Differences that Matter:
Instructional Design for Diverse Learners in the Online Learning Environment

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Who we are...

Queensborough Community College

-one of 23 campuses of CUNY (City University of New York)

-located in Queens, the most diverse county in the most diverse city of the United States....

-open-admission access academic excellence within an environment of diversity

Queensborough provides a rich general education core

-enhancing critical thinking
-decision making skills
-effective learning strategies
QCC-CUNY Facts

Student Population - 16,642

- 129 countries
- 99 different languages
- More than 30% of students born outside the USA
- Over 39% of incoming Fall 2011 freshman speak a language other than English at home
- Equal representation of the major ethnic groups (20% Asian/Pacific Islander; 24% Black, Non-Hispanic; 25% Hispanic; 23% White, Non Hispanic)

85% of students live in Queens
54% are female
46% are male
Core cultural differences affect communication and behavior in the classroom and online environment.
Learning Cycle for Diverse Students

Concrete Experience (CE)
Learning by interacting
- Social interactions
- Sensitivity to feelings
- Personal connections

Active Experimentation (AE)
Learning by doing the project
- Demonstration of skills
- Influencing others through action

Observe and Analyze
Obtain an intellectual understanding of the Issue

Reflective Observation (RO)
Learning by reflecting
- Exploring different perspectives
- Looking for meaning
- Analysis and experience

Abstract Conceptualization (AC)
Learning by academic work
- Intellectual understanding of the situation
- Learning from research and theories

Adapted from: Kolb D. A. (1984) and J.M. Bennett (2011)
Instructional Activities that support diverse learning cycle

Concrete Experiences
- Online Discussion
- Specific Examples
- Autobiography/Personal Stories
- Trigger Videos
- Practical Exercises
- Simulations/Games
- Role Playing
- Peer Engagement

Abstract Conceptualization
- Lecture capture
- Papers, Research, Theories, References
- Term Projects
- Theory Construction
- Questioning

Active Experimentation
- Case Studies
- Projects/Homework
- Practice Assignments
- Self-Paced Learning
- Virtual Laboratories

Reflective Observation
- Journals, Brainstorming
- Creative Problem Solving
- Thought Questions
- Reflective Papers
- Observation, Checklists
- Structured Tasks

modified from Svinicki & Dixon, 1987, p. 142
Cultural Variables of Learners

Communication styles in culture

Individualism-Collectivism in Culture

Attitude Toward Hierarchy in culture

Preference for Risk-Taking

The degree of context

[Core cultural differences affect communication and behavior in the classroom and online environment]
Linear and Circular Style
Direct and Indirect Style
Expressive and Restrained Style
Concrete and Abstract Style
Preference for Risk Taking
Individual Vs. Group Recognition
Attitude Towards Hierarchy

Culture is Communication
Linear versus Circular Style

straight line discussion versus a more circular approach

- **Linear** speaker tells ‘the Point’
- This style is quick, efficient
- Straightforward, logical

**Miscommunication:**
Linear communicators appear too simplistic and leave out information needed for understanding.

- **Circular** speaker gives contextual elements
- Avoids explicitly stating any one ‘point’

**Miscommunication:**
Circular communicators appear to take too long without getting to the point
Direct versus Indirect

**Direct** speakers say exactly what they mean.
- Focus on the content of communication
- Practical, frank, factual,

**Miscommunication:**
Direct communicators appear too blunt and hurtful.

**Indirect** speakers use proverbs, metaphors, silence, and surrounding contexts.
- Focus on relationships and harmony
- Considerate, sensitive,

**Miscommunication:**
Indirect communicators appear not so honest or seem to avoid saying ‘what they really mean.’

“This report is poorly written. Have it redone by tomorrow!”

Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCIAb6hvPgY&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCIAb6hvPgY&feature=related)
Expressive versus Restrained

- **Expressive** speakers show emotions
  - Share joy, sorrow, anger, disappointment, fear
  - Focus on a connected relationship
  - Communication is alive and engaged

**Miscommunication:**
Expressive communicators appear immature and cannot seem to manage their emotions

- **Restrained** speakers keep their emotions to themselves
  - Avoid imposing on others
  - Respectful, responsible

**Miscommunication:**
Restrained communicators appear cold and unresponsive or not interested in either the issues or in the other person.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwDDb_h2i0A&feature=related
Concrete versus Abstract

- **Concrete** communicators use examples, stories, actual cases, and real situations to explain.
- Focus on specific rather than general.
- Provide adequate support to reinforce their ideas.

