View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk

brought to you by CORE

provided by UNL | Libraries

University of Nebraska - Lincoln
DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education

1997

Creating a Culturally Relevant Environment for the African American Learner in the Foreign Language Classroom

Aleidine Kramer Moeller
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, amoeller2@unl.edu

Mary Ashcraft
Shaker Heights High School (OH)

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub

Moeller, Aleidine Kramer and Ashcraft, Mary, "Creating a Culturally Relevant Environment for the African American Learner in the Foreign Language Classroom" (1997). *Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education*. 176.
http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/teachlearnfacpub/176

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications: Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Published in Building Community through Language Learning: Selected Papers from the 1997 Central States Conference, eds. Robert Di Donato, Gale K. Crouse, and Dena Bachman (Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company), pp. 59–76.
Copyright © 1997 Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

4

Creating a Culturally Relevant Environment for the African American Learner in the Foreign Language Classroom

Aleidine J. Moeller
University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Mary Ashcraft
Shaker Heights High School (OH)

Introduction

Several developments have transformed the way the foreign language classroom looks, the role the teacher and the learner assume, and the approaches and strategies we use to teach and learn second languages. These changes stem from fundamental gains in the knowledge base of how second languages are acquired and learned as well as experimental inquiry into a variety of educational innovations such as cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, and the integration of technology into the classroom. Qualitative, quantitative, and action research have provided the foreign language profession evidence upon which to make informed decisions to build a classroom environment designed to optimize learning for all students. One area that requires further research and inquiry is how teachers can meet the challenge of optimizing learning for students of color. Hancock (1994) points out that few African American students enroll in and continue foreign language study compared to students from other cultural groups. He observes that "African American students tend

not to achieve as well as other students, even when they do enroll in such study" (p. 9). Brigman and Jacobs (1981) concur that those minority students who do study foreign languages at the college level "are not performing as well" (p. 376).

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, one of every four Americans is a person of color. Congruent with this is the report by the Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, which states that by the turn of the century, one of every three persons will be of color (1990). Nearly half of the nation's students will be of color by 2020 (Allen and Turner 1990). The U.S. Census indicates that population growth between 1980 and 1990 has increased most significantly among Asians (107.8 percent), followed by Hispanics (53.6 percent). Native American population has increased 37.9 percent, followed by the African American (13.3 percent) and white (6.0 percent) populations. In California, the "minority majority," which Hodgkinson predicted in 1983, has become a reality. Yet despite a rise in the increase of minority students in schools, available data predict a significant decline in the number of African American teachers within the public schools (Education Commission of the States 1989; Gay 1989; National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education 1988). By the year 2000, these teachers will drop to barely 5 percent of all teachers.

As the ethnic texture of our country becomes richer, the issues related to the teaching of this diverse population need to be further addressed. The American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL 1993), the American Association of Teachers of French (AATF 1989), the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP 1990), and the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG 1993) have acknowledged the need for foreign language teachers to be well prepared to meet the demands and challenges of what Byrnes (1992: vii) terms "a multicultural world in transition." A natural link would seem to exist between foreign language teaching and multicultural studies given the "enormous potential for cultural cross-pollination and cooperative efforts . . . here excellent opportunities exist for comparing the culture of the United States to a broad spectrum of both European and non-European cultures" (Temu 1992: 31). Yet foreign language programs have been slow in changing and adapting, mainly catering to one particular culture (Henderson 1992; Otto 1992). Henderson (1992) states, "I am struck by our arrogance and cultural chauvanism" (p. 110). What messages are minority students receiving in the foreign language classroom?

What Is a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

A renewed interest has emerged in examining ways to improve the academic performance of students who are culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse. Mohatt and Erickson (1981) revealed that the teachers who were

most effective in communicating with native American students used an interactional style they describe as "culturally congruent." These teachers altered their speech patterns, communication styles, and participation structures to resemble more closely those of the students' own culture. Au and Jordan (1981) worked with native Hawaiian students to improve their reading performance through a strategy they term "cultural appropriateness." The students worked in small groups underscoring reading comprehension rather than word decoding. The students were encouraged to discuss the readings in a style similar to their home communication style, an overlapping interactional style that resembled what is known in native Hawaiian culture as "talk story." Such attempts to make schools more accessible to culturally diverse learners has not gone without its critics. Villegas (1988) argues that failure in school among students of color is a result of societal conflict and a struggle for power. This view is supported by critical theorists such as Giroux (1983) and McLaren (1989).

African American scholars (Hale-Benson 1986; Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines 1988) have investigated specific cultural strengths of African American students and the ways that teachers can enhance academic and social achievement in the classroom. Irvine (1990) terms what happens between African American students and their teachers as a lack of "cultural synchronization." She further suggests that this lack of cultural synchronization and responsiveness relates to other factors that inhibit African American students' school achievement, including the "prescriptive ideologies and prescriptive structures that are premised on normative belief systems" (p. 4).

The notion of "culturally relevant teaching" integrates "student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture" (Ladson-Billings 1994: 17). Ladson-Billings identifies these negative effects as a result of a) not seeing one's history, culture, or background represented in the textbook or curriculum; b) the staffing pattern in the schools (teachers and administrators are white and janitors and cafeteria workers are black); and c) the tracking of African American students into the lowest-level classes.

Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy "that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes. These cultural referents are not merely vehicles for bridging or explaining, or the dominant culture; they are aspects of the curriculum in their own right" (Ladson-Billings 1994: 18). Ladson-Billings provides an example of a culturally relevant teaching style in a lesson about the U.S. Constitution. A discussion of the bylaws and articles of incorporation used to organize a local church or African American civic association would allow students to learn the significance of such documents in forming institutions and shaping ideals, while they also learn that their own people are institution builders. Connecting the concepts of bylaws and articles of incorporation between these two cultures allows the students to bridge the

two cultures and ultimately reach academic and cultural success (Ladson-Billings 1994: 18).

Lessons from Multicultural Education

A goal of multicultural curriculum and instruction is to create a climate in which students accept themselves and others as having worth (Bermingham et al.: 1986). To make this possible, the students must be the focus of the curriculum, one in which the curriculum is built from the students' background and experiences. Student experiences become meshed with the content, or subject matter (Payne 1983), thus ensuring that the curriculum would be relevant to the students, be built on student learning styles, and be adapted to the students' skill levels (Grant and Secada 1990).

Teachers should be able to make educational objectives, curriculum content, and learning activities meaningful to the experiential backgrounds and frames of references of the students in the classroom. Gay (1983) terms such an approach "cultural context teaching" (p. 81). Davidman and Davidman (1988) believe that to become reality, the whole school environment must reflect a commitment to a multicultural perspective. Teachers need to consider the total curriculum for what is omitted, for this is as important as what is included (Wilson 1984). A curriculum organized around the perspectives of different cultural groups and issues of race, class, gender, and language is strongly oriented to equality of educational opportunity (Davidman and Davidman 1988), and a climate of cognitive and affective support (Gooden and Ligons 1984) allows all learners the opportunity to succeed.

Successful Teachers of African American Students

According to Grant and Secada (1990), little reliable literature exists in the preparation of teachers for diversity, and almost nothing on teacher preparation specifically for African American students (Ladson-Billings 1994). It is for this reason that Ladson-Billings conducted a three-year study with eight teachers who had been identified as successful teachers of African American students. She conducted interviews, classroom observations (three times a week for two years), audiotaped and videotaped classes, and lastly worked with the teachers as a research collabortive to view segments of one another's videotapes. Three broad propositions emerged from her research: 1) the conceptions of self and others held by culturally relevant teachers, 2) the manner in which social relations are structured by culturally relevant teachers, and 3) the conceptions of knowledge held by culturally relevant teachers. In the area of self and others, Ladson-Billings noted that teachers:

- believed that all the students were capable of academic success
- saw their pedagogy as art—unpredictable, always in the state of becoming
- saw teaching as a way of giving back to the community
- believed in a Freirean notion of "teaching as mining" (Freire 1974: 76) or pulling knowledge out
- cajoled, nagged, pestered, and bribed the students to work at high intellectual levels
- used the community as the basis of their curricuum (searched county historic archives, interviewed long-term residents, constructed and administered surveys and a questionnaire, and listened to guest speakers to get a sense of the historical development of their community.

Ladson-Billings noted that absent from the teachers' discourse was the "language of lacking." Students were never referred to as being from a single-parent household, being on AFDC, or needing psychological evaluation. Instead, teachers talked about their own shortcomings and limitations and ways they needed to change to ensure student success.

In the area of building social interactions in their classrooms, Ladson-Billings noted that culturally relevant teachers

- maintain fluid student-teacher relationships
- demonstrate a connectedness with all students
- develop a community of learners
- encourage students to learn collaboratively and be responsible for one another

Teacher-student relationships were described as equitable and reciprocal. Students were given opportunities to act as teachers. Competitive, individual achievement was replaced with collaborative learning (cooperative learning, group work, project teaching).

The conceptions of knowledge held by these eight culturally relevant teachers were seen as follows:

- knowledge is not static; it is shared, recycled, and constructed
- knowledge must be viewed critically
- teachers must be passionate about knowledge and learning
- teachers must scaffold, or build bridges, to facilitate learning
- assessment must be multifaceted, incorporating multiple forms of excellence

The teachers described knowledge as being about doing. Students listened and learned from one another as well as the teacher.

Teaching and Learning Research on African American Learners

The acquisition of academic skills should be facilitated by embedding tasks in a context that is experientially familiar or culturally compatible. In a study of the use of a clustering strategy in free recall, Franklin (1979) found that black and white adolescents were more likely to use clustering when the words to be remembered were pertinent to the social experiences of their own group. Jones (1979) reported noticeable success in teaching reading to black children when the children were allowed to construct their own personal reading texts based on their own everyday experiences. The work of Rychlak (1975) and his associates (Rychlak, Hewitt, and Hewitt 1973) found that black and working-class students performed better on material that they liked than on material they disliked, suggesting their responsiveness to the affective assessment of the material to be learned. These studies suggest the desirability of using both familiar task contexts and materials that are congruent with the child's cultural frame of reference.

Dixon (1976) provides a model of knowledge acquisition that incorporates this construct of the African worldview. In terms of this model, phenomena are known in African American culture through the interaction or synthesis of affect and symbolic imagery. Dixon defines affect as "the feeling (intuitive) self engaged in experiencing phenomena holistically" (p. 20). Affect conveys the orientation among African Americans to personalize phenomena in their effort to understand them (Dixon 1976). This dimension of the construct, then, suggests the importance of "nonrational" (e.g., personal-social and spiritual) components of knowledge acquisition and problem-solving (Nichols 1986). Dixon states that symbolic imagery is the use of phenomena, such as words, metaphors, proverbs, gestures, rhythms, dance, music, song, and so forth to construct and express knowledge, conveying multiple meanings. This dimension of the construct is conceptual and expressive in thrust and depicts knowing as a dynamic, rational, and creative process. Affect-symbolic image-ry, then, suggests a two-dimensional construct of knowledge acquisition. The affect dimension places emphasis on personal-social and spiritual-intuitive (nonrational) characteristics of knowledge acquisition.

