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Maintaining A Culturally Responsive And Engaging Classroom For Students From Eastern And Western Cultures

Chloe E. Delwiche
Hamline University

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MAINTAINING A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND ENGAGING
CLASSROOM FOR STUDENTS FROM EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURES

by

Chloe E. Delwiche

A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts in Teaching

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Capstone Project Facilitator: Trish Harvey

Peer Reviewers: Megan Stevens and Ashley Teare

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

This research approach aims to examine the differences that take place in the classroom among students from Eastern cultures and students in Western cultures.

This paper and project examine the differences in learning styles of students in classrooms from Eastern cultures and students from Western cultures. In this paper, Eastern cultures refer to countries including Mongolia, China, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. In this paper, Western cultures refer to the culture present in schools in the United States. The research in this paper focuses on ways students from Western cultures engage with classmates and teachers in large group settings, compared to the ways students from Eastern cultures engage with classmates and teachers in large group settings. This research analysis will examine the ways students engage in large and small group settings and the reasons they may engage and interact this way while connecting this to their backgrounds and culture.

The research question in this paper and project asks the question: *How can I create a classroom environment that is engaging and interactive for students from both Eastern and Western cultures while maintaining a culturally responsive classroom that respects, accepts, and incorporates all cultures into content and instruction?*

This chapter will look at why I chose this topic and my journey to decide to research my topic. It will discuss what areas of research I will need to complete and what I will need to become more knowledgeable about in order to successfully complete my capstone. The first chapter of this paper discusses my professional and personal goals with my research topic and how I will use what I learn to benefit my teaching practice. It also explains how I will use my research to advocate for my EL students.

Rationale

As an English Language Learner (ELL) teacher, other cultures and languages have always fascinated me. I love learning about my students' backgrounds and I love learning new ways to incorporate and integrate pieces of their cultures into my instruction and content in the classroom. While at Hamline University, I took all of my required classes to become an ELL teacher. During one of my night classes, my professor talked about the differences among students from Eastern and Western cultures. I had always known there were differences between Eastern and Western cultures because I took a Psychology course during my senior year of college that studied cultural differences in the United States. However, hearing the extent of what this could look like in a classroom inspired me to want to learn more. I wanted to learn more about why there are differences among these cultures, what this will look like for my EL students, and how I can incorporate their cultures and backgrounds into my instruction while maintaining a culturally responsive classroom that incorporates an engaging and interactive environment.

My goal with the project is to learn how differences among cultures affect my classroom environment, and how I can help all students learn while respecting, accepting, and embracing their backgrounds and cultures. I want to establish a classroom or small group environment that enables all students to feel comfortable in class. My hope is that if I can create a comfortable, inviting, and engaging classroom, students from all cultures will feel safe and accepted. Hopefully, students will not feel as though they need to stifle or hide aspects of their culture that make them who they are. I want to learn how to create an environment that is warm and welcoming for all, while making sure all students are engaged and participating in class.

Professional Goals

Professionally, I hope to use what I learn from this capstone to help educate other teachers and anyone who works with EL students. As an EL teacher, I want to learn how to advocate for my EL students. My hope is that the research from this paper will help not only me become more educated and knowledgeable about creating an environment that is stimulating, engaging, and welcoming for EL students, but it will also help me be able to pass this information along to colleagues, classroom teachers, administrators, and all people working with EL students.

During the initial phase of completing research and writing this paper, I decided to change my route and complete a project instead of the thesis. This idea came to me after I was quite far along with the paper, but I decided to create a website that can be utilized by other teachers and anyone who wants to learn more about an engaging and culturally responsive classroom. The idea came to me as I was

contemplating how my paper and research could benefit other students and teachers, and I decided I wanted to create something I can continue to work with after this paper is complete. A website is something that can help others for years to come, so I decided to pursue this route instead.

As an EL teacher, I am often the only adult who can communicate with and communicate on behalf of students. This is a big responsibility, and this is where it is important to know how to advocate for my EL students. In many situations with EL students, the EL teacher might be the only person willing or able to advocate for students, to speak up for students, and to help students receive what they need to achieve. Knowing this, I plan to use what I learn from my research and from my paper to advocate for my students. This means I hope to gain more information that enables me to eloquently speak up for them when talking with other teachers or adults working with EL students, and I can provide other teachers and adults with substantial research and analyses that could help them understand what will work best for the student, and what to avoid. In my plan to create an environment that is inclusive, accepting, and engaging, I will use my research from this paper to help myself become a better educator and I will use this research to advocate for my EL students in every way possible.

Personal Goals

Personally, I work in a school with a high population of students from Eastern countries and who still practice aspects of their cultures and religions. The school I work at has a high percentage of students from other countries: 72% are of an Asian

ethnicity. For the purpose of this paper and project, I will only discuss the percentage from Eastern cultures in this school. While working with students from Eastern countries, I noticed that many of them are more quiet, less talkative, reserved, and very polite while in large group and small group settings. This intrigued me because I noticed that students from other parts of the world, and especially students from the United States, were usually louder in small and large group settings and seemed more engaged in class. Although this could be mistaken for a generalization, I began researching why this may be. When my professor in one of my night classes discussed this, I realized why my students from Eastern countries are more reserved; it is a part of their culture that they are carrying with them to the United States. This created a spark in me and has led me to my research topic. On a personal level, this topic is interesting to me because many of my students are from Eastern countries. I have also been interested in learning about other cultures ever since I lived in Spain for four months, and this spark was reignited during my time in the classroom combined with insight and discussions with my professor during my night class.

