2011 College Reading and Learning Association Conference

**Sawubona-(I See You): Teaching Students from Developing Countries**

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**Sawubona- (I See You): Teaching Students from Developing Countries**

**Sawubona** is a greeting used by the Zulu tribe. It literally means ‘I see you’ but it means so much more... I understand you. I am interested in you. I am anxious for you to succeed. I wish you well.

More and more students from developing countries are entering our classrooms. They come with backgrounds and challenges that are unfamiliar to many American educators. This presentation will create awareness of unique barriers, and provide a variety of strategies to use in the classroom.

As our professional teaching knowledge increases, our understanding increases. As professionals we can help students achieve a higher level of learning excellence within the classroom using appropriate strategies.

As students become more educated they can play a larger more productive role in their new country.

Indigenous Music

**Sawubona-(I See You):** Welcome

Introduction

Barriers to Learning: Self Guided Active Learning Stations \*\*\*

Overview of Strategies and Selected Best Practices

Case Studies in small groups\*\*\*

**Sawubona-(I See You)**: Personal Reflection and Action \*\*\*

Wrap Up

\*\*\*Musical Interlude- return to your seat

**Barriers to Learning: Background**

In the late 80’s, Pro government forces in Sudan waged war on the country’s separatists, leaving behind over 20,000 male orphans, otherwise known as “lost boys”... Watch **Lost Boys of Sudan.**

What observations can be made about the story, surroundings, hardship, interaction, schooling, quality of life, adjustments in the United States?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

**Barriers to Learning: Culture**

Which of these cultural barriers might affect a student the **most?**

Which of these cultural barriers might affect a student the **least?**

* Student may have moved from country to country.
* Student may have spent several or many years in a refugee camp.
* Student may have little understanding of time and structure of American way of life.
* Student may not have attended formal schooling.
* Student may have come from a simple land. He/she may be living in crisis mode each day because our country is very complex.
* Student may associate with his/her tribe more than country of origin.
* Student, even if married, may not sit with spouse in class.
* Student may have experienced death, religious persecution, civil war, famine, violence, rape, loss of spouse, or/and loss of family.

**Barriers to Developing Learning Style**

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| --- |
| **Anet-“**I am a political refugee. In my country 30 years is very old. Many men have died in war. How can I think about being a doctor (or in the health field) I am too old to get an education. I do not want to work at Sam’s Club but I am afraid. I can read but I cannot write well. I have a wife and two children. I am here at Salt Lake Community College today.”   1. Students may come to the United States with few w\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ skills. 2. Students may have s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years of schooling because their family could not a\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for them to attend. 3. By age sixteen students may have experienced war, d \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , f\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ death, poverty. 4. Students may lack s\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for their learning because they have many family members who depend on them. 5. Students may a deep desire to learn, but feel that age 30 is too o\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to begin.   writing afford skipped learning drought famine old support |

**Barriers to Learning: Language**

**Khumbalani**-“I am a political refugee. In my country there are 35 dialects. We can speak to some and cannot understand others. We must really listen! I do not have written language. I do not understand how to spell words. Must I always spell words in English the same way? Must I spell my name the same way each time? I speak 4 languages.”

1. Students may speak \_\_\_\_ languages.
2. 1-2 b) 3- 4 c) 5-6
3. Students from developing countries most likely rely on\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_skills to learn.
4. visual b) auditory c) kinesthetic

3. Uganda has\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_languages and dialects.

1. 35 b) 140 c) 12

4. Many languages and dialects are\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ written.

a) completely b)not c) partly

5. There are 140 languages and dialects in Sudan. I must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to what is being said to figure out where the person might be from. English and Arabic are also used in the government.

a) think b)listen c) be aware

Try: With a partner read a paragraph out loud but read only every third word to them. Ask if they understand the paragraph.

**Barriers to Learning: Reading**

**Lerato-** “I passed my matric (graduation tests and requirements) and have attended university here in my country. I was taught by township teachers who used educational objectives; however, they had only an eighth grade education. The passing score was 30%. I am attending college in the United States.”