**Miscommunication:**
Concrete communicators appear too personal and unsophisticated.

- **Abstract** communicators use theories and concepts to explain their point.
- Focus on general principles not details.

**Miscommunication:**
Abstract communicators appear vague and out of touch with their listeners.
Preference for Risk-Taking

Risk Takers

- Uncertainty is valued
- Explore creative options for expressing
- Take risks in making choices
- Prefer experimenting, innovating

Risk Avoiders

- Uncertainty is a threat
- Prefer predictable behavior
- Expect clear Procedures
- Maintain status quo
Attitude Towards Hierarchy

- Power is de-emphasized
- Emphasize individual credibility
- Prefer informal communication
- Likes a consultative approach

- Inequalities in power and status
- Emphasize seniority, age, rank, title
- Formal communication
- Subordinates expect specific directions

Video:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqaa42gbqhA&feature=related
Preference for group Vs. Individual Recognition

- "Me" = Individual Identity
  - Individual goals
  - Emphasis on personal needs
  - Focus on managing individuals
  - Values individual uniqueness

- "We = Collective Identity"
  - Group goals
  - Emphasis on collective needs
  - Avoid direct confrontation
  - Focus on managing groups
  - Values loyalty and compliance

Many of the Asian cultures are collectivist, while Anglo cultures tend to be individualist.

"Me or We" Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CW7aWKXB5J4&feature=related
Improving intercultural communication across styles

**Linear Style → Circular Style**

- Be patient; do not interrupt too quickly
- Stop waiting for the point!
- Listen to interpret
- Make connections among elements
- Don't forget that relationships matter

**Direct Style → Indirect Style**

- Lose faith in the words – look behind words
- Remember that relationships matter
- Learn to use metaphors and proverbs that communicate the point!
- Think about the impact of words you choose; practice diplomacy

**Circular Style → Linear Style**

- If the response seems too brief, ask questions
- Listen to synthesize and reformulate
- Try to select and choose what you will say, perhaps giving a linear response and then adding context

**Indirect Style → Direct Style**

- Try not to feel attacked
- Remember that direct communicators value directness – they tend to take words seriously
- Prefer facts to metaphors
- Try to say exactly what you mean

Integrating Technology and Media

*Instructional Strategies*

Presentation
Demonstration
Cooperative Learning
Gaming
Simulation
Problem-Solving
Discussion
Drill and practice
Discovery
Tutorial

Ways of involving learners in a particular learning activity

Collaboration
Creation
Communication
Comprehension
Role of Media in Instruction

- Media in the Classroom
  - Motivate Learners
  - Provide concrete referent for ideas
  - Illustrate abstract concepts
  - Recall Prior Learning
  - Appeal to diverse learning styles
  - Direct learners’ attention
  - Repeat information in different formats
  - Enhance observation skills
  - Simplify complex process
What Is Social Presence?

“The ability to interact as a real person with other members of a learning community despite barriers of time, distance and technology”
Need for Social Presence

Why Is Social Presence Important?

- We are social beings
- We are physically isolated in online courses
- Isolation may be a factor in attrition;
- Community may increase persistence (Rovai, 2002)
Social Presence Indicators

- Names and inclusive pronouns
- Emotion and expressions
- Humor
- Self-disclosure
- Reference and extension of conversation
- Encouragement

Social Presence

The Task

As a group:

1. Read the student writing
2. Compose a response
   a) Provide clear feedback.
   b) Create social presence.

Social Presence Techniques

- Use conversational tone
- Use names
- Use safe humor
- Be generous with praise
- Share personal experience
- Reference common experiences
- Express concern
How to Create Social Presence

- Initial Contacts
- Projection of Personality
- Timely Interaction
- Good Communication
- Active Involvement
Write down three to five ideas on how to use technology and media in your classroom to engage diverse learners.
Share **one** of your top ideas
Hopefully you were inspired by this session and have a list of ideas you can implement in your classes!