

DID YOU KNOW that the expectations for classroom behavior vary widely around the world? Read on to learn more about the cultural differences surrounding classroom participation and to gain helpful information to better support exchange students and students with diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom. This information can also help you create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

Classroom Participation in the U.S.

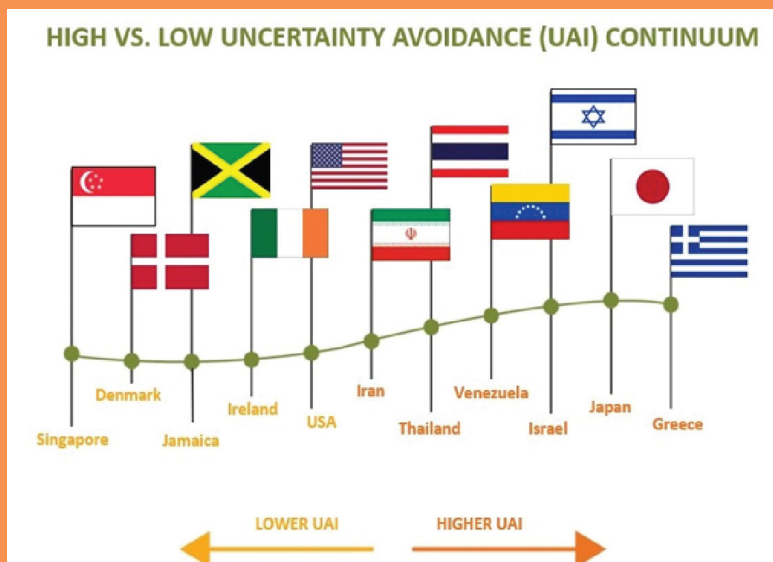
Traditionally, students in the U.S. can be expected to ask and answer questions during class time, and/or make substantive comments during small group discussions. These forms of participation are a way for students to demonstrate comprehension of the material. Some class environments may expect students to sit quietly in their seats, unless directed otherwise by the teacher, and raise their hands when they would like to speak in class. Classroom participation is also viewed as a way of engaging and internalizing the material presented in class. Low levels of performance in class combined with inconsistent homework completion or low assessment scores may be perceived as disinterest in the material and lead to a poor relationship between student/teacher.

How does the world do it differently?

Like the U.S., some places may require students to raise their hand before, or even stand up before speaking. Other places may allow students to speak freely at any time during class, or conversely discourage speaking or asking questions altogether, even if someone has a question. In the Philippines, for example, students who raise their hands are expected to answer their own questions, which often discourages them from speaking up. These observable differences can be explained in part by a country's Uncertainty Avoidance Indicator (UAI).

Uncertainty Avoidance Indicator

How members of a certain culture feel about and respond to unknown situations.



The UAI explains how members of a certain culture feel about and respond to unknown situations. In high UAI countries, like Greece and Japan, people tend to avoid taking risks and unexpected situations because they illicit feelings of anxiety and stress. Students with this cultural orientation prefer predictable situations and may shut down if they are unsure what to do or say, or how their actions might be perceived by others in class.

In low UAI countries, like Singapore and Jamaica, people tend to be more tolerant of what they cannot control. Uncertainty is accepted as part of life and people are generally more relaxed and flexible to new and unknown situations. Students with this cultural orientation may be more likely to speak up and participate in class even if they are unsure of the correct answer.

Addressing These Differences in the Classroom

Due in part to cultural differences, such as UAI, classroom participation and various other group learning methods, such as discussions, are not standard around the world. Exchange students may not realize the importance/role of participation in a U.S. classroom, while others may not feel comfortable speaking up in class, even if directly instructed by the teacher.

The following questions can help you gain insight into the unique cultural backgrounds of students and better understand how these differences may impact their expectations on classroom participation. These questions may also help you begin to formulate strategies to address challenges if/when they arise.



In your home country,

- What is the role of the teacher?
What is the role of the student?
- How do you address the teacher?
- How do you indicate that you'd like to speak in class?
- What teaching methods are used in the classroom (i.e., lectures, group work, discussions, games...etc.)?

Consider offering alternative options for classroom participation that may more closely align with a student's cultural background. For example, accepting the student asking a question privately at the end of class as participation, or coming to a mutual agreement that you will give them a private warning before calling on them in class (i.e., I will walk by your desk and tap the corner before I call on you or having a mutual signal).