During my time in Spain as an undergraduate student, I took courses in Spanish about the culture, language, religion, and politics in Spain. I lived with a host family who had three young children and during my time living with them, I decided to jump outside of my comfort zone even more during this time and volunteer in my host brother's fifth grade English class. Up to this point in my academic career, I was double majoring in Spanish and Psychology with a plan to go to graduate school to

become a school psychologist. However, I realized a new passion for teaching while I volunteered at San Eulalia in Segovia, Spain.

Every Tuesday while I volunteered, I began to love teaching more each day, and I especially loved teaching English to Spanish-speaking students. I have always had a passion for learning languages. I love reading and writing and I found learning Spanish to be fascinating. When I started researching the job description of an ESL teacher, it seemed like the perfect fit for me. I decided to become a teacher, but I first wanted to finish my undergraduate degree since I had only two semesters left. I also thought that having a background in psychology would help me with education because it is beneficial to understand the development of children, characteristics of learning disabilities, and aspects of behavior as an educator. I also thought having a background in Spanish would be beneficial, and it definitely has been. I have taught Spanish to preschool and kindergarten classes, as well as to middle school students. As an ELL teacher, I have found my experience speaking Spanish to be beneficial with many students who are native Spanish speakers. Each teaching experience, whether in Spanish or English, has contributed to what I now know as an educator today.

After graduating with a double major in Psychology and Spanish, I began classes at Hamline University right away to receive my initial teaching license in K-12 ESL and my Master's in Teaching. By taking the initial jump outside my comfort zone to study abroad in Spain and to volunteer in my host brother's

classroom, I found a career that combines my passion for helping children with my love for language.

Conclusion

In summary, I am creating a project that examines the differences in student engagement and interaction between students from Eastern and Western countries and cultures. I became interested in this topic during my time in Spain, my time at Hamline University, and while teaching in my current position. I plan to use what I learn from my research and from writing this paper to become a better educator and to help advocate for my EL students. I also plan to create a website that will contain resources for other EL teachers and any teachers who would like to learn more. In this way, I hope to continue to help other students and educators for years to come.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In the first chapter, I discussed and outlined ways my project and research will lead me to answer the question: *How can I create a classroom environment that is engaging and interactive for students from both Eastern and Western cultures while maintaining a culturally responsive classroom that respects, accepts, and incorporates all cultures into content and instruction?* This chapter will analyze the research done previously that helps answer my research question. The research will focus on social norms, cultural norms, and student engagement in students of both Eastern and Western cultures. It also analyzes how these norms affect how students from Eastern cultures participate and engage in classrooms in the United States. The literature reviews of research that has been previously done will help inform my project; understanding more of the research that has already been completed will help me create a website that is informative and convenient for other teachers.

Eastern Cultures

Overview. This capstone examines how students from Eastern cultures interact with other students and teachers and how they engage in class. This topic is important for teachers to understand because in order to create a culturally responsive classroom that is inclusive and accepting of all cultures, teachers need to know more about Eastern cultures. Eastern cultures have different social norms, cultural norms, languages spoken, religions practiced, and many other aspects that are different from

Western cultures. In order to obtain a deeper understanding of how students from Eastern cultures engage in a school setting, it is necessary to research and study aspects of Eastern cultures. In this section, there is information about Eastern cultures and connections between the materials learned in this section to how it relates to the project. Students from Eastern countries have grown up with different experiences than students from other countries. To name a few of the differences, there are different cultural norms, social norms, religions, politics, sports, and weather that alter how they interact with other students in schools. In order to understand the differences and how they change how students interact and engage in school, we must first understand Eastern cultures.

Cultural Norms of Eastern Cultures

Overview. Although not particular to just Eastern cultures but to all cultures, cultural norms in Eastern cultures can help people understand why people and students in particular act and behave the way they do. Particularly in schools, understanding cultural norms of Eastern cultures can help teachers and other students understand how to support students from Eastern cultures in their classroom while creating an environment that is interactive and engaging for all students.

Understanding aspects of a culture are different than assuming all students act and engage a certain way because they are from a certain country. Stereotyping is different than understanding the root of cultural norms in any given culture or country, and this part of this chapter identifies important cultural norms to understand in Eastern cultures in order to best serve all students in a classroom.

