Navigating U.S. Culture In and Out of the Classroom

International Student Orientation – Fall 2017
Activity

1. Form a group with five members
2. Each group should have one banana
3. DO NOT PEEL THE BANANA
4. You have five minutes to create clear instructions on how to peel a banana.

DO NOT PEEL OR EAT THE BANANA
Volunteers?
Different Instructions?
Were any of the instructions **wrong**?
What are the advantages and disadvantages of each different way of peeling a banana?
How did you learn to peel a banana?
Are there other things you do without thinking about how you do them? What? Why?
What does this teach us about what we can learn from others?
Five Key Findings

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3. Things can be learned from diverse perspectives

4. Individual differences exist, cultural generalizations can be made.

5. Seeing contrasting ideas and thoughts helps us recognize our assumptions.
What is Culture?
Iceberg Model?

Observable
- Behaviors
- Appearance
- Habits
- Language
- Customs

Non-Observable
- Learning styles
- Concept of time
- Thought process
- Norms
- Values
Onion Model

Visual Cultural Differences
- Language
- Housing
- Food
- Clothes

Key Beliefs
Not so visible but has an effect on determining behaviour at a more superficial level

Norms and Values
- greetings
- bow, shake hands
U.S. Culture
Cultural Differences - Time
Cultural Differences - Time

**Monochronic/U.S.**

- Time is a commodity – “don’t waste time,” “time is money”
- Be **prompt**, don’t be late
- Start on time and end on time
- Time is scheduled and organized **for one thing at a time**
- Time divided into blocks using a **calendar** or **clock**
- Appointments and **scheduled** events are taken seriously
- Cultural emphasis on **efficiency**

**Polychronic**

- Time is **flexible, fluid**
- Time varies with the season or because of religious festivals.
- Easier to **change** or **adapt** when plans change
- Go **until it is finished**, not until the time finished
- Time commitments based on value of **relationship**
- Many Polychronic cultures value relationships and an unexpected visit will change the schedule.
In a monochronic culture (i.e. the U.S.), not completing a project or task can be a very serious offense.
Cultural Differences - Time
Cultural Differences - Communication
# Cultural Differences - Communication

## Direct / U.S. Culture
- Emphasis on words
- Instructions are **explicit**, less room for interpretation
- Get to the point quickly!
- Focus of communication is on the **task**, not the relationship.
- More **formal, written** communication
- Most **policies are written and made public**
- Business conducted by **email and phone**
- When making a point or argument moves from **point to point** building upon each point before arriving at request or recommendation
- Criticism is given **privately**

## Indirect
- It’s **how** you say it, **not what** you say!
- Emphasis on **tone of voice, body language, silence** etc..
- **Details** and **relationships** between communicators more important
- Relationships are built and nurtured before doing business.
- Business conducted **in person**
- Often times the key point or request is **unspoken** and not written but expected to be understood
- Often uses story telling to make key point
- Criticism delivered through third party or simply be **implicit**
Cultural Differences - Communication
Cultural Differences – Relationships
Cultural Differences – The Individual

**Individualism/U.S.**
- People are viewed as *individuals* before they are viewed as group members.
- Parents and teachers want to help people become independent.
- Speak about “I”
- Emphasis on truth telling.
- People have their own needs and need to be alone.
- Success of the individual is the most important.

**Collectivism**
- Sum of the parts is more valuable than any one individual.
- Parents and teachers want to help young people feel safe and that they will never have to be alone.
- The needs of the larger group/family are more important than an individual’s needs.
- Success of the group/family is most important.
- Goal of parenting and mentoring is develop loyalty to the family or social group.
Collectivism and Individualism Working Together

People from collectivist cultures might need to limit the expectations they have of receiving help from others and do more for themselves.

People from collectivists cultures may enjoy the new freedom of having fewer obligations.

- Dr. Katherine Punteney (2015)
Cultural Differences – The Individual
Develop your Intercultural Competence

a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of contexts. – Jannet M. Bennett, Ph.D.
O.S.E.E. – a Useful Framework

O – observe (and listen to) what is happening

S – state objectively what is happening

E – explore different explanations for what is happening

E – evaluate which explanation (s) is the most likely one (s)

(Deardorff & Deardorff, 2000; Deardorff, 2008)
Apply the Framework

Split into groups of 8

Watch the situation unfold.

Brainstorm with your group and fill out the form using the O.S.E.E. framework.
Questions?