It is also important to recognize that this and other culture differences are likely to exist to some extent within your classroom whether you are hosting an exchange student or not. Educating all students about these cultural dimensions and tendencies can help each one become more globally competent and ready to interact with the world. Consider implementing our [Learning Styles Lesson Plan](#) in your classroom to better gauge student learning preferences and gain information on methods and teaching techniques that pair best with each type of style.

Did you find this resource helpful?

Visit our [educator webpage](#) for additional information and resources on engaging exchange students and having intercultural conversations in the classroom.



DID YOU KNOW that reaching out for help in an academic setting is not as widely expected or acceptable as it is in the U.S.? Read on to learn more about the cultural differences surrounding this behavior and to gain helpful information to better support exchange students and students with diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom. This information can also help you create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

Reaching out for Help in the U.S.

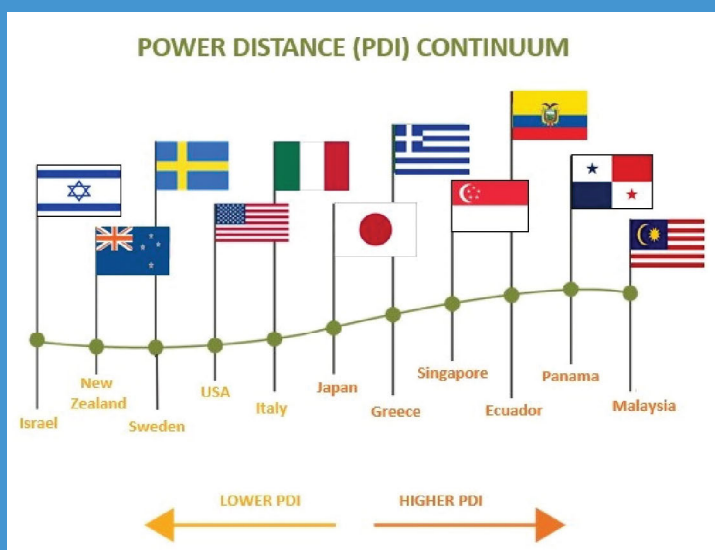
Traditionally, students in the U.S. are typically encouraged to reach out to their teachers directly with any questions about how to complete assignments, topics they don't understand or with questions. Usually, students are also expected to keep their teachers informed if they are, or expect to have, any challenges understanding class materials or meeting due dates. Students who ask for help are generally viewed as being responsible and self-aware. Not reaching out proactively may be perceived as irresponsible or having a lack of initiative and could lead to a poor relationship between student and teacher. Additionally, most U.S. schools have school counselors to help students navigate larger challenges that may impact multiple classes.

How does the world do it differently?

Like the U.S., some places encourage students to be open about their needs and address any issues directly with a teacher or other school employee. In other places, the role of a school counselor is non-existent, and students tend to be discouraged from asking for help with their schoolwork from their teachers. For example, in Malaysia, asking for help can make the student seem incompetent, or even disrespectful to the teacher as they are not usually expected to be accessible to students outside of dedicated classroom time. These observable differences can be explained in part by a country's Power Distance Indicator (PDI), or what AFS refers to as hierarchical vs. egalitarian cultures.

Power Distance Continuum

How members of a certain culture feel about and respond to authority.



Hierarchical countries, like Panama and Malaysia, tend to have strong inequalities of power, that are usually clearly defined and widely accepted by all members of society. Students with this cultural orientation are likely to view their teachers as authority figures and expect any student relationship to be very formal. Students are typically viewed as a recipient of information, rather than an active participant in their learning. They are unlikely to ask for help or question a teacher out of respect for their position and may turn to other students for help instead.

Conversely, egalitarian cultures, like Sweden and New Zealand, tend to view all members of society as having equal rights and privileges, and challenging authority is widely accepted. Students with this cultural orientation may readily interact with their teachers and expect an equal relationship. They are typically more comfortable vocalizing their opinions and may also be more willing to ask for help when needed.

