3. **Inventory the diversity offered by the students enrolled.**  
(Consider such factors as ethnicity, culture, age, sex, etc.)
4. **Decide if you need to involve students from other courses.**  
(This might be an ESL class or another class with a different diversity profile from yours. It might even be a class in another country with which you have electronic links.)
5. **Identify a current assignment you feel has possibilities for being developed into a linked assignment which could achieve the outcome stated in #2 above.**
6. **Review the learning activity in the assignment to ensure that it could be redesigned to be more interactive and to incorporate collaborative, team-work learning.**
7. **List learning outcomes for intercultural/international skills, knowledge and attitudes related to the learning outcomes that might be achieved within the context of #5 above.**
  1. Intercultural/international knowledge
    - 1.
    - 2.
  2. Intercultural/international skills
    - 1.
    - 2.

3. Intercultural/international attitudes .

- 1.
- 2.
8. Identify one or two of the learning outcomes above and decide how the learning outcome might be included in your usual assignment or class activity.
9. Identify how you are going to link the outcomes above to your existing assignment and how you are going to link the students in the class in teams that will be culturally (and/or otherwise) diverse and how they will interact and contribute to the assignment.
10. Sketch out the background knowledge which students would need to successfully engage in the learning activity.
11. Sketch out the background knowledge which students might already have and could bring to the activity.
12. Identify the activities students would need to do to prepare for the linked assignment.
13. Outline the instructions to the students.
14. Describe the product you expect to result from the assignment.
15. Describe how you will assess the intercultural/international learning outcomes that you integrated into linked assignment. (What will students do to demonstrate their knowledge, skills or attitudes?)
16. Create a strategy or assessment tool that contains the above criteria that you and the students will use to assess the intercultural/international learning outcomes.

## SAMPLE WORKSHEET FILLED IN FOR CMNS 125

Although this worksheet was created after the fact, it will lead to an assignment like the one in the case study.

**Begin with the question:** *Where is there room within my regular course assignments to integrate learning outcomes related to intercultural/international skills, knowledge and attitudes?*

1. Identify the course.

CMNS 125, Oral Presentations

2. Identify or write one intercultural/international learning outcome.

Students will be able to identify ways in which culture may influence the criteria for evaluating an impromptu speech.

3. Inventory the diversity offered by the students enrolled.

Students are a mix of cultures including East Asian and South Asian, European, and First Nations. Some of the international students and landed immigrants have been here for only a short time.

4. Decide if you need to involve students from other courses.

There is sufficient diversity in the class this semester to work with the class itself.

However, there will be a research phase and it could be useful to draw on an ESL class as a resource during that phase, perhaps during class time. It might also be useful to have ESL students present when some impromptu speeches are given "Canadian style" to see how they would react to our best efforts.

5. Identify a current assignment you feel has possibilities for developing into a linked assignment which could achieve the outcome stated in #2 above.

The impromptu speech assignment is ideal for this.

6. Review the learning activity in the assignment to ensure that it could be redesigned to be more interactive and to incorporate collaborative, teamwork learning.

This assignment always involves collaborative work, but it may be possible to team students with their cultural backgrounds in mind. It might also be possible to have students collaborate with friends and family or ESL students in the research phase of the assignment.

7. List learning outcomes for intercultural/international skills, knowledge and attitudes related learning outcomes that might be achieved within the context of #5 above.

1. Intercultural/international knowledge

- 1.1 Learners will identify ways in which different cultures might order information differently in public presentations e.g. important point last, or first or both.

- 1.2 Learners will identify ways in which audiences in different cultures have responded differently to both nonverbal and verbal behaviour in impromptu speeches.

2. Intercultural/international skills

- 2.1 Learners will adjust their impromptu speech for culturally different audiences.

- 2.2 Learners will respond appropriately as an audience member to speeches in different cultural contexts.

3. Intercultural/international attitudes

- 3.1 Learners will value the variety of possibilities for impromptu speeches.

- 3.2 Learners will appreciate the difficulties that second language users face in making impromptu speeches outside their familiar cultures.

These goals can be added to the existing assignment through adding a dimension to the research stage that asks students to investigate the cultural variability of the criteria for determining if an impromptu speech has been successful or not.

8. Identify one or two of the learning outcomes above and imagine how the learning outcome might be included in your usual assignment or class activity.

**8.1 Learners will identify ways in which audiences in different cultures respond to both nonverbal and verbal behaviour in impromptu speeches.**

**8.2 Learners will appreciate the difficulties that second language users face in making impromptu speeches outside their familiar cultures.**

9. Identify how you are going to link the outcomes above to your existing assignment and how you are going to link the students in the class in teams that will be culturally (and/or otherwise) diverse and how they will interact and contribute to the assignment.

**For 1.2, I will build in a research component to the assignment that will help make the differences in nonverbal and verbal communication explicit.**

**For 1.3, I will engage students in an analysis of the sources of anxiety associated with impromptu speaking and focus on the way these are both added to and magnified for people using a non-native language while speaking.**

10. Sketch out the background knowledge which students would need to successfully engage in the learning activity.

**Students will need to be familiar with the concept of an impromptu speech as well as have the vocabulary to discuss differences in speeches.**

11. Sketch out the background knowledge which students already have and could bring to the activity.

**Students with this mix of backgrounds will bring a wealth of experiential knowledge to class. Even the students who were born here should be able to bring a lot of indirect, observed experience to this activity.**

12. Identify the activities students would need to do to prepare for the linked assignment.

**First, they need to get some idea of the concept of an impromptu speech. They could likely do this by reviewing their own experience. Later, in small groups they could begin to discuss examples they know of, or have heard of, with regard to how speeches might be different in other cultures.**

13. Outline the instructions to the students.

Use several resources, friends, family, ESL students, and media. Collect data about impromptu speeches in the culture you most identify with. Draw up a list of verbal and nonverbal behaviours you might use to describe the conventions for impromptu speeches, e.g., in Japanese culture speakers do not make direct and sustained eye contact with the audience.