**Myth or Fact**

1. Students may come to the United States without knowledge of libraries or how to use them. M F
2. Students may have never read from a book. M F
3. Students may have never owned a book. M F
4. Reading mastery may be as low as 30%. M F
5. Teachers in some countries may have reading objectives but not know how to use them.

M F

**Barriers to Learning: Assessment**

**Mahkotsa**- “I am studying to be a teacher. What is this? I have not seen a puzzle before. What must one do with this? How can I master this?”

* Why might a puzzle be difficult?
* Are there different or various ways to assess mastery?
* What kinds of thinking skills can be encouraged in our classrooms?

**Arthur**- “I took law tests in my country, but I cannot write answers but I can tell the answers…”

Why might a student have difficulty writing answers in words, in sentences, in paragraphs, and in papers?

Try: Put together a puzzle made from a plain sheet of paper (with no picture or lines).

**Background Strategies**

**1. Expressing Opinions**- Students may not know how to express their opinion. Give an open ended question to student in advance so they can plan their answer in advance.

**2. Share Stories-**Students can be encouraged to interweave their personal stories to build synergy between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Stories and traditional storytelling can transform students as they adjust to life here.

**3. Unfamiliar Customs** together with unfamiliar norms and moirés of western culture may make the transition to the United States difficult. Welcome students who are just discovering education, even though they have been in the US for 15 years or more but yet do not seem to be assimilated in many ways.

**4. Importance of Books**-In developing countries learning is often rote because of the lack of paper, pencils, and books. Use books in each class period to model use and necessity in higher learning.

**5. Encourage Active Participation-**Lecturing to 50-100+ students is the most common form of teaching. It is unlikely that students from developing countries gave opinions on a variety of subjects and may find it difficult to express their thoughts and opinions.

**Cultural Strategies**

**1. Set Ground Rules** for appropriate behavior on the first day and in the syllabus.

**2. Value Identity-**Those who continue to value their identity may be more confident, proud, and more advantaged in the mainstream compared to those who don’t. You might ask: Tell me about your name. How do people greet each other? Use extraordinary sensitivity to each person in class.

In their native land your student might have been preparing to become the chief of the tribe. Realize that students may have had positions of responsibility and recognition in their homeland. Recognize and express your pleasure with having each student in your class.

It is common in some cultures to segregate the sexes even married students may not sit together in class.

**3. Africa is Not a Country-** Each country is unique. Students may be bound more by tribe than by country of origin. Ask questions. Get to know your students. Demonstrate an interest in their ability to speak several languages and their cultural uniqueness.

**4. Eye Contact**-Out of respect students may not be familiar or comfortable with making eye contact. Teach them the reason for making eye contact: to show understanding, or lack of understanding, engagement as a learner.

**5. Call Students by Name,** by making name tents and use them for first two days of class. (After this rely on your memory). Call on students and give ample opportunity for each learner to contribute in every class period. This can be in small or large group situations.

**6. Teach How to Manage Time**-Students from developing countries may have unrealistic expectations about the amount of time needed and commitment needed in college. If reading assignments early, arriving on time, participating in class discussions, and writing well are important to you, let the students know your expectations.

Start class on time to help students understand school and workplace structure.

Take roll each class session.

**7. Show Confidence in Abilities**- Students from developing countries may lack confidence in their abilities and academic skills. They need to learn they can compete with other students and you can help them envision their success.

**8. Use a Musical Introduction-**Music plays a key role in many societies. If reading a global selection, why not introduce it with music from a foreign land? Ask a student to share a song from an appropriate CD from his/her homeland.

**9. Mother Earth**-Africans may see Mother Earth in a spiritual and physical sense. Deep emotions may be exhibited when discussing reading selections that are meaningful to them.

**10. Acquiring New Knowledge**- If reading a selection about “The Decision to Marry”, “Parenthood”, ‘Impending Death” possible links can be made as to how things are done in another culture. This broadens all the students’ knowledge.

