



Establishing Teacher Credibility in Intercultural Classrooms

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Importance of the Study

- For cross-cultural understanding
- For better communication
- For teacher professionalism



Research Questions

- What are the current state of teacher credibility between native and nonnative instructors, particularly ITAs?
- What are the factors that affect teacher credibility of ITAs?
- How to enhance teacher credibility through better communication?



Methods of Research

Nature: action research

- Literature review
- Cultural dialogues
- Survey



Findings and Suggestions

- Differences between native and nonnative instructors
 1. On average, domestic instructors were rated higher than nonnative instructors (McCroskey, 1998)
 2. Low perceptions of ITAs: The Oh No! Syndrome (Yook & Albert, 1999)



Diagnosis of the problems

- Language barriers
 - speech (fluency, pronunciation, accent)
 - grammatical structure (errors, written style)
- Nonverbal differences
 - lack of nonverbal support
 - distracting nonverbal signals
- Different communication styles
 - Collective vs. individual
 - Deductive vs. inductive
 - Explicit vs. implicit



- Pedagogical challenges

- Inexplicit expectations

- Unclear answers

- Classroom skills

- The mechanism

- Lack of homophily in background

- Different cultural communication styles



Strategies to improve teacher credibility for ITAs

1. Making your expectations explicit
 - Clarify your expectations in both oral and written forms
 - Establish instructional alignment between declared goals, activities and assessment
 - Articulate your rationale
 - Provide examples
 - Involve students in decision making
 - Have students interpret the tasks



2. Provide meaningful answers

- Anticipate the difficult aspects of the course
- Paraphrase student questions
- Ask students to rephrase their questions
- Provide answers in student cultural style



3. Initiate positive interactions with your students

- Call your students by their names
- Use self-disclosure and humor
- Enhance non-verbal immediacy
- Provide prompt responses
- Involve marginal students



4. Seeking improvement through data driven reflections

- Collect data through your own survey
- Use course evaluation results
- Seek explanations for the results
- Consult with experienced teachers
- List out things to be improved
- Compare the results



Making sense of the data

- Comparison between an ITA & a Native-dominated sample
 - Clarity of objectives (3.89 vs. 4.12)
 - General understanding (3.50 vs. 4.15)
 - Gestures (4.10 vs. 3.89)
 - Eye contact (4.78 vs. 4.59)
 - Competence (5.78 vs. 6.02)
 - Trustworthiness (6.39 vs. 6.16)
 - Caring (5.04 vs. 4.31)
- Language clarity--perceived competence
- Nonverbal immediacy--perceived teacher caring and character



Conclusions

- Challenges are unavoidable to ITAs due to the language and cultural barriers
- It is possible to establish teacher credibility through effective verbal and nonverbal communication
- Challenges can be used as opportunities for the professional growth of the ITAs