14. Describe the product you expect to result from the assignment.

I expect a “thick” description of the impromptu speech practices of another culture to result from this exercise. Later, learners may adapt their speech content and use an alternate, culturally sensitive delivery style for a culturally different audience.

15. Describe how you will assess the intercultural/international learning outcomes that you integrated into linked assignment.

Accounts of impromptu speeches in other cultures can be assessed for completeness and intelligibility. For the skills of adjusting a speech to an audience, peers might assess how effectively a student adjusted the speech. Self-assessment/self-report is the best means of assessing the achievement of attitude-related learning outcomes.

16. Create a strategy or assessment tool that contains the above criteria that you and the students will use to assess the intercultural/international learning outcomes that you integrated into the linked assignment.

*Many strategies are possible here. See section 1, “Assessing Study Learning in Linked Assignments.”*

# AFTERWORD

## Learning to Internationalize Learning

by Lin Langley

Internationalizing learning, for me, is risk-taking behaviour, akin to rock-climbing, sky-diving and white-water kayaking. It requires courage, concentration, anxiety management skills, and clear, almost reckless conviction. Like other risk-taking behaviour, internationalizing learning refreshes, surprises, and sometimes humbles, but it always brings valuable lessons. Over time, these lessons accumulate and can be organized into a loosely arranged collection of guidelines that are personal to each instructor.

My willingness to participate in the Internationalizing Learning Project began with the fundamental assumption that each student, regardless of his or her background, is worthy of respect and dignity. Troubled for some time by classroom dynamics where voluble, Canadian-born, monocultural students tended to dominate the air time, I was drawn to internationalized assignments because they provide opportunities for all students to have a voice in the classroom. I wanted the class to hear from bicultural students who, because of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, typically remain silent or quiet about their world view, traditions, and approaches to interaction.

In an internationalized assignment, students take the podium as experts while I observe and learn. Here lies the risk: I am not at the helm. I cannot possibly lay claim to the knowledge and understanding students have about their culture. I am not the *content* expert and I have little control over the *process* that is set in motion once students begin to speak. I cannot predict what students will say about their own and others' culture, cannot forecast how students in the class will respond, cannot prevent the conflicts that sometimes develop, and cannot eradicate the conscious and unconscious stereotypes that are almost always put forward.

Sometimes I progress and sometimes I regress in my ability to navigate the shifting waters of class response to an internationalized assignment. Experience has taught that I cannot "check off" internationalized learning from a list of teaching strategies. The assignment that worked so well last year fell flat this year, with a different student group, a different classroom dynamic, and a different complement of diversity. But I talk to colleagues, muse on the variables, adapt and persevere, searching for new ways to breathe life into the activity. Over classes, semesters, and years of experimentation, patterns emerge, sometimes barely visible in the classroom flux, not unlike eddy lines, visible to the trained eye of a river kayaker.

Learning to internationalize learning is a developmental process, and for those who undertake it, the learning fluctuates. But it is, thank goodness, cumulative.

## Contributors

**Jonathon Baylis** teaches English as a second language at Douglas College. Jonathon has long been involved with global education and has a developed interest in and knowledge of intercultural communication. His background includes a period working in China in the 1980s and he recently completed a needs assessment for an English language centre in a Shanghai institute.

**Jennifer Kirkey** teaches physics at Douglas College. Jennifer's observation that students were often unsuccessful in labs because of intercultural communication problems led to her interest in the Internationalizing Learning Project. She is very active making presentations in elementary schools to interested youth, particularly girls, in science and science-related careers.

**Lin Langley** teaches communication at Douglas College. Lin currently teaches courses in public speaking and intercultural and interpersonal communication in the workplace. She is a former Faculty Associate with the Faculty of Education at SFU and has a deep interest in current issues related to teaching, learning, and assessment. She is also a busy mom.

**Brenda Read** is an instructor in the Office Administration Program (OADM) at Douglas College. Brenda promotes diversity across all courses in her discipline, since many immigrants and new citizens enroll in the OADM program. Her program supports preparatory programs which integrate ESL and OADM content for students whose language skills may not yet meet entrance requirements.

**Elva Reid** is now retired from her position at Douglas College. Elva has been active all her professional life in early childhood education. In retirement, she continues to teach occasionally and to write for ECE journals. Boundlessly energetic, she has been described as "awesome" and "way cool" by her students.

**Susan Smthye** teaches geography at Douglas College. Susan is also the Coordinator of Douglas Development, the faculty and staff development unit for the College. Her interests include physical geography and environmental studies. Her participation in the Internationalizing Learning Project gave the project its humanities and social sciences perspective.

**Tom Whalley, Ph.D.**, teaches English as a second language at Douglas College. Tom's graduate work in intercultural communication supports his efforts to integrate intercultural communications content into his ESL classes. Tom managed the Internationalizing Learning Project at Douglas and he is the editor of this publication.

**Debra Wolinsky** teaches communication at Douglas College. Debra currently teaches courses in interpersonal communication for students in the Certified Dental Assistant Program. She has continued to develop her linked assignment. She and Lin Langley are collaborators in interpersonal communications course design, development and implementation.

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