Researchers (Dixon 1976; Hale 1982; Nichols 1986) suggest that an intuitive analysis and synthesis factor characterize the African American knowledge-acquisition style. For example, Hale (1982) emphasizes the tendency in African Americans to surmise or intuit properties of physical phenomena such as space, number, and time, instead of "aiming for complete accuracy" in assessing these properties. Intuition, by definition, suggests a nonanalytical (nonrational) process. Thus the intuitive analysis and synthesis factor can be interpreted as a correlate of the affect dimension of the construct.

Studies have documented the importance of an affective factor as characteristic of African American cultural style (Cooper 1981; Hale 1982; Nichols

1986; Shade 1982; 1984). For example, the learning-style literature highlights a perceptual preference and vigilance for social cues over object cues in African Americans (Shade: 1982; 1984). Research also supports the facilitating effect of affective stimuli on learning in African Americans (Rychlak, Hewitt, and Hewitt 1973; Shade 1982) and confirmed that the communication style of African Americans depicts an interpersonal (holistic) emphasis (Cooper 1981; Smitherman 1977). For example, Cooper (1981) observed in her research that African American students manifesting a holistic style tended to use the first-person subject "I" and "we" significantly more than third-person subjects, such as "the writer" "the speaker," and so on. They also use the expression "I feel" significantly more than "I think" in written composition. The strong interpersonal orientation suggested by this research is consistent with the holistic thrust of the affect-symbolic-imagery-sythesis-construct.

Boykin (1978; 1979; Boykin and Allen 1988) has empirically documented the facilitating effect of stimulus variety and change on learning in African American students. Bell and McGraw-Burrell (1988) replicated Boykin's research on a larger African American sample and obtained similar results, which further supported the stimulus-response variety/change factor. Relative to the same factor, research involving African American and European American youths indicated that African Americans were significantly more perceptive of rhythmic patterns and minute body movements than were European Americans (Shade 1984).

Learning Styles

Boykin (1983) stated that research gives support to the position that educational modifications, congruent with black learning styles, have had positive results. Slavin (1977) and Slavin and Oickle (1981) found a greater increase in black students' academic performance when cooperative learning groups were used. Similarly, Treadwell (1975) found group academic counseling to be more effective than individual counseling with black students. When teachers used instructional techniques that involved more stimulus variety; greater verve; and rhythmic, verbal interactions, the black students performed better than they did with traditional techniques (Boykin 1982; Piestrup 1973; Rohwer and Harris 1975). Hale-Benson (1986) stressed peer-tutoring and small-group learning. Often this is more effective than the one-to-one teacher-student instruction that is commonly prescribed by educators for low achievers.

Holliday (1985) emphasized the teacher-student interactions as critical to a child's learning. She recommended that observations and consultation about teacher-student interactions be part of the basic assessment procedure for students with learning problems, since social interactions are a crucial part of the learning experience for African American teachers and students.

As Cole and Scribner (1974) point out, a child's method of perception, memorization, and thinking are inseparably bound to the patterns of activity, communication, and social relations of the culture in which the individual is socialized.

Strategies and Approaches Relevant for All Learners

It must be clarified and emphasized that many of the recommended practices are effective for all children, and not just for African American children. Anderson (1988) stated that many other groups of color display learning behaviors similar to the styles described for African Americans. Goodlad and Oakes (1988) found that white students benefited equally from recommendations made in response to black students' learning styles.

Researchers have indicated (Keisler and Stern 1977; Payne 1984; Ogbu 1978; Smith 1988) that teachers hold lower expectations for African American students. For example, the Smith study revealed that African American males (both upper middle class and lower class) receive lower ratings on measures of teacher expectation than do white sudents in general. Teachers exhibit such lowered expectations, both overtly and covertly, by being less interested in these students, being more critical of them, praising them less often, providing less and nonspecific feedback, and demonstrating less acceptance of and patience toward them (Ford 1992).

Successful Interventions and Strategies

During the past two decades or so, educators have developed and/or refined instructional strategies. Many educators believe they provide us with the capacity to successfully transform developing comprehension and thinking skills of students whose performance currently is unsatisfactory in reading, history, mathematics, science and other subjects (Block 1993; Idol and Jones 1991; Means, Chelemer, and Knapp 1991; Pearson 1985). Some of the most prominent of these instructional strategies include use of graphic organizers, semantic webbing and mapping, inferencing and prediction techniques, and summarization guidelines (Block 1993; Levine and Sherk 1989).

