Assimilating International Educators into the US Academic Cultural System

CATESOL 2018. Anaheim, CA

Lily Lewis, USC International Academy
Inge McKenney, Virginia Tech Language & Culture Institute
Andrea Todd, Virginia Tech Language & Culture Institute
Session Overview

- Target population and program description
- Orientation development process
- Orientation timeline and topics covered
- Selected hands-on activities:
  - Culture shock activity
  - Breaking norms activity
- Outcomes and feedback from participants
Target Population

- Highly collectivist societies and cultures
- Non-English speaking countries
- K-12 ESL teachers
Program Overview & Objectives

- Selective and competitive program
- One year in duration
- Become an agent of change in the home country school system
- Experience a cultural transformation
- Implement teaching methodologies & strategies from US education system
- Improve English language skills
Program Components

- Intensive English Instruction
- Professional networking opportunities
- Immersion in local culture and system
- Implementation Plan
Challenges for International Scholars

Expectations for US education:

• Self-directed learning (Knowles, 1975; Grow, 1991)
• Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956; Anderson et al., 2001)
• Individual effort and attribution of ideas (Duff, Rogers, & Harris, 2006; Bethany, 2016)

All of these new expectations can cause difficulties for students/teachers from different cultures (Hofstede, 1986).
Development Process

• Start with existing materials
  • Expand topics from 1-day general student orientation
  • Examine relevant presentations given by our director

• Consider skills/knowledge necessary to succeed as a student in U.S. higher education and as a teacher in K-12 education
  • Follow cultural norms & expectations
  • Understand history and context of U.S. education

• Identify practical knowledge needed to succeed in our program
  • VTLCI rules and policies
  • Use of our technology, facilities
  • Resources/services in local area
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview of program goals, format</td>
<td>Proficiency testing</td>
<td>US Laws &amp; VT policies</td>
<td>Local area information</td>
<td>Sign program forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration policies</td>
<td>Set up VT IDs and Gmail accounts</td>
<td>Needs assessment &amp; discussion</td>
<td>How to deal with health concerns</td>
<td>Trip to VT library to get ID cards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Orientation - Week 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visit from program sponsor</td>
<td>US culture &amp; social norms</td>
<td>History &amp; culture of U.S. education</td>
<td>Overview of Virginia Tech; Fairfax County schools</td>
<td>Definitions &amp; examples of plagiarism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor Q &amp; A with program participants</td>
<td>Hofstede’s cultural dimensions; Culture shock</td>
<td>Student rights, responsibilities in the U.S.</td>
<td>Set up Canvas and e-Portfolio sites</td>
<td>Online plagiarism workshop (Excelsior OWL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity 1: Culture Shock

No matter where you travel, the stages of culture shock are consistent and can present themselves at any time throughout your stay. They are typically experienced in a linear fashion and the duration of each stage can vary and is unique to each person.

*Keep in mind that this is a normal process.*

*Each stage will pass.*
Activity 1: Culture Shock

There are 5 stages of Culture Shock that will occur from entry into the US through re-entry back to your country.

5 Stages of Culture Shock:
1. The Honeymoon Stage
2. Irritability and Hostility
3. Gradual Adjustment
4. Adaptation of Biculturalism
5. Re-entry Shock

Source: Adapted from https://www.sfu.ca/students/isap/current/adjust-to-a-new-culture/stages-symptoms-culture-shock.html
Activity 1: Culture Shock

✓ Your group will be assigned one of the 5 stages of culture shock we have discussed.

✓ With your group, you will brainstorm 3-5 ways to anticipate and handle the phase that you are in.

✓ We will regroup and share these action items to help handle the various stages of culture shock.
Activity 2: Breaking Norms

Step 1: Introduce and briefly explain U.S. cultural norms:

- Public Behavior
- Phone Calls
- Forms of Address
- Dining Out
- Metro Ridership
- Classroom Behavior
- Professional Comportment
- Saying and Understanding “No”
Activity 2: Breaking Norms

Example: In some cultures, “NO” is the beginning of the discussion. In the United States, “NO” means the end of the discussion.

- It does not mean to keep asking a person until he or she says “yes”.
- It does not mean asking other people until someone says “yes”.
- It is a cultural expectation in the United States that people respect the word “NO” in conversations and relationships.
- People are encouraged to speak up and share their opinions, but they do not always expect to get their way.
Activity 2: Breaking Norms

Step 2: Act out a short skit in front of the participants in which we intentionally break a cultural norm.

Step 3: Pairs or small groups of participants are assigned a cultural norm and told to create a similar skit in which they intentionally break the “rules.”

Step 4: Participants act out their skit in front of the rest of the group. Other participants must point out the norms being broken and identify possible consequences.
Program Orientation: Participant Feedback

Most Valuable Topics
- Plagiarism
- US Culture
- US History and Education

Least Valuable Topics
- Healthcare
- Transportation
- Registering Children for School
Program Orientation: Participant Feedback

More Information Requested:

- Teaching Methodologies
- Daily Life
- Expanding English Skills
Program Orientation: Highlights & Outcomes

- Overall Participation Rate of 95%
- 100% agreement that the length of the session was appropriate and useful
- Continue collecting data and outcomes throughout the course of the full year
References