**11. Gaining Confidence**- Students may be very self conscious about their age and/or newness to the United States. Help them become incorporated by introducing themselves to a small group in the class. Proceed to introduce a few students each day until all have been introduced. Make sure the introduction gives uniqueness that they can be remembered by.

**12. Attitude Adjustment-** Because war, famine, AIDS, death, poverty, and other life changing experiences may be a part of a student’s background, he/she may assume that a college degree cannot be earned after someone becomes thirty years old. Encourage students to broaden their thinking and thus their ability to achieve long range academic goals.

**13. Encourage students to write letters and words the way they are printed in the textbook.** Some languages have unfamiliar alphabets, word configuration, and ways of writing. Model the correct form by writing legibly on the white board.

**Learning Styles Strategies**

**1. Small Group Work**- Begin the semester using small groups so students gain confidence sharing with fellow learners.

**2. Read Aloud-** Students respond to a teacher reading aloud because it focuses their attention, allows them processing time, and helps with pronunciation. Read together in small groups.

**3. Good Memory**-Students generally have strong listening skills and can memorize well. Provide opportunities to use these strengths in vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skill building.

**4. Writing Skills**-Students may lack writing skills. To give practice, prepare assignments in which the answers are written in complete sentences.

**5. Learning Styles-**Students may be unfamiliar with abstract thinking used in such activities as putting together puzzles. In small groups put one together to emphasize different types of thinking used to solve problems.

**6. Syllabus**-At each class meeting have students check off what was completed so far in class.

**7. Sit in Front!** To increase attention span and encourage students to stay focused have them sit in front. Modern well maintained classrooms may be a bit intimidating for students from developing countries. Encourage them to sit up front.

**8. Write It Down-**Instruct students to write down assignments from the graphic organizer.

**9. Images**-Have students look at images such as pictures and graphs to understand the use and importance of each one. Colorful images may be very new and unfamiliar to students, teach how to use images, pictures, and graphs in textbooks.

**10. Take a Tour-**Take a mini tour of Learning Center, Reading Center, and Writing Center. Many students may be unaware that there is help for them. Many may not have ever been in a library, learning resource center, focused tutoring center, or reading lab.

**11. Learning Naturally-** Students learn naturally by solving problems that occur to them. Encourage students to share problem solving examples from their homeland.

**Language Strategies**

**1. Value Multi Languages**- A student may speak several languages. Although the languages may not be known in the US, recognize the value of this accomplishment and the ability to communicate in many ways.

**2. Limited Language**-Tribal languages are often oral only. There are no written words. They are not easily translated. Help build an English speaking vocabulary by giving many opportunities to speak in small groups.

**3. Advancing Language**-Use basic grammar and plain English at the beginning of the term and as understanding increases advance your vocabulary.

**4. Read Aloud in English**- Students may be fluent in several languages and rely on the sounds they hear. When a teacher reads aloud they can hear the flow of English, oral expression, and the proper pronunciation of words.

**5. Varied Spelling-** In dialects and languages the spelling of names and words may vary each time they are used. Encourage students to use the same spelling of their names. Teach students that English words have the same spelling each time they are used.

**Reading Strategies**

**1. Share Your Philosophy-** On the first day of class share your philosophy of teaching.

**2. Revise Work-**Give plenty of opportunity for students to revise and improve their work before it receives a grade, thereby learning in the process.

**3. High Level Thinking**- Teach students how to apply, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and make judgments. Ask for a few examples of high leveling thinking or problem solving used by students in their homeland.

**4. Expect Success**-Convey a strong trust and confidence that your students can meet your expectations, this is particularly important for these students.

**5. Teach Background** **Knowledge**-What may be thought of as a reading comprehension problem may be a more general comprehension problem: students may simply not have enough background knowledge to understand the new material, regardless of whether it is presented orally or in print.