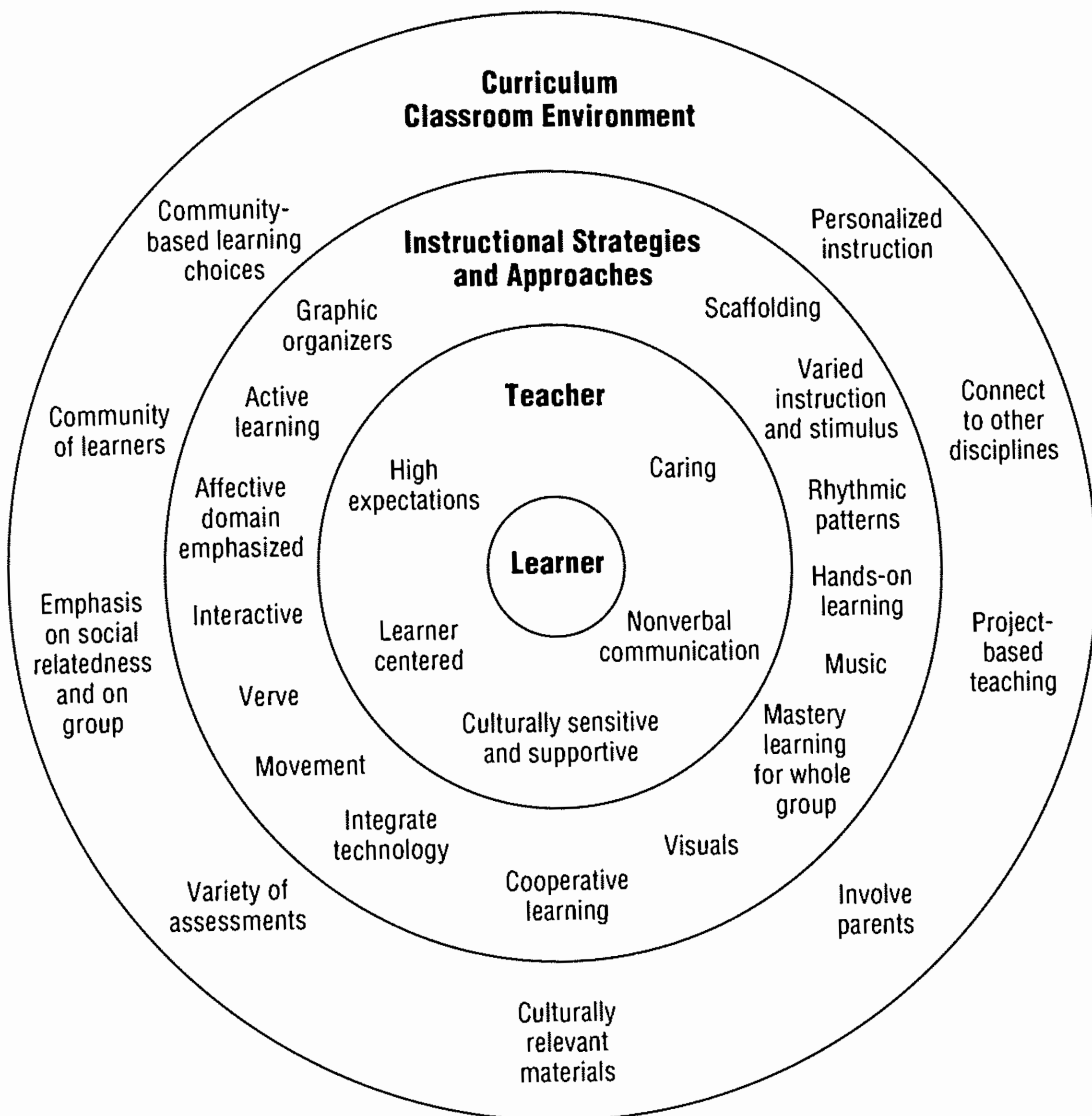
Impressive gains have been noted in the performance of students, particularly those who otherwise would be low achievers or at risk of dropping out of school (Block 1993; Cooper and Levine 1991; Levine and LeZotte 1990; 1994; Levine and Sherk 1989; Means, Chelemer, and Knapp 1991).

Role of Technology in the Diverse Classroom

One good example of a technology-based approach, designed specifically to help students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become independent thinkers and learners, is the "anchored instruction" approach being developed by the Cognition and Technology Group (CTG) (1990). Anchored

instruction aims to create "problem-solving environments" based on the use of videodisc and computer technologies that provide a framework for sustained exploration of "authentic" tasks (p. 2). CTG researchers conclude that students from varied backgrounds participated actively in the program and became more proficient at complex problem-solving. Several analysts have examined possibilities for using computer and other modern technologies to improve thinking skills and comprehension among students from low-income and/or minority families (DeVillar and Faltis 1991; Liao 1991; Mageau 1992; Pogrow 1990; Strickland and Ascher 1992). Researchers have identified practices that can help educators accomplish this important goal. A graphic summary of strategies and findings by researchers that optimize learning for the African American students is represented in Figure 1 below.

FIGURE 1. Summary of Strategies and Findings by Researchers that Optimize Learning for African American Students



Applications of Research for the Foreign Language Classroom

The choice of instructional materials is the teacher's way of affirming diversity. Demonstration of a sensitivity to and awareness of students' diverse background and learning styles should begin on the first day of foreign language instruction. Cultural relevancy in teaching and classroom materials means that students see themselves in and identify with pictures, posters, and other visual stimuli. By choosing authentic materials showing diversity in the target culture, teachers send the message that all students can succeed in that culture and in their study of a foreign language. Instilling that confidence in students is the first step to building the positive self-esteem necessary to achieve.

Teacher-generated materials that incorporate aspects of both the learner's own culture and the target culture are ideal for drawing connections to the students' experiences and to other academic disciplines. A colorful wall calendar in the classroom, which introduces students to special days and customs in the target culture, can also be a means of exploring significant (or even relatively insignificant, but often fun) contributions to one's own cuture. Any day can become a special personalized day for an individual student with the use of name days from the target culture. Special days can include discussions of the historical vs. contemporary significance of the event and on the influences of American cultures on other cultures or vice versa. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, for example, provides an opportunity to make students' experiential background relevant while stressing this American's contributions in the fight against oppression on an international scale. The classroom activities can include parts of a speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. translated into the target language and/or poems and other forms of literature written to honor him (e.g., "An Martin Luther King" by Martin Gutl). John Lalande (1993) suggests using foreign language calendars and reference works as a source of information on famous people and events.