In Eastern cultures, there are different cultural norms that exist in comparison to Western cultures. Not all Eastern cultures have the same cultural norms, but many of the cultural norms from Eastern cultures are similar. The differences in cultural norms and how this affects all students in schools in the United States is a large factor that helps teachers determine how to create a classroom environment that is inclusive to all students while being engaging and interactive. In Eastern cultures, there have been studies that analyze how students associate with other students, interact with others, and engage in class. Through the many studies that have been completed with students from Eastern cultures, and specifically with Asian students from this study, researchers have found that modesty is one of the traits that Chinese participants possess. Cai, Sedikides, Gaertner, Wang, Carvallo, Xu, and Jackson (2011) found the following results in their research:

Modesty is a prevailing norm in China. In support of the hypotheses, dispositionally or situationally modest Chinese participants manifested low explicit self-esteem while manifesting high implicit self-esteem. Modesty among American participants constrained explicit self-esteem but yielded no associations with implicit self-esteem. (p. 59)

This study in particular shows researchers, teachers, and all who work in schools how students from Eastern cultures behave in classrooms in one area. Chinese students from this study have high implicit self-esteem, meaning they possess high self-esteem individually. However, students from this study showed that many Chinese students may not show this on the outside for others to see. In

classrooms in the United States, it is important for teachers to see the differences among students from Eastern cultures and Western cultures. This is research that can be utilized in beneficial ways in schools because it helps teachers and other researchers understand how students from China view themselves. It can help teachers when planning for lessons that involve more engagement and interaction between students.

Social Norms in Eastern Cultures

Overview. Social norms dictate how people and students interact with others. Social norms are defined as “the rules of behavior that are considered acceptable in a group or society” (“Your Dictionary,” 2016). According to Lee (1994), social norms are a very important piece to analyze when looking at how to create and maintain an engaging classroom while being culturally responsive classroom. While reading research and analyzing social norms in Eastern cultures, it is important to understand how these norms can interfere with how students from Eastern cultures engage and interact with their peers and teachers in class. Understanding the social norms in cultures and countries from Asia is important in order to understand how to best create an environment inclusive and engaging for students from both Eastern and Western cultures. The definition of social norms (“Your Dictionary,” 2016) articulates that social norms include behavior that is considered acceptable in a certain group or society. The social norms in the United States will differ immensely compared to the social norms in a particular country in Asia. Students from Vietnam, for example, probably have different expectations that they were taught. These are

expectations of how to behave and act in public, school or social events, for example, and students who were taught different social norms will probably continue to behave according to what is acceptable in their native country. This can end up being a barrier that can affect students' social lives in school. They might not feel comfortable in their environment at school, and it is part of the teacher's job to ensure they feel welcomed and safe in their learning environment.

Social norms in Eastern cultures dictate many characteristics of students in the United States; they influence how students interact in class as well as how they interact in general. Along with social norms, stereotypes are important to understand for this study: "Asian American students are commonly depicted as academic superstars or model minorities. According to the model-minority stereotype, Asian Americans are successful in school because they work hard and come from cultures that believe in the value of education" (Lee, 1994, p. 413). Social norms can sometimes affect how students perceive each other, and this is important to take into consideration as a teacher. Teachers must understand how to maintain a culturally responsive classroom that is engaging and interactive while creating an environment that does not tolerate stereotypes or prejudices.

There has been a substantial amount of research done analyzing how students from Asian countries handle problems. Focusing on this specific study conducted by Taylor, Sherman, Kim, Jarcho, Takagi, and Dunagan (2004), researchers referred to problems in school and problems in social settings. One group of researchers performed two studies focused on how students from Asian countries handle stressful

problems and if these students used social support. Taylor et. al (2004) collected data on how Koreans, Asians, and Asian Americans in the United States use social support:

On the one hand, the collectivist orientation of Asian countries might favor the sharing of stressful problems; on the other hand, efforts to maintain group harmony might discourage such efforts. In two studies, Koreans (Study 1) and Asians and Asian Americans in the United States (Study 2) reported using social support less for coping with stress than European Americans. (p. 354)

Although this study focused on students in Asian countries and students in European countries, the information and results found in this study can be useful when looking at maintaining culturally responsive classrooms in the United States. Students from Asian countries were less likely to use social support for coping with stress compared to students from European countries, and group harmony showed potentially discouraging efforts when dealing with stressful problems. This study is beneficial to understand when creating a classroom environment that is engaging while culturally sensitive and responsive; this means acknowledging students' backgrounds and experiences in a way that is inclusive and supportive. Knowing how Asian students can be hesitant to use social support for coping with stress might alter teachers' methods with group activities and participation. Additionally, teachers can analyze this research and brainstorm ways to incorporate aspects from students' Eastern culture and social norms in Eastern cultures into their classrooms. This

research especially benefits this project and paper because it informs teachers how to create a culturally responsive classroom.

Student Engagement in Eastern Cultures

Student engagement in Eastern cultures is one of the focuses in this project. It is important to study and analyze student engagement in the United States as well as student engagement in the students' native countries. Knowing how students engage in class will help teachers understand how to best reach and teach their students. How do students from Eastern cultures interact with other students and teachers? There is research that has been analyzed in the past, and this project will take pieces from research, summaries of research, and ideas that can help teachers plan for classrooms that are both engaging while maintaining the culturally responsiveness that will help their students succeed.

In a study conducted about Asian and European American preferences for uniqueness, researchers found that East Asians preferred targets that represented conformity while European Americans preferred targets that represented uniqueness (Kim & Markus, 1999). In one of the four studies conducted by Kim and Markus (1999), participants were directed to select one pen they preferred after given various pens to choose from. Participants from Asian cultures chose the pens, or targets, that represented conformity while the participants from Western cultures chose the pens that were unique and stood out compared to the others. The other studies conducted by Kim and Markus (1999) used other targets such as abstract figures and magazine ads. Although this study focuses on European Americans and not those in the United

States, this study still demonstrates how the differences between Eastern and Western cultures have many implications that affect students in schools in the United States. Students from Eastern cultures in the United States prefer conformity, meaning they prefer to blend in a classroom. On the other hand, students from Western cultures in the United States prefer uniqueness, meaning they prefer to stand out in a classroom. This affects the entire chemistry and atmosphere of a classroom.

