Got Culture?

Two-Way Students’ Cultural Competence: Implications for Instruction

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
San José State University
KLindholmLeary@mac.com

CABE 2009, Long Beach Calif
Rationale

- Although two-way immersion programs aim to promote positive cultural attitudes or cultural competence, little information is available on this important topic.

- What we call 3rd Goal – cultural competence

- Do heritage language students (Hispanic English speakers) differ from non-heritage (Other ethnic background English speakers)?

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?

The capacity to interact effectively with people of different cultures
WHAT SKILLS ARE NEEDED?

- Knowledge of Culture
- Communication Skills
- Bilingual
- Attitudes – About Others
Students in the Study

403 Students in Grades 4-8 @ 4 schools

- 3/4 90:10 1/4 50:50
- 89% Hispanic/Latino; 8% Euro; 2% other
- Ethnic x Language Background
  - 73% Hispanic/Latino Spanish speaker
  - 16% Hispanic/Latino English speaker
  - 11% Other ethnic English speaker
- 71% free lunch
Data Collected

- Students completed a questionnaire with questions about their language proficiency, attitudes toward bilingualism, cultural interest and attitudes, cultural knowledge.

- Some items -- student read a statement & indicated level of agreement -- disagree strongly, disagree, agree, strongly agree.

- Some items asked students to select a response from the alternatives.
Bilingual Skills

Differences:
I would say that I am _ Bilingual

- VERY Bilingual differs by language group
  - 73% of R-FEP
  - 57% of EL
  - 58% of EP

- VERY Bilingual differs by model
  - 90:10 67%
  - 50:50 43%

- Significant relationship between students’ rating as bilingual and teachers’ ratings of bilingual proficiency.
...me hace sentir muy, muy, muy, muy feliz!

I love being bilingual

Es genial  It is awesome!!!  Super awesome!  Cool

Maravilloso  Magnífico

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
Almost all students think they have the Spanish skills to:

- **Model:** 90:10 > 50:50

- **Ethnic x Language:**
  - HSS & HES > OES or
  - HSS > HES > OES

- **Language Background:**
  - RFEP & ELL > EP or
  - RFEP > ELL > EP

Differences:

- \( \text{HSS} = \text{Hisp Span speaker} \)
- \( \text{HES} = \text{Hisp Eng speaker} \)
- \( \text{OES} = \text{Other Eng speaker} \)
Most students – cognitive advantages to bilingualism

- Helps them learn better
- Helps them figure out new or confusing material
- Helps them think more creatively
- No student background differences

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
“I am also (I think) a lot smarter than all my friends that know only one language. I can read in one language and understand it in the other.”

“Knowing two languages can be an advantage because if you don’t know what something means in English, you can try to figure it out in Spanish and translate to English.”

“Also any other academic things that you do will be easier for you once you are bilingual, because another part of your brain is now functioning.”

“One more advantage is that knowing another language exercises your brain, which helps you learn in school better.”
Almost all students – positive attitudes toward bilingualism

- Appreciate other languages
- Important to learn other languages & be bilingual
- Enjoy studying through 2 languages and being in TWI program
- No student background differences
“Bilingualism is a very strong word, because this will help you have a future.”
“Now that I’m in this school I could talk to my family without saying ‘What does that mean?’.”
“Being an 8th grader in this Spanish program, I find this extra class stretching the extra mile, although I find learning another language and culture all the more rewarding.”
“Talking to my grandparents is important to me. They tell me many things. In order for me to communicate with them, I must speak Spanish. Not many of my cousins can speak Spanish, so now my grandparents have someone else to speak to. Being bilingual helps me by allowing me to speak to my grandparents.”