Commercially produced teaching materials can be lacking in their sensitivity to the issue of multiculturalism. Publishers are becoming more aware of the necessity for inclusive representations, but there is a real need for teachers to insist on textbooks, videos, and reading and listening texts that provide a broad perspective of life experiences in the target culture. The video series *Lernexpress* (Kratzer and Curland 1992) provides a number of appropriate instructional strategies. The series focuses on a diverse group of young people living in contemporary Germany. Within the context of a series on everyday life, these nonactors provide students with an authentic representation of the wide variety of life-styles that exist in the German culture. *Lernexpress* gives learners much to identify with; it presents young people talking about their own lives and interests with a strong focus on family. It gives ample opportunity for students to recognize similarities and to compare and bridge cultures with discussions grounded in their own experiences. The emphasis

on family life and the commmunity has a natural relationship to those same structures in the experiences of the students.

Personalized instruction and the establishment of a community of learners are integral parts of communicative foreign language instruction. Activities that focus on the individual and the group can also begin on day one as students introduce themselves to others, providing information about themselves and their families. One possibility for the active exchange of information, which involves the important apsect of movement in the classroom, is the use of the bingo format. Students are given a grid that they carry along with them in their interchanges with other students; the student who is first to fill the grid squares with names or signatures of other students is the winner. This is an affective learning activity which can be adapted to several levels of language proficiency. The simplest level is asking names and perhaps ages and siblings in the target language and writing the information in the grid. A more advanced version of this activity first asks students to make a list of five to nine interesting things about themselves. The teacher then tells the students to interview a certain number of classmates (depending on the time allowed and the number of squares in the grid) and fill in the grid with their name and one interesting fact. At the end of the allotted time, students must then introduce one another using the information they learned. A third possibility has the students submit to the teacher an interesting or quirky fact that no one in the room knows about them. The teacher then makes a grid containing the facts but not including the students' names. The students must learn the identities of their classmates by quizzing them about the grid information.

A project-oriented strategy that can also be successful at many different language-learning stages is the "All About Me" activity. Even students with very limited knowledge of the target language can produce impressive results in the form of a poster, collage, scrapbook, or illustrated journal. As with any personal information that is shared at school, one should emphasize at the outset that students may use either real or fictitious data. Teachers may even ask students to use a famous person or role model as the subject of the project. The project involves a number of techniques recommended to improve achievement: an affective approach, personalized instruction, the use of I/we, hands-on learning community-building, connection to other disciplines, strengthening of the teacher-student relationship, experiential familiarity, and the use of alternative assessments.

Projects at the novice level can include personal data (name, age, family tree, cultural heritage, clubs); information on pets, hobbies, and sports; the student's house and/or room; friends; favorite movies and television shows; and favorite foods. Assignments can include creative writing tasks such as alphabet name poems, concrete poems, haiku, and cinquain. If the project is done in scrapbook or journal form, work can be completed over a long period of time and can include original art, pictures from magazines, and/or photographs. The possibilities are endless, and the students love to work on

projects that are about them. Because beginning students often want to express concepts that have not been covered in instruction, teacher input is essential on an ongoing basis.

The "Me" project can be adapted for more advanced students by adding more complex writing asignments and more details. Intermediate students can count the number of windows in their house or lamps in their living room. They can write a paragraph or two about what they would be if they were an animal. Teachers can require advanced students to describe their rooms using prepositions and adjectives, tell why they like their favorite subject, describe the events of a typical weekend day, praise/criticize their school, write about their plans and hopes for the future, or their most embarrasing experience (*My Book about Me* by Dr. Seuss and *Das bin ich* by Martin Seletzky). When students have completed the project, they can share their work with classmates in pairs or small groups, or give oral presentations in front of the whole class. The projects can be evaluated in a variety of ways and can include an oral component.

A project that changes the focus from the individual to the community is the authoring and illustrating of children's stories and books. This can be done on the intermediate or advanced level in conjunction with a unit on fairy tales or legends. Students can write their own stories and illlustrate them by hand or with computer software. After the stories have been checked by the teacher, or through peer-editing, students make a book to present to a school, church, or other organization in the community where the target language is spoken. The presentation of the books can be made during a visit to the institution where students meet with native speakers of children who are learning the target language and read the books together. This project can be done in conjunction with the Art Department and/or with the aid of a colleague who knows how to bind and "publish" books (Eve Haeberle, Lakewood High School).

The use of songs, dances, and rhymes has long been a staple in the foreign language classroom. The enthusiasm of the students for such activities verifies the research findings on the effectiveness of stimulus change and positive response to rhythmic patterns. They also provide an experiential link to the learner's background. Songs and rhymes can be recited, rapped, danced to, acted out, and translated. They are an ideal way of practicing pronunciation and intonation, of stimulating affective learning, of enlivening instruction, and of getting the class moving.