Biggs (1996) shared how in Eastern cultures, students are taught that the teacher is the primary authority in the room. In many countries in the Eastern part of the world, the teacher stands at the front of the room and lectures “at” students, while students are primarily silent and listen to the teacher. This has great effects when students move to the United States and are suddenly immersed in a setting completely different than an authoritarian, teacher-centered model. In the United States, it has become much more common in the past decades to foster a student-centered approach in classrooms. This means students are face to face with other students in school, collaborate with other students, and this creates more time for students to speak instead of listening to the teacher lecture. This also means that at the end of the day, students are more engaged and interactive in class (Liu, 1997). The teacher is always present and teaching, but it is more student-centered. In Eastern cultures, this is not the case, and although many students from Eastern cultures excel upon arrival in schools in the United States, they still face many challenges. Liu (1997) discussed the conflict some people feel when speaking English: “Although most see no conflict between speaking English and their Chinese identity, many feel unease when

speaking it. This unease is often reinforced by students' anxiety to speak well and some teachers' error treatment techniques," (Liu, 1997, p. 371). With an authoritarian style classroom, students may have more anxiety or fear of speaking out in class, and this is transferred to the United States and to the students' new classrooms upon arrival.

Biggs (1996) discussed the differences between classrooms in Eastern and Western cultures, and also touches on how there is a connection to one of the religions practiced in Asia. Biggs (1996) discusses how "Confucian heritage" challenges the propositions and conditions in which learning takes place. Studies have shown that "Confucian heritage" is built on an ancient religions foundation that emphasizes the social values, institutions, and ideals of a traditional Chinese society. There are many social values in a traditional Chinese society that may affect how students interact in school. Nguyen, Terlouw, and Pilot (2006) examined the cultural conflicts that happen with Western and Eastern cultures interact in an educational or other setting: "The results of this examination reveal a complex web of cultural conflicts and mismatches that are likely to happen when a Western educational methodology is applied in another context with rigorous adaptation to improve compatibility with the host culture," (p. 2). There are many considerations to think of in an educational setting, and this research by Nguyen et. al (2006) shows readers, researchers, and educators how important understanding students' cultures and heritages is to their learning.

Although there is a substantial amount of research supporting the fact that students from Eastern and specifically Asian cultures are more reserved in the classroom, there are also studies that argue this and claim that the causes are situation specific. Cheng (2000) discusses the differences in situation-specific causes: “The causes are situation specific rather than culturally pre-set. These situation-specific causes could be the differences between teaching methodologies and the lack of required foreign language proficiency,” (Cheng, 2000, p. 435). Cheng (2000) argued that educators and researchers should not over-generalize with any students, but specifically with Asian students. Instead, educators should reflect on ways their teaching methodologies, students’ foreign and English language proficiencies, and the lack of language proficiency. This is a valid claim to make, and it is important in my study to acknowledge the chance of educators over-generalizing students from Eastern cultures’ abilities. It is even more important in this study to stay away from over-generalization which could lead to stereotyping.

Instead, it is important to recognize the potential differences among students from Eastern cultures and the fact that many of them come from different areas of the Eastern world, meaning they each have unique experiences to bring to a classroom. Understanding the depth of their culture, language, and background can help educators stay away from over-generalization among students.

Western Cultures

This capstone focuses on student engagement in the United States, and because of this, it is important to look at Western cultures as well. Maintaining a

culturally responsive classroom means being welcoming and supportive of all cultures, and this is why understanding the social and cultural norms of the Western culture is important as well. In order to fully understand how to accommodate for students from both Eastern and Western cultures, it is necessary to also read research and studies conducted following students from Western cultures. For the purpose of this paper and project, Western cultures refers to the culture in the United States.

In Western cultures, there are different classroom setups compared to those in Eastern cultures. Different classroom setups lead to other differences among teaching and learning styles between Eastern and Western cultures. “The type of teaching context prevailing in many Asian countries is typically characterized as unvarying and expository, taking place in what seem to be highly authoritarian classrooms, where the main thrust of teaching and learning is focused on preparation for external examinations” (Biggs, 1996, p. 147). In Asian countries, the majority of school models are set up in highly authoritarian classrooms; where the teacher is in charge of the entire class and has the power. This typically means that the teacher stands at the front of the room and teaches and lectures students. Students have desks that face the front of the room, which does not allow for student-to-student interaction. On the other hand, students in the United States often have more student-centered classrooms. They may have desks in groups of four to six, allowing for partner activities and interaction among students. This is one main example of the differences between classrooms in Eastern cultures and classrooms in Western cultures.

