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ACADEMIC CULTURE AND LANGUAGE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATING LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY DIVERSE STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES

Anne E. Campbell

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of academic culture and its implications for educating linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. Although the research presented in this paper has been done primarily with students in U.S. schools who are from different language backgrounds and/ or countries, the research findings and theoretical frameworks have application for students from the same country who speak different dialects, who are from different geographical regions, who are of different genders, who come from rural or urban areas, who are handicapped, or who come from different social classes (Banks, 1994).

I begin with a general discussion of culture, the differences between surface and deep culture, and the ways in which they influence how people think about and organize educational experiences for students. Next, I describe some current changes in the immigrant student population in the United States and implications of those changes for teacher preparation. I also discuss some common assumptions held by United States educators about program development, the role those assumptions play in educational practice, and their implications for educating linguistically and culturally diverse students. I then review some key research on academic literacy and culture and discuss the implications of the research findings for program analysis and development. I have found that this research can enable preservice as well as in-service teachers to understand the complexity of academic culture and its relationship to student success in school; analyze the values, assumptions and beliefs underlying their own practices; identify cultural differences that may affect student success; and develop culturally sensitive educational programs for linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. I conclude with a brief summary and some suggestions for instructional practice that will enable linguistically and culturally diverse students to become successful participants in the academic culture of school.

Culture and School Practices

In 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn reviewed 164 concepts and definitions of culture developed by social scientists. They presented the following definition:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. .. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of further action (p. 181).

Culture thus comprises the shared patterns of thinking, feeling, perceiving, behaving, and evaluating that make life meaningful for any group of people (Hallman & Campbell, 1982). It is a learned product of experience, social interaction, and self reflection. It is implicitly and explicitly taught to new members of the social group. The cultural heritage of any group comprises the sum of all group members' knowledge, understandings, artifacts, and attached values. Few individuals know or have access to all of the cultural heritage of their group.

Education in any society is the means by which children learn their groups' shared cultural patterns and their related meanings. The purpose of education is to provide these new members with experiences that will enable them to develop the cultural knowledge they need to become effective adult members of the group. Preparation for adult life may include such things as learning basic skills necessary to find work and support one's family; the development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for life-long learning; a commitment to and willingness to participate in the political and economic institutions of the country; or a predisposition to develop oneself spiritually rather than materially.

In most countries, schools, as well as family, church, community, and the national media, provide children with opportunities to learn the cultural heritage of their group. The cultural heritage in turn shapes not only the group members' perceptions and assumptions about education, but their perceptions and assumptions of what is necessary to educate children, as well as their beliefs about what actions need to be taken in planning and implementing educational experiences. When groups are fairly stable, the shared patterns that make life meaningful are rarely examined or questioned; however, when new individuals move into established communities and attempt to become members of those communities, traditional ways of doing things and their underlying values and assumptions are often called into question. This questioning is a two-way process. The new individuals question and examine the cultural patterns of their original group in light of the new community's practices and beliefs. The members of the community in turn question their beliefs and practices as they work to make them explicit to the new individuals who strive to become community members.

If there are many similarities between the new individuals' beliefs and practices and those of the community, cultural integration into the group may not be a major issue and may occur fairly easily. If there is a great disparity, however, between the new individuals and the community, cultural integration may not occur. This is especially true if the beliefs and practices of the community are only presented implicitly and are never articulated or taught to the new individuals. In such cases the disparities in beliefs and practices may result in the rejection or exclusion of the individual by the community, or in the voluntary withdrawal and isolation of the individual from the group. In either case, cultural integration is not achieved.

Stewart and Bennett (1991) explain the mismatch of cultural beliefs and practices using the concepts of surface and deep culture. Surface culture includes language, behavior in any given social context, institutional practices, and artifacts, in short, any cultural pattern of interaction or product of such interaction that can be observed, articulated, and recorded. They argue that, with the exception of cultural anthropologists, surface cultural patterns and products have been studied the most by social scientists. What has been neglected is deep culture.

Deep culture operates at an unconscious level. It provides the template that gives meaning to observed surface level patterns and artifacts. Deep culture includes: value orientations that represent the ideal, how members of the groups "should" act in any given situation; cultural assumptions or unquestioned and unstated beliefs that shape expectations, "define what is 'real' and the nature of that reality." (Stewart and Bennett, 199], p.I-]); patterns of thinking; cognitive perceptions; and nonverbal behavior. Individuals from two distinct cultural groups may agree completely on the specific language, physical gestures, and behavior used by an individual in a specific social context. Where they usually differ is in the understood meaning of the observed language and actions.