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
Cultural Knowledge
I would say that I am _ Bicultural

- VERY Bicultural NOT differ significantly by language group or other student characteristics
  - BUT R-FEP 63% vs EL 55% vs EP 56%
  - BUT HES 63% vs HSS 57% vs OES 47%

- VERY Bicultural differs by model
  - 90:10  60%
  - 50:50  35%
- Most students have interest in Mexican, Latin American, Mayan, Aztec, or Spanish culture
- Most students perceive they have knowledge in these cultural arenas
“It isn’t about learning the language, it’s about connecting with culture and learning as much as possible.”
“You also have an open mind about other things. You’re more sensitive and understand people better.”
“I understand more things about cultures.”
“That’s why I discovered another whole different culture. There was way more stuff in a culture and language than I had ever imagined.”
“You will be able to read old stories in their original languages, like Don Quixote.”
Most students – express interest and positive attitudes toward culture

- Better understanding of culture
- More interest in culture & appreciation for other cultures
- Some attend cultural activities outside of school
- No student background differences
Other Perceptions of Culture
Attitudes Toward Others

Most students – express positive attitudes toward others

- Better understanding of others (Spanish speakers, those of other cultures)
- Feel comfortable around people different from themselves
- No student background differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding Spanish speakers</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More understand people different than me</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feel comfortable around people different</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
Other Perceptions of Culture
Negative Attitudes Toward Others

I think that I have ___ prejudice toward people of other groups compared to most of my peers

- Most students say same amount (51%), one third say less prejudice (34%) than their peers
- No student background differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interactions with Others
Comfort in Interactions with Various Groups

I would say that I feel very comfortable, fairly comfortable, UNcomfortable in interacting in situations/groups with mostly
• !Latinos/Hispanics/Mexicans
• !Asian American
• !African American
• !White/Euro-American

• ! Few students feel UNcomfortable in interacting with students from various backgrounds.
• ! Students feel most comfortable with Hispanics (sample has more Hispanics)
• ! Euro, African Am and Asian Am perceived fairly similarly

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
Significant Model difference

- Very bilingual & very bicultural:
  47% 9010 vs 26% 5050

- Somewhat bilingual & bicultural:
  40% 5050 vs 18% 9010

Most students are at least somewhat bilingual and somewhat bicultural
Conclusions: Students have Cultural Competence Skills

- Students have good communication skills – bilingual skills
- Students possess cultural knowledge and cultural interest
- Most students are at least somewhat bilingual and bicultural
  - RFEP students most bilingual & bicultural
  - 90:10 students more bilingual & bicultural than 50:50 students
- Students have positive attitudes toward others
  - They feel comfortable interacting with people of different backgrounds than them
Implications for Instruction

- Communication skills – give students social/oral skills in both languages to communicate in social settings
  - Provide & practice socio-culturally appropriate customs & behaviors (e.g., greetings, some slang to interact appropriately with peers)
  - Provide opportunities for students to talk to each other about social things (family, community, friends, activities)

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
Implications for Instruction

- Cultural skills – ACTFL Standards for Foreign Language Learning around culture
  - Cultural perspectives – integrate variety of perspectives of culture as often as possible – students need to feel a part of culture, not just develop head knowledge
  - Cultural comparisons – need to compare and contrast different cultures and cultural perspectives (businesses hire consultants to teach people to behave appropriately in different cultures)
  - Be careful not to stereotype; cultural variations within groups

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.
Implications for Instruction

- **Attitudes**
  - Provide opportunities for students to talk to each other to feel more comfortable with students from other groups.
  - Include stories of children from different backgrounds; discuss similarities.
  - Have school community activities so parents can feel more comfortable with other parents.
  - Class trip to Spanish-speaking country (at least community).
Implications for Instruction

- Attitudes
  - If school is mostly segregated (Latino students), provide opportunities for students to engage one-on-one with people from other backgrounds (field trips, classroom exchanges through visits or Internet, speakers)
Implications for Research

More research

- How can we effectively define cultural competence in a TWI program?
- How do we teach students these skills effectively so students do not self-segregate by ethnic/language background?
- How do we help heritage language students to connect with their heritage language and culture? Help ELLs stay connected with their L1 language and culture? Help other ethnic/English speakers to connect with second language & culture?

Kathryn Lindholm-Leary, Ph.D.