Songs are available for every topic of foreign language study. The choices include seasonal songs, festival songs, rounds, children's songs and rhymes, songs taken from the target culture of familiar songs translated into the target language (Sophia Ellis, *Singing and Dancing in the German Classroom*). Grammar songs make learning a list of prepositions fun and cement those words into memory (*O Susanna o konjugier für mich;* AATG listserve). Folksongs and classical music from the target culture can be used to teach history and literature. Current music is an excellent source of information and

insight into contemporary issues and is of special interest to young people. It is motivating (and multicultural) to hear familiar popular musical styles interpreted in different cultural settings. Popular music videos are great because they allow students to use the dual learning modalities of seeing and hearing.

The availability of cassettes, CDs, and videos offers a number of options for presenting music in the classroom. Songs can be introduced with or without the written text, and even without the tone when showing videos. Students listen or watch the first time through and discuss what they heard in the lyrics or speculate on what the song could be about. The second listening/watching can include a cloze exercise where students have to fill in significant words from the text. With an especially difficult or long text, students can work cooperatively on translations or interpretations. Each small group can be responsible for explaining one stanza of the song to the whole class. Follow-up activities can include choosing adjectives to describe it, drawing or finding a picture to go with it, comparing it to a song they know, and, of course, performing it.

One of the most fruitful sources of affirming diversity and incorporating multiculturalism in foreign language study is the investigation of minority groups or foreigners living in the target culture. This topic presents the opportunity of dealing with similarities and differences among people and cultures, the patterns of and reasons for immigration, prejudices, and nationalistic behaviors. The rich cultural diversity in our own country can serve as a starting point and a point of comparison. Students can share their own stories and those of their parents and grandparents. They can tell stories and explore attitudes through interviews with family, friends, classmates, or by using the Internet. These stories from one's own culture and from all other cultures are an essential part of developing understanding, breaking down stereotypes, and nurturing a sense of the worth of self and others.

American students are very often unaware of the multicultural makeup of foreign cultures. In order to investigate the topic adequately it is therefore often necessary to start with facts and figures. Tables and graphs are succinct and easily understandable ways to give students at almost any level the necessary information. The facts one presents can include, for example, the makeup and size of minority groups, the native country of the foreigners, or the languages that are represented in a given country. The vocabulary for discussing the pertinent issues can be introduced by means of a semantic web or graphic organizer. Students will already know many pertinent words (e.g., love, hate, help, understanding), or they will readily understand terms given to them by the teacher (e.g., racist, radical, discrimination, ignorance). A follow-up vocabulary activity then can require the students to categorize the words into either a positive or negative semantic group. Active participation is achieved when the teacher gives each student a card with one of the words from the list written on it; students must then go to a bulletin board or the blackboard and affix the card under the positive (+) side or negative (–) side.

Students are now equipped to examine the experiences of and attitudes toward minority groups. Teaching materials for this purpose can include native language or foreign language articles from current newspapers and magazines, literature written by members of minority groups, protest or socially critical music, and Internet discussions. Students are made aware of the plight of minority or disenfranchised groups in their conflict with the mainstream culture when teachers ask them to bring in articles on the topic from various news sources. A collage or bulletin board containing such reports leads to a realization of the variety and extent of cultural differentiation in all societies. Literary texts present the affective side of the minority experience, and are particularly effective when written from a young person's perspective (*Fremde unter Deutschen: Ausländische Studenten berichten,* 1991; *Wir leben hier! Ausländische Jugendliche berichten,* 1993).

Poems, songs, videos, and movies with the "outsider" theme speak to adolescents, who can easily identify with feeling disenfranchised from the mainstream culture. Songs with an element of social criticism have recently reappeared on the pop music scene, and one can introduce this genre to students with music by Tracy Chapman or Janet Jackson. Songs that bemoan the plight of minority group members, celebrate diversity, and decry violence and hatred can be found on pop music charts the world over (Udo Lindenberg, Herbert Groenemeyer, die Prinzen, PUR). Short films or feature films dealing with the topic, available in foreign language and/or dubbed versions, are great vehicles for starting discussions and making comparisons (*Yasmin, der Schwarzfahrer, Bread and Chocolate*). When students then write their own skits or dramatize a scene, they profit from experiencing what it is like to be a minority or a person from a different culture.

Proper closure to a unit on cultural diversity and conflicts among cutural subgroups must include mention of solutions and peacful resolutions. Teachers can present examples of cooperation and mutual understanding by presenting information about the work of leaders and groups in both our culture and the target culture. Students can use problem-solving skills to genrate their own solutions in brainstorming sessions, in teamwork, or in role-playing assignments where they express their interpretation of the present and hopes for the future.

Conclusion

Learning partners, peer-editing, games, pictograms, posters, collages, graphs, diagrams, tables, sketches, pictures, and photographs are teaching techniques that create an optimal learning environment for all learners. Effective strategies that lead to improvement in participation and achievement in all students include the use of authentic materials that encourage interpretation, personalization, and internalization.

Effective implementation of instructional strategies and interventions as described in this article can produce significant attitude, achievement, as well as performance gains for all learners, most especially among African American learners. Garcia (1992) points out that "our task as language educators encompasses not only knowing the language and culture of the people whose language we teach, but also the language and culture of the people whom we teach" (p. 3). By creating a culturally relevant curriculum and classroom, foreign language study can become a more meaningful and successful experience for African American learners.

References

Allen, J. P. and E. Turner. 1990. "Where Diversity Reigns." *American Demographics* August.

American Association of Teachers of French. 1989. "The Teaching of French: A Syllabus of Competence." *AATF National Bulletin* 15. Special Issue, October.

American Association of Teachers of German. 1993. "Professional Standards for Teachers of German: Recommendations of the AATG Task Force on Professional Standards." *Unterrichtspraxis* 26, 1: 80–96.