To illustrate the difference between surface and deep cultural meaning, I use an example from education. The student and teachers I describe below are composites based on my experiences as a cross-cultural teacher educator. A student comes from a country where the teachers lecture and students take notes and memorize what they are taught. In class, students do not volunteer to answer or ask questions. It is their responsibility to learn what is taught. To ask a question implies that the teacher has not taught well and has not made the material clear. Students do not attempt to display publicly what was taught until they have practiced it in private and feel that they have learned it well. When they are called on in class to give an answer, students stand by their desks. Also, when a teacher of any other adult enters the room, students stand and greet the adult. They remain standing until they are told to sit down. Students are judged on examinations by their ability to present with clarity the information the teacher presented in class. Original interpretations of theories, counterfactual thinking, and application of information to new problems is not rewarded. Rather, the students are expected to learn as completely as possible the ideas of those who are seen as experts in the area of study.

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A student from such an educational system moves to the United States and is enrolled in a school. At that school, teachers emphasize process approaches to learning, small group exploratory activities, peer tutoring, and reflective journal writing. Students are expected to learn by trying to do things, by publicly making mistakes and learning from them, and by asking lots of questions. When teachers teach the entire class, usually it is to introduce a new idea or to clarify a problem many of the students have raised. Students sit at group tables and are free to talk while they work. Creativity of thought rather than memorization of specific facts and information is rewarded. "What do you think and why?" is the teachers' favorite question for stimulating learning. When students ask for information, teachers tell them to research it themselves. Students may help the teachers plan the curriculum by proposing projects or topics of interest to study. When called upon to answer questions, children stay in their seats. When teachers ask questions, many children enthusiastically raise their hands and say "I know. Call on me." Finally, when adults come into the room, they usually are ignored unless the teacher specifically calls for the class's attention and introduces the person to the group.

Although the above descriptions do not represent anyone group, they demonstrate some very real differences in how adults from different countries think about and organize educational experiences for students. They also demonstrate some deep cultural beliefs and values about the roles of teachers and students, adults and children, and the purposes of

education. When students from the first educational setting enter U.S. schools, they may only perceive disorder and chaos. They may see the teacher as lazy, ignorant, unable to control the students, unable to gain the respect of the students, and unable to teach. Small group and peer tutoring activities, discovery learning approaches, and reflective writing may be seen as a waste of time. "How can I learn from peers when they are as ignorant about a subject as I am?" is a question often asked to me by international college students trying to make sense of and adapt to the cultural teaching practices of U. S. college professors.

In turn, teachers may perceive student from diverse cultural groups as formal, deferential, overly dependent on authority, reluctant or unable to participate in class discussions, and hesitant to express their own opinions. Teachers may feel such students are lacking in self esteem and may try to get them to participate in even more undirected activities. The purpose is to prove to the students that they can learn on their own, thus prompting independence in learning, as well as self-confidence.

Unfortunately, the deep-cultural interpretations described above, that students and teachers make about each other, are rarely articulated. Rather, they operate at the implicit, unconscious level. To become effective teachers and learners in such cross-cultural situations, both need help in articulating the cultural patterns they value as well as the meanings those patterns have for them. Based on their explicitly shared awareness, teachers then can provide students with planned activities designed to help them learn the new patterns for behaving, thinking, perceiving, feeling, and evaluating that are common to the academic culture of which they are now a part.

The United States Educational Context

Approximately 15,000,000 immigrants entered the United States from 1975 to 1990; nearly one-third of them were school-age children. **In** 1984 the Ford Foundation funded a two-year study to identify factors affecting the education of the new immigrant student population in U.S. public schools, as well as the implications of those factors for effectively educating such students. The study was conducted in communities throughout the United States and was based on interviews with educators and community members, as well as representatives from many immigrant groups. The final report concluded that the immigrant population had changed drastically, but the American public as well as the schools were not prepared to cope with the challenges presented by the now immigrant students (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1988). The report findings identified that there was a shortage of teachers prepared to address the instructional needs of the students, as well as a shortage of teacher education programs designed to prepare teachers to effectively teach them.

Key factors that needed to be addressed in teacher education programs included not just preparation to deal with language differences. Also needed were teachers who understood how disparate the life experiences the students had in their home countries were from those of their peers who grew up in the United States. Teachers also needed to know how to build on those experiences and use them in their instructional program (Tikunoff, 1985). These experiences often include war, extreme poverty, life under very different political and economic institutions (Hallman & Campbell, 1982), life in refugee camps, traumatic experiences encountered after leaving their home country, and sporadic rather than continuous participation in school. For

those who had been in school, very often the curriculum they studied, as well as the instructional methods used to teach that curriculum, had little in common with the curriculum or methods commonly experienced in U.S. schools.