**6. Read Aloud-** Students respond to reading aloud because it focuses their attention, allows them processing time, and helps with pronunciation. It is possible they read aloud from a chalkboard in their homeland.

**7. Graphic Organizer**-Provide a graphic organizer for each class period. Erase each part of the class activity as it is finished. Students will have a sense of completion each class period.

**8. Using Quotes**- When developing critical thinking skills use quotes from homelands of those in your class. An example of a Persian saying is: ‘I was angry because I had no shoes until I met a man who had no feet.’ Discuss in small groups.

**9. Vocabulary**- Create vocabulary logs to promote new vocabulary word use. Write the word and where it was found. Make a prediction as to the meaning. Use MW.com an online dictionary to find the correct meaning. Use software and /or Freerice.com website for practicing vocabulary while earning rice to feed others around the world through UN programs.

**10. Sustained Silent Reading**-Have students read silently the first ten minutes of class from a book of their choosing. SSR models examples of well written passages, pleasure in reading, and plants the desire to become a lifelong reader.

**11. Overlap-**Teach so that there is concept overlap. Students see the reinforcement of what they are learning to reading, writing and, learning in their other classes.

**12. Forecasting**-Students are presented a scenario, simulation, or situation and then asked what should happen next, what would they do next? Students from developing countries may enjoy this prediction exercise, and will probably give answers based on their homeland experience.

**13. Practice Using Skills** –On a weekly basis, use well written publications to have student search out an interesting article. In a worksheet format find the topic, main idea, and major support details. Find a fact and an opinion, understand author’s purpose for writing and tone, evaluate the level of language used, give a personal opinion about the article, and find 10 challenging words. Predict their meaning and look up meaning in the dictionary. Share about the article in a small group. Students from developing countries enjoy finding articles about their homeland to share as an authority.

**14. Reading in Pairs**-Have students pair up and read to each other. Take turns summarizing a passage. Students from developing areas can gain confidence reading to each other as they read aloud.

**15. Synopsis-**Groups of three to four students are given a reading assignment. All the members read the assignment and then compile annotation about the main points. Present the results to the whole class.

**16. Check Assignments**- Are they culturally relevant, fair, and interesting? Use a wide variety of reading reflective of relevant research on diverse groups wherever possible.

**17. Group Work-**Groups of four students work weekly on progressively more difficult paragraphs or chapters of a novel. Each student has an assignment: find topic and main idea, find support details, establish the purpose for writing, or find and define difficult words. The group reassembles each week to review their findings and share with the class.

**Assessment Strategies**

**1. Varied Testing Methods**- Give students many chances and many ways to demonstrate their comprehension. (Oral, open book, conference, critical thinking conversation, open ended questions, group test, partner test, collaboration, etc.)

**2. Give Students Written Feedback** on assignments as quickly as possible.Use written positive reinforcement on all assignments.

**3. Provide Samples of Proper Essay Answers-**Let the students seewhat complete answers look like. Use as part of instruction. With this skill they will improve their reading and writing ability.

**4. Try, Try, Again-**Skills of learning require deep practice. Learners from developing areas must feel comfortable to try again and again and make self corrections. Allow students to resubmit corrected work.

**5. Students Should Measure Their Work**- Students should measure their own work to assess progress. A simple chart with the number right and the number wrong, in vocabulary, comprehension, standard questions etc. as part of the syllabus provides a record. Midway through the semester have the students analyze their strengths and weaknesses from the chart they have been keeping in the syllabus, and their plan to improve.

**6. Quiz Students Frequently**. Give regular assignments and tests so they see how well they are learning the material. This improves individual grades and creates greater learner capacity, understanding, retention, and accountability.

**7. Use Classroom Assessments**- In the diverse classroom it may be difficult to be aware of student progress. Informal assessments can be used to check proper knowledge. Ask, “What is the muddiest thing we learned today, what was confusing?” (Use this information to begin the next class) Give a one sentence summary of what was learned today in class.

**8. Assessment in Third Week**- Use 5 open-ended questions as an assessment in the third week of class to evaluate student progress. Report the results back to the students by creating a document with all the answers for students to see. The purpose is to gather information to improve instruction for the remainder of the semester, but the document also helps students to identify and recognize strengths of the course, and the variety of perspectives and needs of class members.

**9. Student Reports**- Students may send their grades and successes by internet to their families in their homeland. Help them to succeed so they can share their best efforts. Encourage developing a strong ePortfolio to share with family in their homeland.

**10. Walk Students Through An Old Test as a Class-** This exercise allows them to ask questions and review their understanding of material.

**Case Studies**

The following case studies reflect the grammar and manner of speaking of real people.

**Lerato-** “I passed my matric (graduation tests and requirements) and have attended university here in my country. I was taught by township teachers who used educational objectives; however, they had only an eighth grade education. The passing score was 30%. I am attending college in the United States.”

**Abel**-“I am overcome by the richness of what I am reading in this magazine. I do not understand many of the words but my heart is tender. How can I read and understand the words I am reading?”

**Mahkotsa**- “I am studying to be a teacher. What is this? I have not seen a puzzle before. What must one do with this? How can I master this?”

**Anet-“**I am a political refugee. In my country 30 years is very old. Many men have died in war. How can I think about being a doctor (or in the health field) I am too old to get an education. I have a wife and two children. I do not want to work at Sam’s Club but I am afraid. I am here at Salt Lake Community College today.”

**Khumbalani**-“I am a political refugee. In my country there are 35 dialects. We can speak to some and cannot understand others. I do not have written language. I do not understand how to spell words. Must I always spell words in English the same way?”

**Soloma**- “I cannot cope with the complexity of this land. I am a refugee from a very simple land. I have never been 10 km from my township. This country is so big and I must learn so many new things. It is very difficult. We are reading about bullies in our reading book. The word bully is used many times. What is a bully?”

**Arthur**- “I took law tests in my country, I cannot write answers but I can tell answers…”

**Godfrey**-“In my high school we cannot possibly do the assignments. We have no pencils, paper, books, or computers. In Africa we just say “shhhh” and are very quiet. When it is time to turn our assignments in we cannot. I am attending university (college) in the United States to become a CP (accountant).”

**Elias**-“I speak 5 languages. I am old (45+-) and never attended school. In my country I was not educated like the whites. I want to learn how to read and write in English. I want to have my own book with words I can read. I want to study each day and go to school.”

**Annie**- “I want to be a doctor. All my life I have read anything I could find because I did not own books or magazines. Soon I will attend the most advanced university in my country. I cannot afford paper and pencils. I am from Munsieville Township and our passing score was 30%. I hope I can be strong and capable. I would like to attend school in the United States.”

**Rose**- “I have been attending Writers Club (an after school class we taught to encourage education in townships). My teacher couldn’t believe that I had written my essay. She couldn’t imagine that I could use such big words. She asked me if she could join Writers Club so she can learn too. I am going to university!”

**Erness**-“I have been living with 16 other grandchildren with my Granny. You see all of our parents died from drugs and HIV. Granny wonders if there is a way for me to get to the US for university. Am I prepared to go?”

**Thomas**-“I have been in the United States for a long time (seven years). If I can return to my country after years of wars and famine I will teach about economics and how to use it in our country. I am taking Reading 990 so I can read well. I am a chief of my tribe and I must teach others about the importance of education. There are many refugees from my country in this city. We must learn all we can. I do not know how to write (form) letters well. Can you help me?”

**Thabo**-“In my homeland we could not be friends because our tribes kill each other. It is different in the United States. I am a political refugee but I like my new country it is my new home. My mother gave me the blessing of my father and encouraged me to come here. I will study pharmacy.”

**Kola**-“I have a Masters degree in economics from university in my country. I am researching how our government can help people to learn to read. We have no books or libraries. Can you help me think of what to do?”

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**Quote**

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