



Opportunities and Challenges in Supporting Multilingual Learners

Topics to be discussed during the workshop

- The linguistic and cultural diversity in our classrooms
- Issues and challenges in supporting multilingual students' post-secondary success
- The connection between language and culture
- The content professor's role in developing the multilingual student's cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)

Who are your students?

- Who are your students? (their ethno-cultural and linguistic backgrounds) What languages do they know/speak?
- How do you identify who is an international student and a non-native English speaker?

How do we label/identify our students?

English as a second language (ESL) student

English language learner (ELL)

English as a second dialect (ESD) student

English speaker of other languages (ESOL)

International Students

1.5 Generation

Parachute kids

Multilingual Students

A different norm on college campuses: No longer is the monocultural, monolingual English speaker the “average” or “normal” student.

-Canagarajah, 2006: 216

Issues and Challenges in Working with Multilingual Students

What are some challenges or concerns in teaching multilingual students?

Challenges faced by students

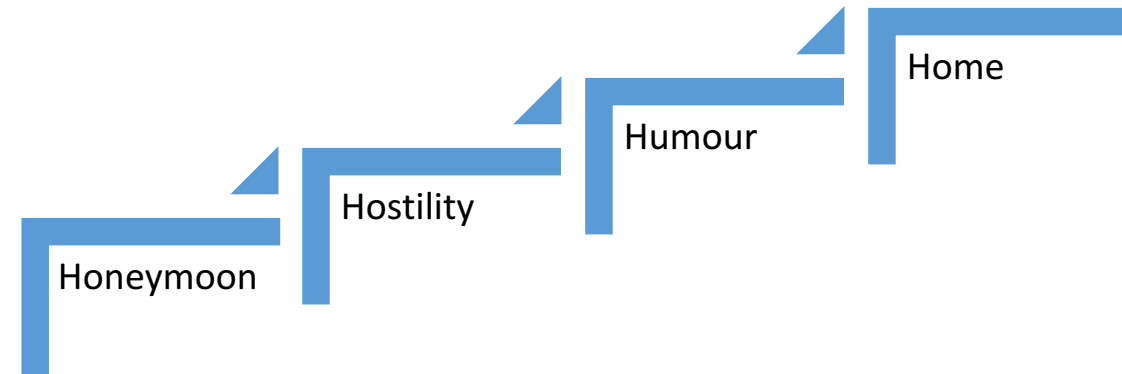
- Socio-cultural Challenges
- Linguistic Challenges
- Academic Challenges



Socio-cultural Challenges

- Cultural Adjustment

1. Honeymoon
2. Hostility
3. Humour
4. Home



- Culture Shock & Cultural Dissonance



Socio-cultural Challenges

In what ways does the institution/instructor support the multilingual student's adjustment?

- What resources are available to instructors?
 - Centre for Teaching and Learning, International Centre/office
- What resources are available to students?
 - library support, tutoring support, writing centers, career advisors, counsellors

It takes an institutional village

Case Studies:

Interactions between faculty and multilingual students: challenges and solutions

Understanding THE Cultural FILTER

We think our minds are free...However, collective programming in our culture begun in the cradle and reinforced in kindergarten, school and workplace, convinces us that we are normal, others eccentric.

...Richard D. Lewis, *When Cultures Collide*

(Visible & Hidden!) Factors Shaping One's Personal Cultural Filter

National culture, family, region, geography,
neighborhood, education, profession,
corporate culture, class, gender, sexual
orientation, race, generation, religion,
exposure to other cultures, experiences,
individual character...

What is the professor/ academic institution's role in supporting their students' cultural adjustment?

According to Cummins (2001):

Students will learn more, become more academically engaged and develop their academic self-concept if they feel respected and valued in their educational environment...

Students are reluctant to invest their identities in the learning process if they feel their instructors do not appreciate their experiences and cultures...