Addressing These Differences in the Classroom

Due in part to cultural differences, such as PDI, reaching out for help from a teacher, or perhaps reaching out at all, is not standard around the world. Exchange students may not realize that teachers are available and expected to provide support to students. And even if they do, they may not feel comfortable coming to them for fear of being stigmatized, too informal, and seemingly confrontational.

The following questions can help you gain insight into the unique cultural backgrounds of students and better understand how these differences may impact their willingness to reach out if needed. These questions may also help you begin to formulate strategies to address challenges if/when they arise.



In your home country,

- What should the relationship between a teacher and a student look like?
- What do you do when you do not understand something in school?
- Who do you go to for assistance?
- What is the role of a guidance counselor?

Consider offering students alternative options for assistance that allow them to 'save face', or in other words encourage them to retain respect and feel less self-conscious. For example, you may have students work in pairs to give and get feedback on their work, or you may provide an anonymous questions box in your classroom. It may also be helpful to use less impactful words like assistance instead of help, or support person rather than counselor.

Of course, it's also important to recognize that this and other culture differences are likely to exist to some extent within your classroom whether you are hosting an exchange student or not. Educating all students about these cultural dimensions and communication styles can help each one become more globally competent and ready to interact with the world. Consider implementing our [Active Listening Lesson Plan](#) and [Non-Verbal Communication Lesson Plan](#) in your classroom to help students find common ground, recognize the power of non-verbal cues, and develop empathy for others.

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DID YOU KNOW that schools around the world have different standards when it comes to their students arriving at school and submitting assignments on time? Read on to learn more about the cultural differences surrounding attendance and homework and to gain helpful information to better support exchange students and students with diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom. This information can also help you create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

Attendance and Homework in the U.S.

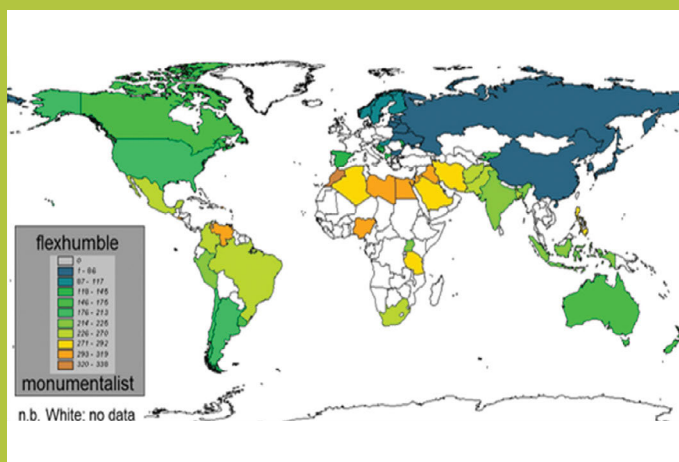
Traditionally, school starts at a set time in the U.S., and students are expected to be in their first class, prepared and ready to learn by the time the first bell rings. Students who are late, may be penalized for being tardy but can attend classes once they arrive. Some degree of homework may be assigned regularly and is expected to be completed by the date specified by the teacher or the following day. Students who arrive and submit homework and other assignments on time are generally viewed as being responsible and good students. Conversely, students who are often tardy or do not complete their assignments by the due date (or at all), may be perceived as irresponsible, lazy or apathetic students.

How does the world do it differently?

Like the U.S., most places do have a set start time for school. However, unlike the U.S., some places will not allow students to attend classes if they are late, and teachers may even lock the classroom door to prohibit students from entering. In other places, when homework is assigned, it is not expected to be turned in on a specific due date, but rather by the end of the school semester/year. Yet still, in countries like Finland for example, homework is never assigned (and even banned by the government). One way of looking at these cultural attitudes to time is in terms of Time Orientation.

Time Orientation

How members of a certain culture value time and perceive goals.



Time Orientation refers to the extent to which members of society adopt a long- or short-term outlook on life and affects how different cultures value time. Long-term orientation countries tend to be future-oriented, encouraging people to invest and conserve resources. Students from this time orientation likely value persistence and the “big picture”, and as such be more inclined to follow attendance and homework standards as they see these behaviors benefiting them in the future.

In contrast, short-term orientation countries tend to be more focused on the present, and typically focus on achieving quick results rather than long-term benefits. They are likely to value opportunities for immediate gratification and value forming relationships for the individual gains they can provide. Students from this time orientation may be perceived as short-sighted and may be less inclined to achieve good attendance or turn in their assignments in a timely manner due to prioritizing other needs or social obligations.