The need for teachers to understand the processes underlying second language acquisition as well as their students' culture and prior life experiences and to know how to use their understandings in the development of instructional programs were key issues affecting student learning. A further important obstacle to learning was the linear curriculum model commonly used for program development in the United States (Trueba 1992). Underlying such a model is the assumption that a student will enter school in kindergarten or first grade, progress through each successive grade, complete the work for that grade, and graduate from high school. This assumption has led to a linear approach to the planning and organization of educational curriculum and programs. In elementary school, for example, cumulative records are kept for each child. In most states, these records are cards with lists organized by grade level that include the skills and concepts that were to have been introduced during the year. A place in the card is provided for teachers to note the date when the student learned or mastered the grade-level specific skills and concepts.

The linear approach to curriculum planning illustrates an unquestioned cultural pattern of behavior that is used to think about and organize educational programs in a culturally meaningful way for United States educators and communities. While it is often effective and appropriate for students who have grown up in the United States, the effectiveness of such an approach diminishes for many of the new immigrants. Educators who use a linear curriculum model assume that students will have fundamental levels of development in Standard English before they also assume that as children progress through the grades they will acquire certain academic as well as social skills and knowledge common to all students at that grade level, and that these will then become the building blocks for further studies.

The fallacies of the linear, single developmental model approach to education and its limitations with respect to providing educational programs for linguistically and culturally different students has been discussed by Trueba (1989). Heath (1992). further argued that schools need to provide varied opportunities for linguistically and culturally diverse students to hear, practice, and acquire the language necessary for school success. Finally, researchers such as Cummins (1992), Tikunoff (1985). Chamot and O'Malley (1992), and Mehan (1979) have examined the interactive language and participative strategies necessary to become a successful learner in the academic culture of school. They all argue the need to provide students with planned, varied, and appropriate opportunities to develop and learn to use the linguistic and participative strategies their U.S. peers already have had the opportunity to acquire. Of concern is that the types of activities students need often may not fit the linear curriculum model and that such teaching may not be planned for or even occur.

Academic Language and Culture: Related Research

As stated at the beginning of this article, the issue of deep cultural differences occurs not just between teachers and students from different countries, but between those from different communities within the same country. Heath (1983), for example, studied the language use and social language learning experiences of children in three linguistic communities: middle class

town children, rural white children, and rural African-American children. All three groups attended the same schools in town. She found that the teachers primarily represented the middle class group. Additionally, the language forms used and valued in the school were those of the middle class white community. The language forms used to talk about school work and school subjects were not common to the rural students' social and linguistic communities outside of school. For example, teachers often asked students specific facts about something the group had just read or about other information shared by the group. Heath (1992) calls this linguistic form "recounting." It is used extensively by middle class parents and teachers to informally evaluate student learning. In the rural communities Heath studied, this form of adult-child linguistic interaction was not often practiced. People did not ask questions about things that were commonly known or understood. From the children's perspective, the teachers were acting in a disrespectful way since they obviously had read the story or text and knew the information. The children were not sure what the teacher wanted and did not know how to articulate their confusion. Conversely, the teachers interpreted the student's inability to respond appropriately to their questions as proof that the students were not comprehending the material. To compensate, teachers might reread the story aloud and emphasize the words and information they wanted the students to learn, or they might retell in detail a prior lesson in order to help the child remember what he/she appeared to have forgotten.

The teachers, for the most part, were unaware of the linguistic differences between the school and the students' homes and communities. They had little to no accurate understanding of the linguistic forms used in those communities and had no understanding of how children learned the language forms of their social group. They attributed students' inability to respond appropriately to the teachers' and town students' linguistic interactional structures to the rural students' stupidity, slowness, or other deficits. These incorrect assumptions based on unconsciously learned linguistic norms provided unquestioned explanations as to why students from the rural communities did not do as well in school. Heath later worked with the teachers to help them become conscious of the language forms they assumed the children should know and be able to use to learn in school. She also helped them to understand how their assumptions influenced their judgments of students' ability. By becoming conscious of their own language norms, teachers were then able to adapt their questioning patterns and rhetorical styles of discussion and writing to match better the linguistic styles of all their students. The teachers also had to learn about the family and community language styles the students brought with them to school. The teachers were able to plan well instruction that would enable the students to practice, learn, and independently use the language forms required for success in school.