Linguistic Challenges

- Mastery of the Language
- Understanding the Registrars and Functions in a Language
- Proficiency in Academic Language Tasks

Mastery of the Language: Accuracy and Fluency

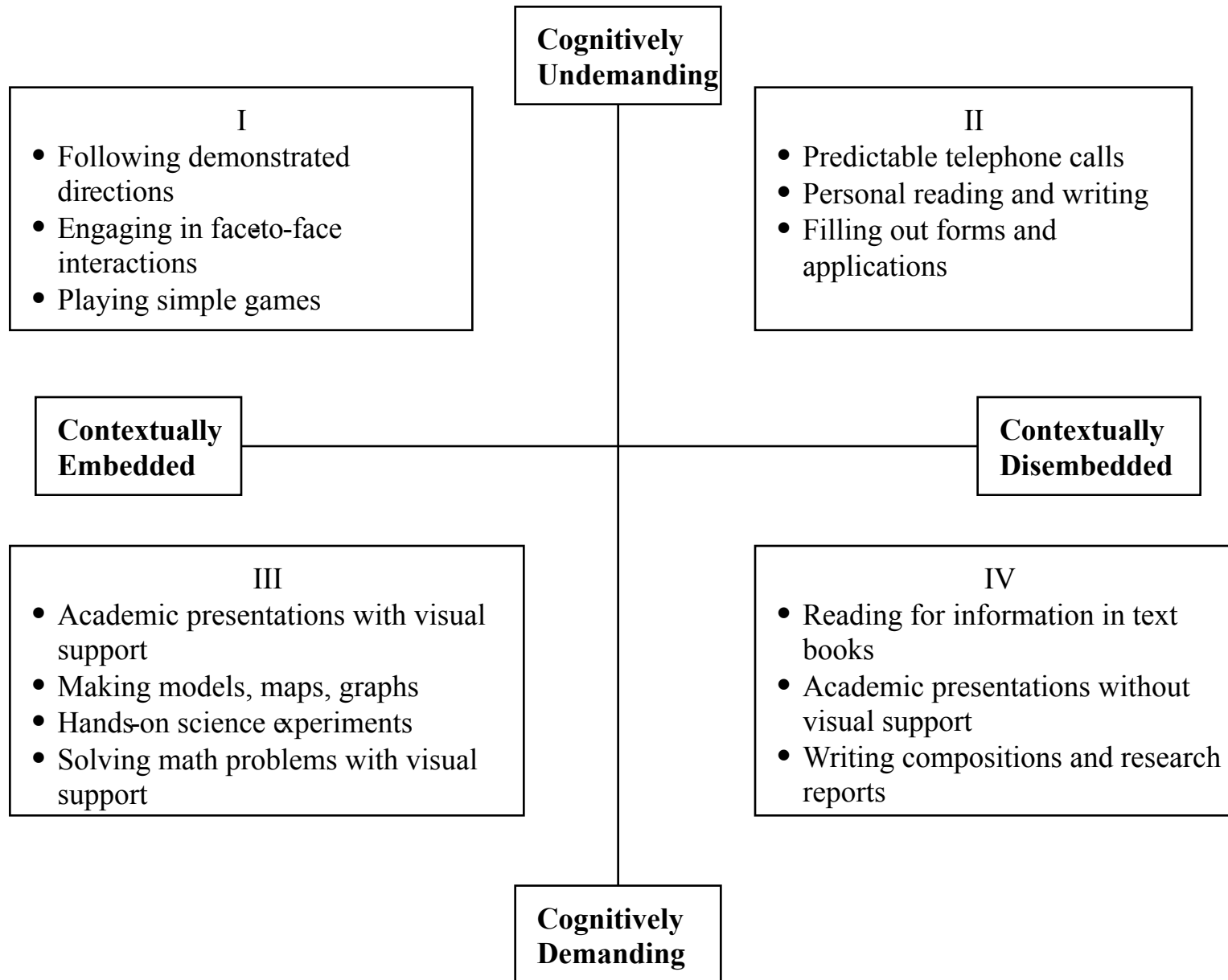
- ***Accuracy*** is typically associated with correctness, getting the language right:
 - performance is assessed by the number of mistakes made
- ***Fluency*** is typically associated with comprehension/ understanding, and intelligibility/comprehensibility:
 - performance is based on how well ideas are expressed and understood

Learning a New Language:

- How long does it take to become fully proficient in a language?
- What factors impact how easily someone learns a second language?

BICS & CALP

- Of key importance in understanding linguistic competency in the academic classroom are the concepts of **Basic interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)** and **Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)** (Cummins, 1996).
- The distinction between the two concepts is based in the degree of contextual support provided in the language-use situation, and the degree of cognitive complexity required in the task that language is needed for.



What about your course/discipline?