Addressing These Differences in the Classroom

Due in part to cultural differences, attending school and completing required homework and assignments on time is not necessarily standard practice around the world. Exchange students may struggle to arrive on time if, for example, they are used to a later start to the school day. They may also not understand the importance of due dates in the U.S. school system or how turning things in late might negatively impact their grade or access to opportunities.

The following questions can help you gain insight into the unique cultural backgrounds of students and better understand how these differences may impact their views and understanding of attendance, homework, and due dates. These questions may also help you begin to formulate strategies to address challenges if/when they arise.



In your home country,

- What time does school start?
- What happens if you are late?
- How often do teachers assign homework?
- How strict are the due dates for homework and other classroom assignments?
- What happens if you turn in homework assignments late? Or do not complete it at all?

Consider explaining the importance of arriving to class on time and describing the school handbook consequences for late arrivals. It may also help to review your individual class' late work policy and philosophy with the student. And for long term or extended projects, consider sitting down with the student to help them create a personalized timeline complete with deadlines for completing each required element. It may also be helpful to understand if your student's time orientation pre-disposes them to prefer doing one thing at a time (monochronic) or multitasking and having many assignments in the works at once (polychronic).

Whether you are hosting an exchange student in your classroom or not, it is important to recognize that this and other culture differences are likely to exist to some extent within your classroom. Consider implementing our [Where do you Stand Lesson Plan](#) in your classroom to help all students gain experience with this topic and become more globally competent and ready to interact with the world.

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DID YOU KNOW that perceptions around information sharing differ around the world? Read on to learn more about the cultural differences surrounding this behavior and to gain helpful information to better support exchange students and students with diverse cultural backgrounds in the classroom. This information can also help you create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

Information Sharing in the U.S.

Traditionally, information sharing in the U.S. occurs under very specific circumstances. Typically, it is seen in a workplace environment between colleagues, but not as often between classmates. In a classroom setting, students are often viewed as competing with one another and unlikely to share information with each other for this reason. In general, sharing information with each other, unless explicitly directed by the teacher, is considered cheating/plagiarizing and can be grounds for disciplinary action such as re-doing the assignment, receiving a failing grade on the assignment, phone calls home or more severe if this is a repeated behavior.

How does the world do it differently?

Like the U.S., some places consider students sharing information with other students inside or outside of the classroom as cheating. In these places, students who share information may be perceived to be dishonest, and/or having a lack of initiative to complete the work on their own merit. Conversely, in other places, information sharing can be interpreted as a societal responsibility and, as such, highly encouraged. In these places, students may expect help and support from other students in the form of providing them information. In this case, sharing information is likely viewed as a common courtesy rather than a form of wrongdoing. These differences in perception can in part be explained by a country's cultural orientation towards Individualism or Collectivism.

Individualistic vs. Collectivist

How members of a certain culture feel about sharing information.



Members of Individualistic (Me) societies, like the United States or Australia, tend to make decisions independently and be most concerned about themselves and close family members. Students from this orientation value competition and are less likely to share information with others outside of their circle. They may also be less likely to cheat or plagiarize in school.

In contrast, Collectivist (We) societies, like Pakistan or Indonesia, tend to value collaboration and strong bonds between members. They are more likely to think of themselves as a part of a larger unit and take actions that benefit the whole group. Students from this orientation may view information sharing as borrowing rather than stealing/cheating. They may also view this behavior as a social responsibility to help/receive help from their social circle and resources.

Addressing These Differences in the Classroom

Due in part to cultural differences, perceptions around information sharing, and specifically what constitutes cheating, is not necessarily standard practice around the world. Exchange students who come from a 'We' orientation may struggle to reconcile this mindset with the expectation laid out in a traditional U.S. classroom. They may view information sharing as a form of positive collaboration among students and be less likely to recognize if/when they have done something wrong.

The following questions can help you gain insight into the unique cultural backgrounds of students and better understand how these differences may impact their views and understanding around information sharing. These questions may also help you begin to formulate strategies to address challenges if they arise.