Other researchers have documented the complexity of the linguistic, academic, and cultural learning processes that confront linguistically and culturally diverse students once they enter academic programs in U.S. schools where instruction is only in English (Tikunoff, 1986). They also have identified the participative structures and assumptions about language and cognitive concepts that underlie academic culture in U.S. schools. Richardson, Martens, and Fisk (1981), for example, examined the multiple levels of literacy required for success in college that needed to be learned in high school. They identified four areas of linguistic competence: "an ability to identify, analyze, and apply salient features of the language involved in a given situation, an understanding of the way in which language is processed, an ability to identify essential elements of the context in which the language is processed, and an ability to adapt language according to the functions of its use in relation to specific goals"(p.4).

Cummins (1979; 1992) identified the need for students to develop the social language skills necessary to participate competently as a member of the the school community in general, as well as the academic language skills necessary to successfully learn in programs where all instruction is in English. Although social language skills develop more rapidly than the academic language skills, the two are intertwined. Within any academic institution, faculty need to identify the social and academic linguistic and cultural skills necessary for success in that institution and plan for their students' development of those skills and related knowledge. Of primary importance in the development of academic language and cultural skills was the students' general life as well as prior school experiences. The greater the commonality of diverse students' experiences with those on which the U. S. school curricula was based, the more students could focus on learning new language forms for concepts and meanings they already have developed. The greater the disparity, the more faculty would need to develop additional practice and experiences to build the concepts and understandings assumed by the school curricula.

In addition to social and academic language and cultural skills, Tikunoff (1985) identified what he called participative competence. Participative competence is the ability of a student to actually do the academic tasks assigned by a teacher. At lower grade levels, participative skills are directly taught; while at upper grade levels educators often assume that students should have already learned those skills. Students who have not developed those skills are often seen negatively by teachers and are rarely given explicit instruction or the opportunity to develop the appropriate behavioral patterns once they have completed the grade in which they were expected to have learned them. As Tikunoff noted (1986), linguistically and culturally diverse students entering school for the first time or entering school in the upper grade levels may not have participatory skills essential for success in United States schools. These skills would need to be assessed and taught in programs for such students.

Chamot and O'Malley (1992) identified metacognitive learning strategies characteristic of good language learners and of successful students in U.S. schools. They argued that traditional ESL programs often do not provide linguistically and culturally diverse students with the opportunity to develop the linguistic and academic skills or the learning strategies they need to succeed once instruction is only in English. Like Tikunoff (1986) they argued that the development of such skills and learning strategies must be an essential component of instructional programs. More recently, Mehan, Datnow, Bratton, Tellez, Friedlander, and Thuy (1992) examined the needs of traditionally low achieving students for explicit instruction in the social as well as academic tasks of school work.

A final theme present in much of the research is the need for students to develop skills necessary to learn independently. Day and others (1991) documented high school students' participation in activities that foster independent study skills and academic behaviors that contribute to success in college. These included: studying in the library; checking a book or journal out from the school library; doing unassigned reading for a course; and studying with other students. Such activities help to improve reading and study skills, as well as the ability to work on one's own. These skills will not just appear. They must be an integral part of any instructional program, and their development must be planned for.

Summary and Discussion

The development of programs designed to enable diverse student populations to persist and graduate from U.S. schools is a major national issue. Traditionally, U.S. educators have approached the issue of educating linguistically and culturally diverse students from the perspective of a deficit or deficiency. Diverse students were often seen as "lacking" appropriate linguistic or academic knowledge and skills. Programs that were designed to help such students tended to be compensatory in nature. The emphasis was on eliminating the students' deficiencies. Although the acquisition of Standard English and content-specific academic preparation are important factors affecting students' success in school, current research has identified additional expectations that are placed on all students, expectations for which linguistically and culturally diverse students may never have been given the opportunity to prepare. These expectations include linguistic, cognitive, and social-cultural competencies such as general literacy skills, background knowledge and experiences, goal identification, sociocultural values, motivation for attending school, and metacognitive skills or learning strategies. Within each of these areas, multiple related competencies and skills have been identified and studied. What is needed are programs that will enable linguistically and culturally diverse students to bridge the gaps between their life and educational experiences and those needed for success in the school community. "Curricula, teaching strategies, and teacher-student relations radically different from those in conventional remedial classrooms" (Griffith & Connor, 1989) will be needed to build those bridges.

When one considers the complexity of participative and interactional skills and knowledge as well as academic literacies necessary for successful participation in school, achieving student understanding of and ability to use those skills and knowledge becomes an important task in the facilitation of culturally and linguistically diverse students' academic success. Integrating instruction in these competencies throughout the entire curriculum, and throughout the school community in general, rather than in a specific department or a few special programs, is one possible approach to developing student competence in these areas.