- What in your course/discipline is CALP?
- Create own quadrant - How do students move from informal conversation through cognitively demanding language?
- Knowledge – Understand – Demonstrate – Analyze – Synthesize – (Critically) Evaluate

Moving from BICS to CALP

- build on prior knowledge by making connections to the students' previous experiences and cultural backgrounds;
- highlight and expand on key vocabulary required for development of the topic;
- use advance organizers (structural overviews, diagrams, charts, graphs, etc) when presenting new material

Language Tasks in the Classroom

Speaking and Writing Tasks:

- “Output” is required
- Students are often formally assessed on these tasks
- Considered high stress activities
- Consider the type of task (formal, semi formal, informal), the outcome and expectations associated with the task



The Issues and Challenges in Assessing Multilingual Students' Written Work: Faculty Perspectives

- Issues of equity, not wanting to discriminate against second language (L2) students
- Unsure how to respond to written work that has a number of language errors
- Concerns about how to foster student success and prevent failure

Issues of Equity

- Don't change the "standards" of your classroom
- How would you characterize the ESL student's writing? (is it different than the writing of the native English speaker?)
 - Is the writing pattern specific to another language?
 - Are there a number of grammatical errors?
 - Is the student familiar with the English academic style required for a college/university program?

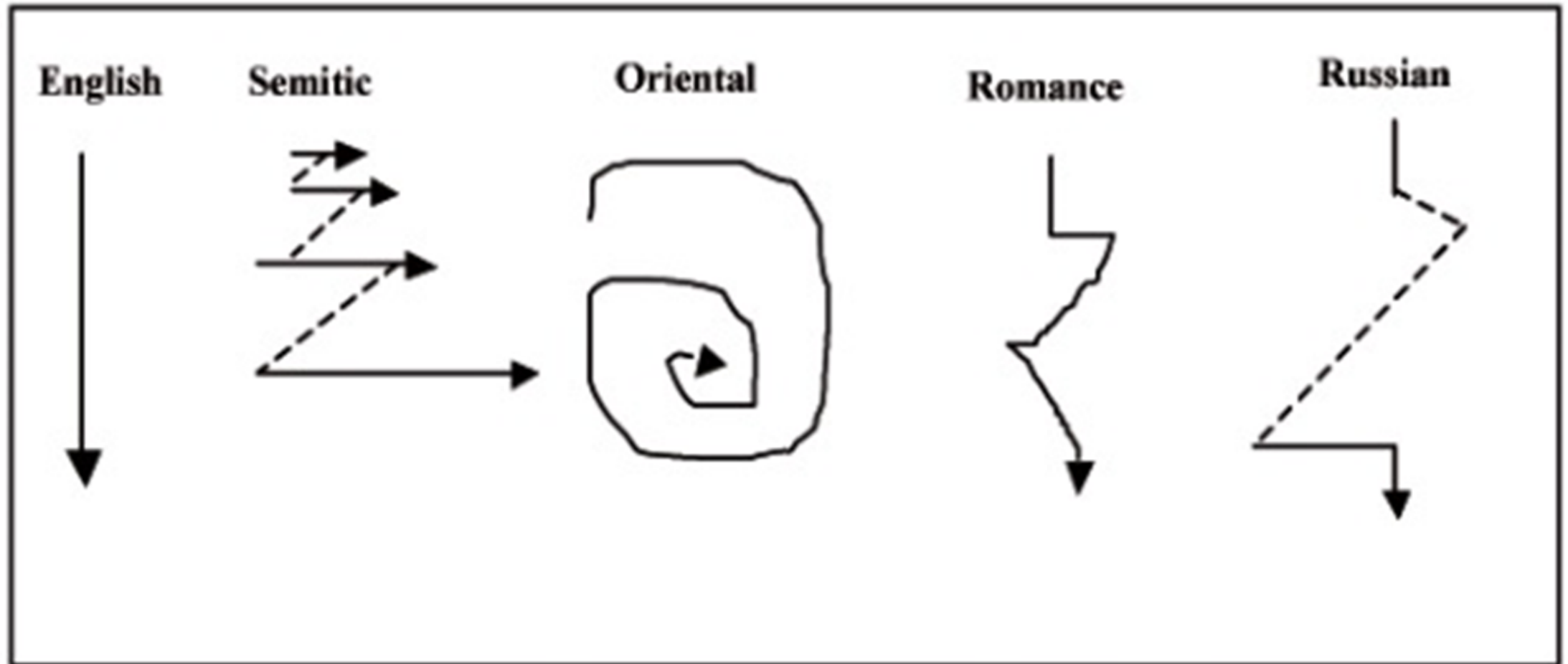
Writing a formal academic paper

Writing & Reading Challenges?

Faculty expect students to write linguistically clear and sophisticated papers with a clear thesis, good support, synthesis of material from sources with accurate documentation, a coherent, easy to follow organization, and a rhetorical style appropriate for their specific discipline.

Theory of Contrastive Rhetoric: Culture's Influence on Written Communication

Figure 1. Kaplan's rhetorical structures



Responding to students' language errors

Summary response to a news story:

Nightmare in Indonesia

Bantleman a Canadian school teacher worked at prestigious school Jakarta International School in Indonesia when he was arrested, and accused by parents of sexually abusing their children. Hence started nightmare in this Canadian teacher's life. Everything began with rumors of one mother who believe her son had been sexually abused at school. That is when a nightmare for this couple started. When investigations began five janitor workers from school were accused, imposed and sentenced without evidence. The public justice system in Indonesia is very powerful. Bantleman and the assistant teacher were accused and sentenced to 10 years in jail. After, Bantleman was 13 months in maximum security prison but then High Court in Indonesia dismissed the charge because the accusations had contradictions in the medical test and the boy testimonial. The teacher was freed, but the Indonesia Justice department was appealing to send him back to jail. Unlike the other teacher, Bantleman can spend 7 and 8 years in jail if the court finds him guilty.

Responding to students' language errors

- Ask yourself:
 1. How many times do I stop while reading the paper?
 2. How many times do I debate with myself the student's exact meaning?
 3. Am I finding the same errors throughout the paper?
 4. Am I responding to the student's content and ideas or am I just pinpointing errors?

Higher-order elements of the written work

- Comment on the organization, development of ideas, and selection of details.
- A thesis driven paper calls for the student to form and support arguments while synthesizing others' ideas about a topic and formulating one's own ideas. This might be very different from what students of other cultures are familiar with, particularly if they are from cultures in which giving an opinion is not done.

How can I foster student success?

Suggestions to Foster Success:

- For major papers, incorporate opportunities where students get feedback before the final paper is due:

Stages include:

- a) a tentative topic for approval;
- b) written progress reports at various intervals;
- c) a formal outline;
- d) an annotated bibliography or literature review;
- e) a draft, complete with documentation.

Things to Consider to set a positive stage

- Research indicates that students want their instructors to take an interest in them, get to know them and incorporate their prior learning and life experience into classes
 - Getting to know you activities should incorporate key questions about country of origin, language proficiencies, years of formal study prior to becoming an international student
 - Find and use a language strategy inventory
 - Take time to explain the do's and don'ts of your academic institution with a focus on communication and cultural assumptions
 - Knowing about and accessing the language resources at your institution

Classrooms today...

- Require competencies for teaching all students
- Calls for an instructor who is sensitive and responsive to the unique differences of each student and demonstrates a willingness to view instruction through varied cultural lenses

References and Resources:

- Canagarajah, A.S. (2006). Understanding critical writing. In P.K. Matsuda, M. Cox, J. Jordan and C. Ortmeier-Hooper (eds). *Second-Language Writing in the Composition Classroom: A Critical Sourcebook* (pp. 210-224). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's (Original work published in 2002).
- Chiang, Y.S.D. and Schmida, M. (1999). Language identity and language ownership: Linguistic conflicts of first-year university writing students. In L. Harklau, K.M. Losey and M. Siegel (eds). *Generation 1.5 Meets College Composition: Issues in the Teaching of Writing to US-Educated Learners of ESL* (pp. 81-96). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Johnson Hafernik, J. & Wiant, F.M. (2012). Integrating multilingual students into college classrooms practical advice for faculty. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Grading Multilingual Students' Papers: A practical guide
<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/faculty/multilingual-students/grading-strategies>

References and Resources:

Writing Across Borders

- a film written and directed by Wayne Robertson
- Writing Across Borders is a 3-year documentary project funded by Oregon State University's Center for Writing and Learning and its Writing Intensive Curriculum Program. The documentary's purpose is to help faculty, writing assistants, and other professionals work more productively with international students in writing environments. The film's goal is to address some of the most significant challenges international students face when writing for American colleges and universities. <http://writingcenter.oregonstate.edu/using-film-faculty-development>



Questions?

Further discussion?

Thank-you!

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