In your home country,

- What factors do you consider when making a decision? (How it will impact you or impact the larger group?)
- What would you do if you are struggling in class? If you noticed a classmate struggling?
- What behaviors constitute cheating in school? What does cheating look like?
- What are the consequences for cheating in class?

Consider offering students the benefit of the doubt while you explore if their actions are related to a cultural aspect, the personality of the student, or the situation they were placed in. The Culture, Person, Situation Model is a great way to slow your thinking and encourage you to consider multiple perspectives on a behavior so that you can respond appropriately. Applying this model to the example of cheating, a student might engage in this behavior because they view information sharing as collaboration (cultural), they are naturally helpful (personality), or they were very stressed out about their grades (situation).

It is also important to recognize that this and other culture differences are likely to exist to some extent within your classroom whether you are hosting an exchange student or not. Educating all students about these cultural dimensions and preferences can help each one to become more globally competent and ready to interact with the world. Try implementing our [DIVE Lesson Plan](#) in your classroom, to provide students with a tool to go below the surface and take a closer look before making judgments about what they see, hear, and experience in their everyday interactions with others.

Did you find this resource helpful?

Visit our [educator webpage](#) for additional information and resources on engaging exchange students and having intercultural conversations in the classroom.



DID YOU KNOW that the way people act and expect others to act in group settings varies around the world? Read on to learn more about how one's approach to conflict can impact group dynamics in the classroom. Also, learn how this insight can be used to help better support exchange students and create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

Group work in the U.S.

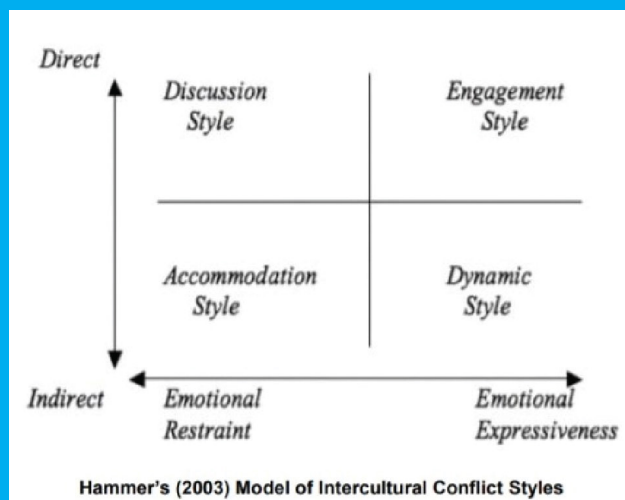
In the U.S., it is common for teachers to assign homework or projects with an expectation that students work together to effectively complete the assignment. Students may even be seated in table groups specially designed to facilitate collaborative work. In general, when conflict or disagreements arise students are encouraged to be direct and discuss their concerns aloud. They may also be expected to do so in a calm manner and refrain from using a loud tone of voice or too much emotion. A student who shows more emotion during conflict could be perceived as dramatic or overreacting.

How does the world do it differently?

In some places around the world, group work may be less common or non-existent. Classroom seating may be positioned in rows facing the front of the room and students are expected to complete their assignments on their own without help or input from classmates. Although this may also happen in the U.S., students who look to collaborate with others may be perceived as incapable of completing assignments on their own merit and may even be portrayed as lazy or cheating. In cultures where indirect communication styles are generally preferred, students may be expected to approach conflict with the teacher or other students by hinting at an issue or using a third party. Depending on an individual's tendency, this could be accomplished with or without outward expressions of emotion.

Intercultural Conflict Styles Inventory

Measures a culture's tendency to approach conflict along two different continua: **Direct vs. Indirect** and emotionally **Expressive vs. Restrained**



These observable differences can be explained in part by the Intercultural Conflict Styles Inventory (ICS) which measures a culture's tendency to approach conflict along two different continuums: Direct vs. Indirect approach to conflict, and Emotionally Expressive vs. Emotionally Restrained, or the extent to which one prefers dealing with conflicts by expressing or by restraining emotion. Together, these continuums create four conflict styles: including Discussion, Engagement, Accommodation, and Dynamic (See Image).

Addressing These Differences in the Classroom

The following questions can help you gain insight into the unique cultural backgrounds of students and better understand how their approach to conflict may impact their role in any group work you may assign.



In your home country,

- Is it common for teachers to assign group projects?
- If you were upset with or disagreed with a classmate, what would you do? A teacher?
- When you feel angry or sad how do you process those emotions?
- Do you often speak with your hands, or in a loud tone of voice?

It is important to note that different cultures, but also individuals from the same culture, may approach conflict in distinct ways. Each individual student may have a preferred conflict style which will likely influence their approach to any potential conflict in a group setting, but they may also switch between styles based on the context.

Consider implementing our [Conflict Styles Lesson Plan](#), outlining an opportunity for learning and a chance to better gauge your students' preferences. This activity will help students explore the advantages and disadvantages of using each conflict style in different types of situations. It may also help to consult our [Conflict Styles for AFS and Friends Handout](#) for more background on both models.

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DID YOU KNOW that the way people seek to achieve and prioritize their goals varies around the world? Read on to learn more about one how one's approach to achieving their goals may be impacted by cultural differences and learn how this insight can be used to help better support exchange students and create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

Student Socialization in the U.S.

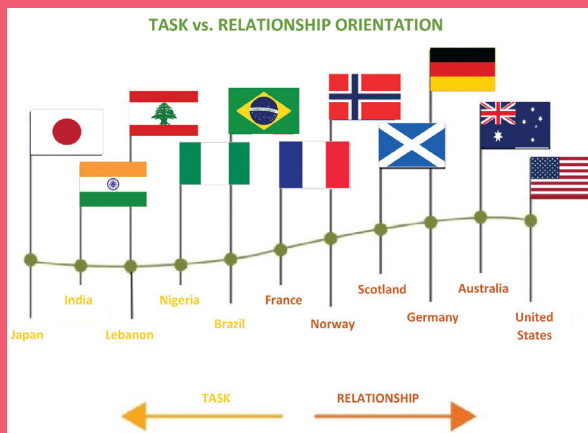
In the U.S., typically students are expected to be focused and paying attention during class activities. Depending on the method of instruction, they may be seen actively engaged with their peers, however they are expected to remain on topic and not get sidetracked by personal conversations. Homework and other assignments are typically given a due date or deadline where careful planning and efficiency are rewarded. Behaviors that are deemed disruptive to class or student's productivity such as texting, passing notes, talking aloud, procrastination, or not completing the task altogether may result in personal conversations to inspire changes in behavior or natural consequences.

How does the world do it differently?

In other places, students may also be expected to remain focused during class. However, unlike in the U.S., this behavior is seen more of a sign of respect and acknowledgement of the teacher-student hierarchical relationship rather than a sign of one's motivation to complete the assigned tasks or as interest in the content area. Students often see their role in relationship to others and may feel that it is not their place to answer questions in class due to the teacher's perceived higher status. For this same reason, students may also be expected to formally greet their teachers and each other before class. In group situations, it is common for members to spend a good portion of work time getting to know each other and/or catching up. Engaging in behaviors that ignore social aspects of a situation, such as prioritizing efficiency or making a decision on your own without the group's consent are often considered risky and even unfriendly or rude.

Task vs. Relationship Orientation

Describes a person or culture's tendency to prioritize either individual accomplishment and responsibility, or maintaining personal connections with others.



These observable differences can be explained in part by a culture's tendency to be either task- or relationship-oriented. In task-oriented cultures, like the U.S., the primary means of achieving one's goals at school or in the workplace is through skillfully managing tasks and time. A successful person is one who is able to work independently and efficiently to get the job done. The ability to think on one's feet is typically a valued trait, while needing too much assistance or guidance from others to complete a task is often perceived negatively.

In relationship-oriented cultures, like most of Latin America and Asia, goals are accomplished via building and maintaining positive relationships with others. In these cultures, the group(s) to which a person belongs is a crucial part of an individual's identity. A successful person is one who prioritizes the harmony of the group over their individual needs. Cooperation and consensus-based decision making are typically seen as positive traits, whereas individual decisions or behaviors, especially those that do not account for social aspects of a situation are often perceived as reckless or impulsive.

Addressing These Differences in the Classroom

The following questions can help you gain insight into the unique cultural backgrounds of students and better understand how their tendencies toward tasks and/or relationships may impact their behaviors in class.



In your home country,

- In a group setting, is it common to put more emphasis on getting the task accomplished or getting to know the other members of the group?
- How common is it for individuals to be encouraged to make decisions on their own without input from others?
- How important is it to consider social aspects of a situation when making a decision?

It is important to note that different cultures, but also individuals from the same culture, may vary in their tendency to be task- or relationship-oriented. Consider implementing our [I Am... Lesson Plan](#) to better gauge all your students' tendencies on this topic. Educating all students about these tendencies can help each one become more globally competent and be ready to interact with their classmates and the world more effectively.

You may also consider directing students to complete this [cultural profile HERE](#). Though aimed at people in the workplace, the tool is an opportunity for self-reflection and provides helpful insight as to where an individual stands as compared to their home country's general cultural tendencies on a variety of topics.

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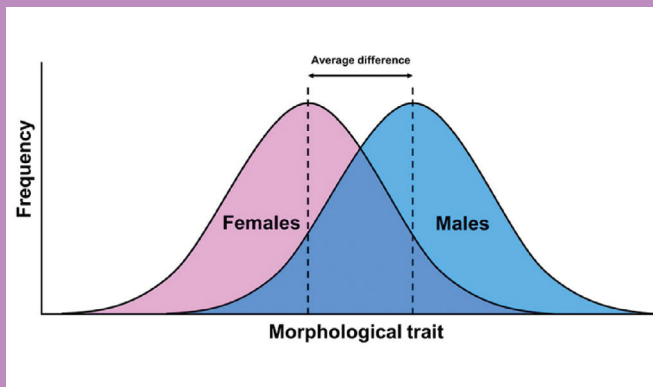
DID YOU KNOW that the way students choose their friend groups can often be influenced by stereotypes and generalizations? Read on to learn more about this behavior may be impacted by cultural differences and learn how this insight can be used to create valuable intercultural learning opportunities for all students on this topic.

How do students choose their friend groups?

In general, students from around the world tend to make friends with classmates that they see most often on a day-to-day basis. This could mean that they have the same class schedule or participate in similar extracurricular activities and with whom they typically share the same values and beliefs. This tendency to group up with “one’s own” so to speak is sometimes derived from a will to feel a sense of belonging, while other times it can stem from certain stereotypes or generalizations that students hold about other groups of people.

For example, a student who self-identifies as “nerdy” in school, may choose not to be friends with classmates who are considered popular, if there is a belief that this group is not as intellectual. Similarly, in the context of student exchange, U.S. students may not feel comfortable interacting with a classmate from Russia for example if there is a belief that people from this country are not very friendly.

Stereotypes + Generalizations



Stereotypes assume all members of a group have the same characteristics.

Generalizations categorize members of a group as having similar characteristics.

What are Stereotypes and Generalizations?

So, what are Stereotypes and Generalizations? Stereotypes involve categorizing all members of a group as having the same characteristics. For example, “All people from Country Y are good students”. They can be either positive or negative and are typically inflexible and resistant to new information. Because of this, they do not account for individual differences and often lead to prejudice and intentional or unintentional bias or discrimination.

Generalizations involve categorizing members of the same group as having similar characteristics. For example, “People from Country X tend to have an indirect style of communication.” Generalizations are a type of hypothesis, or guess, of what we expect to encounter when we interact with a certain culture. Because they are flexible and allow for the incorporation of new information, they are inclusive of individual differences. This is important because the use of generalizations allows for a member of a group or culture to deviate from the group as a whole but still be considered part of the norm for a given society. (See image for an example).

[Adaptation](#)

Addressing these Beliefs in the Classroom

The following questions can help you gain insight into the beliefs students hold about friendship from their home culture and what beliefs they may have about others that could get in the way of making friends with their U.S. classmates.



In your home country,

- What is the role of a friend?
- What qualities do you look for in others when trying to make friends?
- What stereotypes have you heard about American students that may help or hurt the process of making friends here? And about your home country?
- How or where do you usually go about making friends?

Implementing our [What do you Know of What You Heard Lesson Plan](#) can also help you gain insight into students' beliefs and better understand how these may impact their behaviors at school and in the classroom. This activity also serves to open a dialogue on these topics to help students think critically and be more mindful of these tendencies' impact on others. You may also consider reviewing our [Stereotypes and Generalizations for AFS and Friends Handout](#) for more information on these topics or to use as a supplemental resource to your lessons.

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