For an integrated curriculum to be successful, however, teachers need to become aware of and able to articulate the cultural patterns and knowledge students need for success. This conscious examination of language use, interactional and participative cultural patterns, and expectations is not easy. It requires effort on the part of the teacher. Since most teachers are not taught methods for analyzing their own language and teaching practices in their teacher education programs, it also means that the teacher may need to participate in additional coursework or in-service programs.

One promising approach designed to integrate the teaching of participative and social interactional structures into academic programs can be found in the definition of teachers and students as members of "learning communities" in general and of "discourse communities" specifically. Such approaches provide teachers and students with new ways of thinking about academic culture and literacy. While models do exist for developing and implementing learning communities on a college-wide or department-wide basis (Gabelnich, MacGregor, Matthews, & Smith, 1990), there is a lack of research examining the effects of such programs, as well as identifying the key factors contributing to such programs success. There also is a lack of studies that examine such programs at the high school level (Levin & Levin, 1991) Nevertheless, such

programs can provide students with successful experiences in meaningful contexts, as well as multiple opportunities to practice, develop and use well the skills and knowledge necessary for academic success (Chiseri-Strater, 1991). Although further research is needed, possible outcomes of such approaches to educating linguistically and culturally diverse students include increased positive student experiences as they become successful participants in the larger academic community and, ideally, increased equity in program completion and graduation.

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**APPENDIX
A SUMMARY OF COLLEGE LEVEL PARTICIPATIVE AND
INTERACTIONAL SKILLS**

**developed by
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The chart that follows is based on interviews with and lectures given by directors and staff assistants in general academic advising and minority retention programs at one four-year and one two-year college in Arizona. The chart presents some of the participative and interactional skills identified as being essential for success in college. Personnel identified these skills as ones their programs helped students to develop. Two types of programs are represented: retention and general advising. Academic skills and knowledge are not included on the chart because tutorial help in specific courses is generally provided through departments rather than through the retention and advising programs from which the chart was developed. Academic skills vary by subject area or specific course requirements; however, knowledge of grammar usage and writing style of the discipline, as well as basic mathematics knowledge, were essential academic skills and knowledge requirements that were common to most content areas.

Retention Programs

Participatory Skills

Ability to learn in large lectures
Notetaking
Auditory discrimination
Memorization skills
Able to see the board and copy information
Vocabulary skills: decode and understand new words
Ability to read multiple assignments and remember what was read
Ability to read to learn
Ability to follow a syllabus
Self-evaluation skills
Knowing how to get through the system
Protecting their GPA
Knowing why and how grades are given

Interactional Skills (Social)

Ability to interact with professors
Ability to interact with peers/for study and social/support groups
Ability to interact with advisors
Ability to ask for help
Ability to ask for information

Ability to focus on the product, the desired results of an interaction rather than the process of the interaction

Ability to identify self-destructive behaviors

Ability to identify where and how one can get help

Values related issues (culture shock)

a) Being able to do things on your own

b) Being able to balance family and school demands

Setting realistic expectations and goals

Developing good survival strategies

Becoming bicultural in the academic culture while honoring your own culture

Taking responsibility for one's actions

Being able to critically evaluate the reality of a situation and the consequences of one's actions using the norms and values of the system

Knowing one's options

Setting a plan for getting through

Becoming part of a study group

Ability to plan a realistic schedule

Developing an ability to focus on the product, not the process

Developing an ability to think in a linear, cause . and effect way and plan actions accordingly

Being able to assess one's own skills and resources

Being able to select a career: realities and options

Knowing how to use the bookstore

Advising Programs

Participatory Skills Identify a major

Make a commitment to finish

Know how to use general education courses to find a major

Have a realistic understanding of the requirements for a profession

Ability to identify and express problems

Ability to identify interests

Ability to ask for help

Realistic understanding of what one can do with a degree

Self-evaluation skills

Know when they need help and how to get it

Ability to get through the system

Understanding of the consequences of one's actions: probation

Ability to understand counseling advice and to act on it: go to learning center or see a professor

Ability to manage time

Ability to apply learning strategies to a variety of content areas

Interactional Skills

Ability to communicate interests to an advisor

Ability to interview/ask good questions of professors counselors family members, clergy, friends

Knowledge of the right/ appropriate questions to ask

Ability to interact with and learn from a counselor
Ability to identify and express what one doesn't know
Ability to ask questions in class or to go and talk with a professor
Ability to think critically locate/access appropriate information analyze evaluate, and apply
Information to own situation
Ability to make informed decisions
Knowledge of general academic concepts such as incompletes, key deadlines and probation

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