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. 1990. "AATSP Program Guidelines for the Education and Training of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese." *Hispania* 73: 785–94.

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. 1988. "ACTFL Provisional Program Guidelines for Foreign Language Teacher Education." *Foreign Language Annals* 21, 1: 71–82.

Anderson, D. 1988. "Cognitive Styles and Multicultural Populations." *Journal of Teacher Education* 39, 1: 2–9.

Au, K., and C. Jodan. 1981. "Teaching Reading to Hawaiian Children: Finding a Culturally Appropriate Solution," pp. 139–152 in H. Trueba, G. Guthrie and K. Au, eds., *Culture and the Bilingual Classroom: Studies in Classroom Ethnography.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Bell, Y. R., and R. McGraw-Burrell. 1988. "Culturally Sensitive and Traditional Methods of Task Presentation and Learning Performance in Black Children." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 12, 4: 187–193.

Bermingham, J., A. Sra, and D. Sydnor. 1986. "Multicutural Education for the Classroom." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of Teacher Educators, Atlanta, GA. [ERIC: ED 303 425].

Block, C. C. 1993. "Strategy Instruction in a Literature-based Reading Program: Effects upon High, Average, and Below Average Readers." Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Boykin, W. A. 1978. "Psychological/Behavioral Verve in Academic/Task Performance: Pretheoretical Considerations." *Journal of Negro Education* 4: 343–354.

Boykin, W. A. 1979. "Psychological/Behavioral Verve: Some Theoretical Explorations and Empirical Manifestations," pp. 335–367 in W. A. Boykin, A. J. Franklin, and J. F. Yates, eds., *Research Directions of Black Psychologists.* New York: Russell Sage.

Boykin, W. A. 1982. "Task Variability and the Performance of Black and White Schoolchildren: Vervistic Exploration." *Journal of Black Studies* 12: 469–485.

Boykin, W. A. 1983. "On Academic Task Performance and Afro-American Children," pp. 324–371 in J. R. Spencer, ed., *Achievement and Achievement Motives*. Boston, MA: W. H. Freeman & Co.

Brigman, S., and L. Jacobs. 1981. "Participation and Success of Minority Students in University Foreign Language Programs." *Modern Language Journal* 14,3: 372–376.

Byrnes, H. 1992. *Languages for a Multicultural World in Transition*. Report of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Cole, M., and S. Scribner. 1974. *Culture and Thought: A Psychological Introduction*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Cooper, G. 1981. "Black Language and Holistic Cognitive Style." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 5: 201–207.

Cooper, E. J. and D. U. Levine. 1993. "A Comprehension and Cognitive Development Approach to School Reform." *Journal of Negro Education* 62,1: 91–100.

Davidman, L. and P. Davidman. 1988. "Multicultural Teacher Education in the State of California: The Challenge of Definition and Implementation." *Teacher Education Quarterly* 15, 2: 50–67.

DeVillar, R. A., and C. J. Faltis. 1991. *Computers and Cultural Diversity*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Dixon, V. J. 1976. "Worldviews and Research Methodolgy," pp. 51–77 in L. M. King et al., eds., *African Philosophy: Assumptions and Paradigms for*. Los Angeles, CA: Fanon Center.

Education Commmission of the States. 1989, May. "A Close Look at the Shortage of Minority Teachers." *Education Week*, p. 29.

Ford, B. A. 1992. "Multicultual Education Training for Special Educators Working with African American Youth." *Exceptional Children*, 59, 2: 107–114.

Franklin, A. J. 1979. "Cultural Content of Materials and Ethnic Group Performance in Categorized Recall," in A.W. Boykin, A. J. Franklin, J. F. Yates, eds., *Research Directions of Black Psychologists*. New York: Russell Sage.

Garcia, O. 1992. "Societal Multilingualism in a Multicultural World in Transition," pp. 1–27 in Heidi Bynes, ed., *Languages for a Multicultural World in Transition*. Report of the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Gay, G. 1989. "Ethnic Minorities and Educational Equality," pp. 167–188 in J. A. Banks and C. A. McGee Banks, eds., *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Gay, G. 1983. "Why Multicultural Education in Teacher Preparation Programs?" *Contemporary Education* 54, 2: 79–85.

Giroux, H. 1983. *Theory and Resistance in Education*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey.

Gooden, C. R. and C. M. Ligons. 1984. "Teacher Preparation for Equity Edcuation." *Texas Tech Journal of Education* 11, 1: 31–43.

Goodlad, J. I., and J. Oakes. 1988. "We Must Offer Equal Access to Knowledge." *Educational Leadership* 45,5: 16–22.

Grant, C. and W. Secada. 1990. "Preparing Teachers of Diversity," pp. 403–422 in W. R. Houston, ed., *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*. New York: Macmillan.

Guttenberg, M. 1972. "Negro-White Differences in Children's Movement." *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 35: 435–436.

Guttenberg, M., and S. Ross. 1972. "Movement Responses Insimple Concept Learning." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 42: 657–665.

Hale, J. 1982. *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture, and Learning Styles*. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

Hale-Benson, J. E. 1986. *Black Children: Their Roots, Culture and Learning Styles*, 2nd ed. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins.

Hancock, C. 1994. "Cultural Roots and Academic Achievement: Is There a Problem in Foreign Language Study?", pp. 9–19 in Gale K. Crouse, ed., *Meeting New Challenges in the Foreign Language Classroom*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Henderson, I. 1992. "Preparing for Diversity: From Administrative Planning to T. A. Training." *Unterrichtspraxis* 25, 2: 107–115.

