CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES
WHAT THEY ARE AND HOW TO SUPPORT THEM

WHAT IS IT?

The term "culturally sustaining pedagogies" (CSP) refers to instructional strategies that actively encourage linguistic and cultural pluralism in the classroom. CSP is one of several pedagogical approaches that focuses on making room for students' cultural background, including culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy. For a discussion of the differences between these three approaches, see Caldera (2021) and Galloway et al. (2019).

Educators who embrace CSP often do so by having their students engage with various aspects of youth culture, for example by encouraging students to bring their own cultural practices into the classroom (e.g., by addressing a prompt through a hip hop performance or a poem rather than a traditional essay). At the same time, they recognize that youth culture can be implicated in structures of oppression, which is why a critical examination of the systematic barriers minoritized youth face in (higher) education is a crucial aspect of CSP.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In higher education, speakers of non-mainstream varieties of English (including multilingual speakers) are often framed as lacking important communication skills. Culturally sustaining pedagogies challenge this deficit mindset and the feelings of shame and inferiority it causes by focusing on the skills and experiences students bring to the classroom. This helps students find and develop their own voice and allows them to embrace their heritage and their authentic selves.

For example, speakers of African American English may be eager to integrate African American Verbal Traditions (AVT's) such as Sounding, Repetition, or Signifying into their work (see Franz et al. 2022, companion website). Culturally sustaining approaches to academic communication would encourage students to think critically about their intended audience, if the use of these traditions would be effective for this audience, and how AVTs could be incorporated into their work.

HOW CAN INSTRUCTORS IMPLEMENT CULTURALLY SUSTAINING PEDAGOGIES IN THE CLASSROOM?

Adopting culturally sustaining pedagogies means being responsive to the experiences, needs, and interests of a specific group of students at a specific point in time. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to implementing this framework in your classroom. However, the following steps can help you identify what your students' needs are, how your own positionality may affect how you are responding to these needs, and how you can create space for your students' voices and cultural practices.

1. **Examine your own positionality and biases**. Like your students, you bring a host of experiences to the classroom that influence the way you approach the course material, what you expect from your students, and how you interact with them. Take time to reflect on how your positionality influences your teaching and what (implicit) biases you have. Consciously address these biases so they do not negatively affect your students.

2. **Get to know your students.** For example, you could administer an optional survey at the beginning of class where you ask students to share their preferred names, their pronouns, where they are from, what languages they speak, etc. Explain why you collect this information and how you will ensure that it remains confidential. Use the information to guide the design and selection of learning activities and/or course materials. Give students plenty of opportunities to share their perspective, but do not expect them to act as a spokesperson for the communities they belong to.

3. **Allow students to bring their linguistic and cultural practices into the classroom.** Make room for students' practices in your teaching. For example, you could ask students to respond to a resource using whatever language variety or medium they feel most comfortable with. This allows them to take agency of their own learning and gives them room to use and further develop their own voice. Note that this doesn't mean that every student can or should complete the coursework in their native varieties. However, there should be room for students to code-switch between varieties or to use terms and concepts from their native languages and dialects that may not have an equivalent in Standard Academic English, ideally with an appropriate explanation for the rest of the course.

4. **Give students room to explore topics that are relevant to them and their communities.** Whenever possible, allow students to work on topics that they care about and to relate the material to their own lived experiences. This will increase their motivation and give them an opportunity to draw on the expertise and lived experience they bring to the classroom.

5. **Focus on what linguistic and cultural diversity can add to your classroom.** Having a diverse group of students allows you to create activities where students can learn from each other. For example, you could create discussion forums where students relate some aspect of the course material to their own lives. Students could then respond to each other's posts, giving them an opportunity to reflect on their own positionality.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (Internal)

Multilingual Writing Studio
   https://www.yorku.ca/laps/writing-centre/writing-support/multilingual-studio/

ESL Open Learning Centre
   https://www.yorku.ca/laps/eslolc/

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (External)

Explore in 15-30 Minutes

Caldera, A. (2021). *What the term "culturally sustaining practices" means for education in today's classrooms*. Intercultural Development Research Association. https://www.idra.org/resource-center/what-the-term-culturally-sustaining-practices-means-for-education-in-todays-classrooms/

California Department of Education (2022). *Culturally sustaining pedagogy*. Educator excellence. https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/culturallysustainingped.asp

Lyiscott, J. (2014). *3 ways to speak English*. Ted.com. https://www.ted.com/talks/jamila_lyiscott_3_ways_to_speak_english?language=en

YORK U
UNIVERSITÉ
UNIVERSITY

teaching
commons

assist
advise
design

Explore in 30-60 minutes

Franz, H., Charity Hudley, A. H., Rowell, A., Johnson, S. J., Tano, M. & Petty Grue, M. (2022). Black students' linguistic agency: An evidence-based guide for instructors and students. *American Speech*, 97(2), 230-47. https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-9940616

Companion website: https://charityhudleydickterfranz.com/instructors-guide-to-grading-writing-2/

Ladson-Billings, G. (n. d.). *Module 17: Culturally sustaining pedagogy*. Project READY: Reimagining equity and access for diverse youth. https://ready.web.unc.edu/section-2-transforming-practice/module-17/

Savini, C. (2021). 10 ways to tackle linguistic bias in our classrooms. https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/01/27/how-professors-can-and-should-combat-linguistic-prejudice-their-classes-opinion?fbclid=IwAR1Vn3suthW8ksbB5anaV0Nz6Pq71lM-lu9Hzvp_2BI7y63h9gBJQnmT-kk

Explore in 60+ minutes

Galloway, M. K., Callin, P., James, S., Vimegnon, H. & McCall, L. (2019). