

Internal (Hidden) Cultural Characteristics

To better understand the cultural filter that may affect children's behavior, the following is a sample of some general, key cultural factors:

Passive/Active Movement and Talking

- In some classrooms, talking or moving about the classroom is usually teacher-directed.

Implications for the Classroom:

How are children regarded who are more active and talkative?

Verbal versus Non-Verbal Communication

- Verbosity is interpreted by some cultures as friendly, outgoing or indicating a high level of language development, and by other cultures as rude.

Implications for the Classroom:

If a child smiles or nods, do we assume he/she understands?

Proximity and Touching

- Some cultures value privacy and separate rooms vs. the importance of extended family and sharing living space.
- In some cultures, demonstrative and informal behavior is common between children and adults.

Implications for the Classroom:

What is the "zone of comfort" for interactions? (distant vs. pushy)

Is there a small, close work space or a wide-open work area?

Do the children sit close together or spread out?

Eye Contact

- Some cultures show respect by not looking persons of authority in the eye.

Implications for the Classroom:

Is certain behavior interpreted as disrespectful?

Could children be missing directions?

Time

- There are different perceptions of the concept of time: being on time or wasting time
- Time runs vs. time walks
- Relationships vs. punctuality

Implications for the Classroom:

Are students late to school? Do they hand in assignments on time?

Are tests based on speed?

Gender

- Cultures have different expectations of how boys and girls should behave and what is expected of them.

Implications for the Classroom:

Is there a difference in the student's performance if the assessor is male or female?

Cooperation versus Competition

- Some classrooms typically value competition and "doing better than others".
- Winners and losers
- Working alone vs. cheating

Implications for the Classroom:

What does "doing your best" mean?

Family versus Individual Orientation

- Some cultures place more value on the family than on individual achievement.

Implications for the Classroom:

Is family pride a concern if the student fails or succeeds?

Is there pressure to perform?

Fate versus Individual Responsibility

- Some cultures believe in individual responsibility, while others feel that control lies outside of themselves (God, fate, natural forces).
- "We missed the bus" vs. "The bus left us".

Implications for the Classroom:

How do we perceive students who don't accept responsibility for their actions according to our expectations?

Explanation for poor test preparation or performance?