In order to understand the research question more thoroughly and understand how to make a classroom culturally responsive, inclusive, and engaging all at the same time, it is also important to understand how Western cultures fit into this picture. Students from Western cultures have different views of students from Eastern cultures and vice versa, and as a teacher, it is important to establish acceptance and encouragement to continue aspects from both cultures. However, finding a classroom that also establishes a common culture that is supportive of all students is crucial. In many students from Western cultures' opinions, the culture in Asia and Eastern countries is more restrictive and more passive, and this can influence how students interact and engage in class. "The picture is thus a coherent one to Western eyes; Asian students are brought up in a restrictive teaching/learning environment, which commits them to a passive, uncritical, and reproductive mode of learning" (Biggs, 1996, p. 147). Teachers need to be aware of what students may have been brought up learning, and teachers need to be able to teach students how to accept other cultures as a whole, and not to just accept pieces of them. In doing this, educators can be more successful in creating a classroom environment that is supportive and engaging for students from both Eastern and Western cultures.

Student Engagement in Western Cultures

Overview. Student engagement in Western cultures is important to study and analyze because in order to maintain a culturally responsive classroom, teachers need to know how to support student engagement with students from all cultures. Studying student engagement in both Eastern and Western cultures will hopefully help teachers

understand how to create a system in their classrooms that works for both cultures and incorporates pieces of both cultures and backgrounds into one classroom setting.

In order to understand how to help students from Eastern cultures remain engaged and successful in class, it is necessary to understand how students from Western cultures are able to engage. This is because it is important to understand how to incorporate aspects of multiple cultures in a classroom. Gay (2010) has researched the role culture plays in school settings for many years, and has learned how observations of students from different cultures helps educators understand techniques for improving performance. “These observations underscore the importance of placing culture at the center of the analysis of techniques for improving the performance of underachieving students of color, or, of explicitly acknowledging that it is already there, and broadening the “center” of educational practices to make it culturally pluralistic rather than homogeneous,” (Gay, 2010, p. 39). Gay (2010) found through his studies that it is important to acknowledge and recognize the multiple cultures that are present in a classroom, and it is important to do even more. He discussed how broadening the “center” of educational practices helps incorporate more students’ backgrounds. When educators incorporate students’ backgrounds, students are able to make intrinsic connections that remain with them for longer periods of time than if educators keep material on the surface level and do not dive deeper. Making these connections helps students not only understand the material and succeed in these subjects or areas, but it helps students retain the knowledge they

have gained for years to come. This in turn helps them in other areas of their academic careers.

This being said, throughout all of the research on Eastern cultures, Asian Americans are underrepresented: “Asian Americans are underrepresented in all aspects of research, theory, and practice about culturally responsive teaching,” (Gay, 2010, p. 39). Culturally responsive teaching is valued in the ELL community and is becoming more important and widespread in all academic areas. As the United States is changing and becoming more populated with people from many different countries, creating and maintaining a classroom that is culturally responsive is becoming more prominent in schools across the United States and other countries. Research on Asian Americans is underrepresented in the United States, and this is one reason it is important for more research to be conducted; it is also a large part of my project choice. Educating teachers and administrators about the importance of maintaining a culturally responsive classroom will help students tremendously.

Studies have been completed focusing on students from all ages from Eastern cultures. Zepke and Leach (2010) researched students in higher education and how they can remain successful despite cultural differences. Zepke and Leach (2010) synthesized research studies from ten different countries and created a conceptual organizer for student engagement. The conceptual organizer includes four major pieces; they are student motivation, transactions between teachers and students, institutional support, and engagement for active citizenship. Although my project focuses on students in grades K-12, I believe this research can be beneficial for

educators when looking at how to create an engaging and culturally responsive classroom setting.

Higher education often takes different approaches in the classroom, but the four ideas included in the conceptual organizer by Zepke and Leach (2010) can be used as a model for educators in grades K-12. Student motivation is a factor that is crucial to understand as an educator; teachers must know how to motivate students in order to help them succeed in school. Transactions between students and teachers are another aspect that can help educators and administrators understand and learn how to interact with students from Eastern cultures. Students from Eastern cultures are often taught to be more reserved around authoritative figures in their lives, and once teachers have learned this, they will be able to better understand how to interact with their students. This could come into play during student presentations or when grading student participation. Students' from Eastern cultures may be less likely to participate in a large group setting, and teachers can learn how to create participation expectations and rubrics for students from Eastern cultures while being culturally sensitive.

According to Zepke and Leach (2010) institutional support and engagement for active citizenship are pieces that can help educators and administrators understand how to support students from Eastern cultures. Even on an elementary level, institutional support from administrators and school board members can help ELL teachers and all teachers support their students in various ways. Having support from administrators can provide teachers with materials that can help them serve students

from different cultures, specifically from Eastern cultures. Materials that can support students from other countries can include visual aides to help students understand content, and books, art, or music from other countries that are represented by students in the classroom. In opposition, if teachers do not receive support from school board members or administrators, they are less likely to have a successful and culturally responsive classroom. Teachers who do not receive support may not have the resources, materials, or abilities to utilize strategies that incorporate aspects from both Eastern and Western cultures. Utilizing materials and strategies that primarily support Western cultures can harm students from Eastern cultures because they will be less likely to retain information if they have no background connection to it.

While researching student engagement in both Eastern and Western cultures, psychology plays in important piece. Understanding the psychological theories and viewpoints of psychologists can help researchers better understand learning and engagement in various cultures: “According to Bandura’s social cognitive theory, self-efficacy (perceived capabilities for learning or performing actions at designated levels) is a key cognitive variable influencing motivation and engagement,” (Schunk, 2012, p. 219). The social cognitive theory developed by Bandura (1997) emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, modeling, and includes interaction between the three. Furthermore, Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed in a situation or the belief in one’s ability to accomplish a task. The connection between psychology, and specifically the social cognitive theory and self-efficacy, can help educators become more culturally

sensitive and responsive with students from all cultures, but specifically with students from Eastern cultures. Knowing the theory behind the viewpoints can help teachers know why this is important when teaching and interacting with students from Eastern cultures. Students from Eastern cultures engage in a small or large group differently than most students from Western cultures. The question being answered in this paper and project is how to create a classroom environment that is engaging, interactive, and culturally responsive all at the same time. If some students learn and engage differently by observing more than speaking or imitating, or from observing the teacher as a model for the classwork, then teachers need to recognize this and act upon this research. Students from Eastern cultures are often more reserved in class, and they may learn more from imitating the teachers' responses or other students' responses. Teachers who understand this can use this to help the students instead of having students lose participation points, for example.

Conclusion

Overview. The second chapter in this capstone reviews literature that helped inform the idea for the project. The research reviewed in this chapter analyzed cultural and social norms of Eastern cultures, religion in Eastern cultures, student engagement in Eastern cultures, and student engagement in both Eastern and Western cultures. Throughout this chapter, materials were reviewed and research was analyzed. All of this research together helps inform the readers about how to create an engaging, interactive, and culturally responsive classroom. Despite difficulties to maintain a classroom that is both engaging and culturally responsive for students

from both Eastern and Western cultures, there are ways to become informed through research and reflection, and this will help to create a positive environment for all students.

Transition to Chapter 3

The literature review in this chapter helps inform Chapter 3 and the website that I designed. Chapter 3 consists of a description of the website, the rationale behind creating it, the audience for the website and how it benefits them, how the website helps me answer my research question, and more details of what I want to accomplish while working on this project and paper. Chapter 3 primarily discusses the goal, purpose, rationale, and explanation of the project. Using the research from Chapter 2, I elaborate on the website that I created and I explain how the research in Chapter 2 connects to the project.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to inform the reader of the project, the rationale behind the project, and how the project will help the researcher answer the research question. The research question is as follows: *How can I create a classroom environment that is engaging and interactive for students from both Eastern and Western cultures while maintaining a culturally responsive classroom that respects, accepts, and incorporates all cultures into content and instruction?*

The capstone project described in this paper is a website that informs other teachers about the cultural differences between students from Eastern and Western cultures while informing teachers how to create classroom environments that are inclusive, accepting, engaging, and interactive for all students. The website is designed to contain resources for educators to help them understand strategies that can be implemented into lesson plans and classroom environments to help students from Eastern cultures remain engaged in class and succeed while being culturally responsive. The goal of the website was to be an easily accessible, convenient, and informative resource for teachers to use. The website I created contains easily accessible, efficient, and convenient resources that teachers can use as part of an addition to a curriculum as well as resources that can help set up an engaging and culturally responsive classroom environment for students from Eastern cultures.

Rationale

Before arriving at the decision to create a webpage, I originally planned on completing the thesis. However, after more thought about how my capstone could benefit other students and teachers, I decided I wanted to create something that can be an effective instructional tool for teachers, and this will in turn help students in the future. I shifted the purpose of my research in order to create something more convenient and easy for other teachers to access. The website I created contains research that has been and will continue to be updated regularly by me, and the research is part of what helps inform other teachers. It also has the potential to be a website where resources and classroom strategies can be shared between educators through the comments section of the website. This is an ongoing project, not one that is finished with this paper. I plan to maintain the website regularly in the future in order to keep the materials and resources updated for other teachers.

Principles of Web Design

Before beginning to create this website, I knew I wanted to create a website that was engaging and useful for other teachers. Not only did I want it to be a valuable and efficient resource, but I wanted teachers to be able to efficiently access and use the materials I wrote about on the web page. I found information specifically about website design guidelines policies through “United States Department of Health and Human Services” (2006) that included a helpful guideline. The guideline suggested creating a website that is engaging, relevant, and appropriate to the audience (“United States Department of Health and Human Services,” 2006). After

reading this guideline, I decided to make sure my website was engaging, relevant, and appropriate for my audience of K-5 teachers. This guideline helped me progress and develop my website.

Website Contents

There are many elements to this website. The name of the website is: *Engaging English Language Learners*. This website was created through *wordpress.com* and was created as a type of blog website that can be added to continuously. *Engaging English Language Learners* contains resources for other EL teachers, classroom teachers, and any teacher in a K-5 setting specifically. The resources I added and summarized on the website includes scholarly articles, some of which have been cited in this paper, that help educators understand how to maintain a culturally responsive and engaging classroom. *Engaging English Language Learners* also contains tips and strategies listed that can be easy for educators to skim over when they need an idea of what to do to help their students from Eastern cultures in their classrooms.

The website I designed contains summarized scholarly articles, quick tips, and efficient strategies that I have summarized and posted on the website for teachers to easily and quickly read through. This is a convenient way for other teachers to read through the research without taking too much time out of their busy schedules to become more knowledgeable. This is one way the website is more convenient and easily accessible for teachers; they do not need to spend hours searching for materials or research because it is right there on this website for them.

On the website, I created short lists, quotes from scholars and researchers, summarized research, and examples of what these strategies and ideas realistically look like in a classroom. The resources I provided are convenient for other teachers because they can simply click on them and find the resources they need. The resources are instructional materials and studies that were conducted with data that can help students from Eastern cultures remain engaged feeling welcome in class.

Finally, I added a section on the website for comments from others who visit the webpage. They can post comments, questions, and their own resources that helped them. They can also comment or send in suggestions to improve the materials I post. I am also hoping to someday create a way for others to post materials they have used and that have been successful in their classrooms right on the webpage.

Audience

The targeted audience of my web page is classroom teachers and ELL teachers, but it can be very beneficial for all educators, specifically elementary school teachers in a K-5 elementary setting. The website contains research that primarily focuses on how to make a classroom environment more inclusive and engaging for students from Eastern and Western cultures, so it is the most beneficial for regular classroom teachers. However, ELL teachers are able to use research from this website to contribute to their practice and strategies while lesson planning. This website is available to anyone with access. It is designed for teachers, but administrators, school board members, and anyone with internet access is able to utilize the resources on this website.

The Project and Research Question

The project helps the researcher answer the research question in various ways. The project I created is ongoing, and although it is finished and shared with others, it is an ongoing project because the researcher continues to add new resources and information to the website. Because of the ongoing changes, the researcher and audience will continue to learn and grow as the website changes and adds new information.

Currently, the website helps the researcher answer the research question through resources. A main piece of this project is reading research, summarizing research in a way that is easy and convenient to understand for all educators, and finding tips through research that can help answer the research question for not only the researcher, but for all educators. This project will benefit the researcher's practice as an educator and increase the researcher's knowledge about the research question. This project also has the ability to inform and educate an unlimited number of educators, and this in turn has the potential to impact and help students from Eastern cultures succeed in many areas of academia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the third chapter has described the project, the rationale behind the project, and the project's anticipated audience of teachers and all educators. The website that will be created will be an informative and convenient way for other classroom teachers and ELL teachers to gain access to resources to help them create an engaging and culturally responsive classroom for students from both Eastern and

Western cultures. This chapter has described how the website will help other educators become more informed, and how this will in turn help more students and teachers succeed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions

This project has been beneficial to my practice as an English Language Learner teacher in many ways. It has informed me of new strategies to use when maintaining a culturally responsive and engaging classroom while providing me with research to support my research question. The research I have found will continue to support my practice as an ELL teacher and challenge me to try new ways to engage my students. This project benefits not only me but other educators and students as well.

My research question is: *How can I create a classroom environment for students from both Eastern and Western cultures while maintaining a culturally responsive classroom that respects, accepts, and incorporates all cultures into content and instruction?*

My project contributes to my research question in various ways. The website I created contains research I have summarized that explains how to maintain a culturally responsive classroom for all students, particularly English Language Learners. The website also contains easily accessible and convenient strategies for teachers to read quickly, or skim, in order to add ways to create a culturally responsive and engaging classroom for all students. The strategies are listed efficiently and are easy to read quickly. Teachers who visit the website take away new strategies and new knowledge to share with students. This website has benefited my research question because it has given me more research to help other teachers

and myself understand strategies to use. It has provided me with a way to share this research and reach more teachers and students. This website can be reached by anyone from anywhere in the world. This is a benefit of this project because teachers from all over can read new research and ways to make their classroom more culturally responsive.

Learnings

I have learned relevant information in my role as a researcher, writer, learner, and educator throughout this process. As a researcher and learner, I have become more educated in evidence that supports maintaining a culturally responsive classroom. I have learned the reasons behind the research and practice, and this has benefited me as a researcher and learner. Throughout the process of creating my website and this paper, I have written extensively. This has helped me become a better writer and it has helped my confidence in writing grow. I have grown in my practice as a teacher because I have gained additional strategies for working with English Language Learners, and specifically for working with students from Eastern cultures and backgrounds. I primarily work with English Language Learners from Eastern cultures among other cultures, and this project has benefited me as an educator and scholar immensely. This is the area I have grown in the most; I have more strategies to bring to the classroom, and I can share these strategies with colleagues.

Some of the learnings I had throughout this process were unexpected. I currently teach English Language Learners at an elementary school, and I found

myself questioning parts of what I do everyday. I realized that I should be incorporating more of the research I found and strategies I wrote about on my website into my own practice and classroom. This was unexpected because I had expected to already be using the strategies I wrote about; however, I realized that some of the strategies require more time than what I am given each day! This was a good awakening for me as a teacher because I realize how precious time is with students when we do not have a sufficient amount of time to cover everything. This helped me understand how to focus on what is most important in my classroom. Building a culturally responsive classroom takes time and effort, and this is something that is worth taking the time to do at the beginning of the school year as well as periodically throughout the year.

Connections to the Literature Review

There was valuable information from the literature review that helped me create my website. A lot of the research I found helped me write about strategies for teachers to use. Specifically, the research done by Zepke and Leach (2010) helped add information to my website. Zepke and Leach (2010) created a conceptual organizer for student engagement that includes four pieces: student motivation, transactions between teachers and students, institutional support, and engagement for active citizenship. The two pieces that helped this project the most were student motivation and transactions between teachers and students. My website includes strategies of ways teachers can engage with students to help motivate them and support them in all areas academically. The conceptual organizer created by Zepke

and Leach (2010) as well as all of the research discussed in the literature review contributed significantly to this project.

Throughout the process of creating the website and writing this paper, I have found more research to add to my website. I have also found relevant strategies that I want to include in my website that I plan to add later on; strategies such as mindsets teachers use in the classroom and how this is beneficial to both student and teacher growth. These are strategies I plan to implement in my own practice as a teacher and I hope to share this information with other teachers through my website.

I added a definition from Ladson-Billings (2004) that described how culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that values the importance of students' cultural backgrounds. Culturally responsive teaching has many aspects that can be implemented in a classroom environment, and there are various ways that lesson plans can include ways to integrate students' cultures as well. The definition by Ladson-Billings (2004) was a concise definition that I put at the beginning of the website in order to help people understand what the website is about immediately.

Furthermore, I added an article I wrote on acculturation. Crenshaw (2013) found that positive acculturation is a significant piece in order to help students adjust to a new country, city, school, or environment in general. I added research from Crenshaw (2013) on acculturation after writing my paper because I found this information relevant and valuable to add to the website.

Possible Policy Implications

There are possible policy implications involved in this project. As a website, this project has the potential to be shared with an unlimited number of people, in the United States and particularly in the district I work in, and it also has the potential to be shared around the world if I continue to expand and promote the website. This website does have the potential to inform decision makers. The audience of *Engaging English Language Learners* is K-5 elementary teachers; ELL teachers, classroom teachers, and any teacher in an elementary setting. However, because this project is a website, it can be used by anyone as a resource. For example, politicians could learn from this website. They make important decisions for cities, states, and the country as a whole, and if they use resources that tell them more about the reality of education, they can become more informed. School board members are also decision makers who could benefit from reading the information on this website. They can become more informed of the reality that teachers and English Language Learners face in the classroom, and this could help them make decisions with the best interests for teachers and students in mind.

Limitations

There were few limitations that occurred while creating this project. First, I have never been to any of the countries in Asia and this could have potentially limited part of my perspective. Although I researched extensively, I did not have firsthand experience in the various cultures I wrote about and researched, and this would have benefited my experience if I would have had more personal knowledge.

Given the large number of languages spoken, religions practiced, and cultures in the specific countries I focused on, there were limitations when writing this paper and creating the website. It was challenging to provide enough research and strategies to help students from various cultures from such a wide range. If I could have focused on a smaller area, this could have benefited my paper and website. However, I wanted to give teachers enough strategies to use with many of their students instead of focusing on just one country, so I chose to broaden the area. This was a small limitation of my project.

In the future, I will add more research to my website. This is an ongoing project that I plan to continue adding information to. I plan to provide new and relevant research to my website and continue adding new strategies and tips for other teachers to use. One way I could expand this idea would be to create another website or another section to the current website that includes strategies and research about students from African countries and Hispanic countries. This project could move forward in many ways and teach educators how to best serve different cultures.

Another way this research can be expanded is in other languages. This project has focused on students from Eastern countries, as defined earlier in this paper, in the English language. In the future, I would like to expand this project to not only focus on cultures from Africa, Mexico, or Spain, to name a few, but also to create a website in other languages that could be used in other countries by teachers. By creating a website in other languages in addition to English, this project would have the potential to reach a substantial amount of teachers around the world.

In addition to expanding my own research question and website, other researchers and teachers could expand on my project and research question in many ways. Teachers can add resources to my website by contacting me. They can share parts of their own classroom environment and lesson plans that are beneficial for other educators to learn about. Teachers could look at the demographics in their own classrooms and find ways to support students from other cultures in their classroom each day, and they could share this through the website.

Communicating Results

I plan to share my website with many other educators. A website is a project that can easily be shared through the Internet, and I hope to reach as many educators as possible who are looking for strategies to help their English Language Learners. I will share my website with other teachers at the school I currently work at, and I will share my website with other teachers in the district. This will hopefully spread to any other teachers who are looking for resources.

Benefits to the Teaching Profession

The website I created is a benefit to the teaching profession because it educates teachers on how to maintain a culturally responsive classroom for English Language Learners. In the United States, there are many English Language Learners who need teachers to understand how to teach them while respecting and incorporating their native culture. Maintaining a culturally responsive environment for all students, especially English Language Learners, is the first step that needs to happen in order for students to learn; they need to feel welcome and valued in their

environment first and foremost. This project helps teachers learn how to do this and it helps them understand the importance. Teachers are busy and are often (if not always) pressed for time, and this website is a quick and convenient resource for teachers to use when looking for strategies to implement in their classroom. This website benefits the teaching profession and it benefits English Language Learners.

The website *Engaging English Language Learners* was a process that taught me more about the teaching profession as an English Language Learner teacher than I had expected. I was more conscious of everything I was doing in my own classroom, and this was not something I had expected going into this project. I learned a lot of relevant, interesting, and useful information from research while creating the website. This website can benefit many educators and students now and continuing in the future; it will benefit the ways teachers maintain a culturally responsive classroom for all students, but especially for English Language Learners from Eastern cultures. Although there were some limitations, this website is an ongoing project that will continue to be updated and modified in the future in order to best serve teachers and students.

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