

Chapter 24

Global Status Elevation in Today's Classroom

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ABSTRACT

This chapter details how technology may be implemented and utilized in K-12 and post-secondary classrooms as a resource for inviting two-way communication between American students and educators and students and educators from other countries, as well as potential expectations and outcomes from such a teaching tool. This model demonstrates going beyond infrequent, rare communication to regular two-way communication as part of the typical curriculum, in an effort to elevate the status of people from other countries through promotion of cultural, linguistic, and interpersonal communication.

INTRODUCTION

Through the Internet, learners may access information from the world over, yet it is not only access to technological literacy that empowers students. Access to people globally as learning resources is an underutilized asset to the average classroom. Some foreign language courses access information and engage in occasional global communication beyond classroom walls, but even those resources are underused. With today's learner being more apt to learn from an online, interactive source than from a textbook or other print source, it seems

logical to take the experience a step further to live, two way interaction with people from various countries and cultural backgrounds. No longer is the power to study abroad limited to time and monetary resources; it is limited only to Internet access.

Much of the prejudice that continues to perpetuate itself across borders of nationality, race, religion, and politics, comes from a lack of familiarity. Though this era of highly accessible international news coverage has helped some become more geographically aware, continued limited contact with the global community still leaves many viewing life outside the country's borders as mystical at best, or scary and cruel, as much news

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coverage seems to convey. The dispelling of bias is a crucial component of social change. Education has been playing a critical role in modern global culture and society; culture has had enormous impacts on education by constantly generating new demands. It is essential that students obtain cross-cultural awareness to be competitive in the global economy.

With the tools in place for global communication as a typical classroom component, students may engage in regular cultural and language learning from a primary source, rather than secondhand. They may travel to the streets and homes and historical places that were before mere images on the pages of their textbooks. Students may experience firsthand what sets them apart from the world, as well as what makes people similar. Teachers may co-teach with international counterparts. Ongoing learning and cultural and educational exchanges may be actualized through Internet based communications, such as classrooms that span multiple countries through the use of two way online communication. Additionally, relationships may easily be maintained, language skills may be enhanced, and cultural exchanges may continue to flow through ongoing relationships by email exchanges between international and American educational partners.

The opportunity for international learning partnerships is no longer limited to those who have the opportunity to travel abroad. The opportunity is now, in our classrooms, available to all.

THE WAY WE WERE (AND ARE)

In 1974 *The Equal Education Opportunities Act*, reaffirming equal education for all, and in the same year *Lau. V. Nichols*, demonstrated that the 14th amendment applied to language being tied to national origin discrimination. This was a landmark time for many born in America and others who had more recently immigrated to the United States. While discrimination in the classroom gained

attention and started a slow path to dissolving, it still remains prevalent in the today. Some of the concerns of the 1970s have remained—that too often marginalized students are not afforded the same educational opportunities as others. With a growing immigrant population, other concerns over discrimination based on language, culture, and socioeconomics have gained recent attention. Hopefully, if you are reading this book a decade or more after the copyright of this publication, the need for such a chapter on status elevation for students will be dated, and you will be able to look back at how far we have come in elevating the status of marginalized people. Until such a time, there remains the need for educating students of all ages on the necessities and merits of recognizing the value of all people for their personal merits as well as the value of interchanges between others as an aide for self edification.

Among other difficulties faced by English language learners, immigrants, and other marginalized people, are the pains with which they try to position themselves socially. What is less evident, for it is more an internal struggle, are the difficulties faced by many non-native English speakers in terms of how to begin to interact in a predominantly English language, American cultural environment. While some are willing to take risks in learning and negotiating language, many are more likely to wait for an invitation to interact. Even when such opportunities present themselves, some will participate with great hesitancy and apprehension. There is also the attitudinal consideration of status and worth. Many students may find it difficult to have a positive attitude if they perceive that they are being looked down upon. Sometimes it is easier to adopt a “tough” attitude than to appear susceptible to racial criticism or taunts about speech, dress, and culture. Likewise, those unfamiliar with different cultures are reticent to engage in conversation and academic exchanges with cultures non-similar to their own.

One way to combat the issue is through elevation of status. When students, regardless of who

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