Holliday, B. G. 1985. "Towards a Model of Teacher-child Transactional Processes Affecting Black Children's Academic Achievement," pp. 117–131 in M. B. Spencer, G. K. Brookins, and W. R. Allen, eds., *Beginnings: The Social and Affective Development of Black Children*. Hillside, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

Irvine, J. 1990. *Black Students and School Failure*. Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press.

Jones, C. 1979. "Ebonics and Reading." *Journal of Black Studies* 9: 423–448.

Keisler, C., and E. Stern. 1977. "Teacher Attitudes and Attitudes Change: A Research Review." *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 229, 6: 59–67.

Ladson-Billings, G. 1994. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. 1994. "Who Will Teach Our Children: Preparing Teachers to Successfully Teach African American Students," in E. Hollins, J. King, and W. Hayman, eds., *Building the Knowledge Base for Teaching Culturally Diverse Learners*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Levine, D. U., and L. W. Lezotte. 1990. "Unusually Effective Schools." Madison, WI: National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development.

Levine, D. U., and J. K. Sherk. 1989. "Implementation of Reforms to Improve Instruction at an Unusually Effective Inner-city Intermediate School." *Peabody Journal of Education* 66,4: 87–106.

Liao, Y. K. 1991. "Effects of Computer-assisted Instruction and Computer Programming on Students' Cognitive Performance: A Meta-analysis Paper." Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago.

Mageau, T. 1992. "Two Teaching Models that Work." *Electronic Learning* 11,4: 16–22.

McLaren, P. 1989. *Life in the Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*. White Plains, NY: Longman Press.

Means, B., C. Chelemer, and M. S. Knapp, eds. 1991 . "Teaching Advanced Skills to At-risk Students." San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mohatt, G., and F. Erickson. 1981. "Cultural Differences in Teaching Styles in an Odawa School: A Sociolinguistic Approach," 105–119 in H. Trueba, G. Guthrie, and K. Au eds., *Culture and the Bilingual Classroom: Studies in Classroom Ethnography*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House 105–119.

National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education. 1988. *Information on Personnel Supply and Demand: The Supply of Minority Teachers in the United States*. Reston, VA: The Council for Exceptional Children.

Nichols, E. J. 1986. "Cultural Foundations for Teaching Black Children," pp. 17 in G.M.T. Rattery, ed., *Teaching Mathematics: Culture, Motivation, History and Classroom Management*. Volume I. Washington, DC: Institute for Independent Education.

Ogbu, J. 1978. *Minority Education and Caste*. San Francisco, CA: Academic Press.

Otto, K. F. 1992. "Minorities and Materials." *Unterrichtspraxis* 25, 2: 153–157.

Payne, C. 1984. "Multicultural Education and Racism in American Schools." *Theory Into Practice* 23, 2: 124–131.

Piestrup, A. 1973. "Black Dialect Interference and Accommodation of Reading Instruction in First Grade." Monograph 4. Berkeley, CA: Language Behavior Research Laboratory, University of California.

Pogrow, S. 1990. "A Socratic Approach to Using Computers with At-risk Students." *Educational Leadership* 47, 5: 61–66.

Rychlak, J. 1975. "Affective Assessment, Intelligence, Social Class, and Racial Learning Style. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 32, 989–995.

Rychlak, J., C. Hewitt, and J. Hewitt. 1973. "Affective Evaluation, Word Quality and the Verbal Learning Styles of Black Versus White Junior College Females." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 27, 248–255.

Rohwer, W., and W. Harris. 1975. "Media Effects on Prose Learning in Populations of Children." *Journal of Educational Psychology* 67, 651–657.

Shade, B. J. 1982. "Afro-American Cognitive Style: A Variable in School Success?" *Review of Educational Research* 52,2, 219–244.

Shade, B. J. 1984. "Afro-American Patterns of Cognition: A Review of the Research." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Slavin, R. E. 1977. "Student Team Learning Techniques: Narrowing the Achievement of" (Report No. 228). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, Center for Social Organization of Schools.

Slavin, R.E., and E. Oickle. 1981. "Effects of Cooperative Learning Teams on Student Achievement and Race Relations: Treatment by Race Interactions." *Sociology of Education* 54, 174–180.

Smith, M. K. 1988. "Effects of Children's Social Class, Race, and Gender on Teacher Expectations for Children's Academic Performance: A Study in an Urban Setting," pp. 101–117 in C. Heid, ed., *Multicultural Education: Knowledge and Perceptions*. Bloomington/Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Center for Urban and Multicultural Education.

Smitherman, G. 1977. *Talking and Testifying*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Strickland, D. E., and C. Ascher. 1992. "Low-income African-American Children and Public Schooling," pp. 609–625 in P. W. Jackson, ed., *Handbook of Research on Curriculum*. New York: Macmillan.

Taylor, D. and C. Dorsey-Gaines. 1988. *Growing Up Literate: Learning from Inner-City Families*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Temu, N. M. L. 1992. "African-American Students' Self-awareness through Kiswahili Language." *Journal of Black Studies* 22, 4: 532–545

Treadwell, V. 1975. "Group and Individual Counseling: Effects on College Grades." *Journal of Non-white Concerns* 5: 73–82.

Villegas, A. 1988. "School Failure and Cultural Mismatch: Another View." *The Urban Review* 20,4: 253–265.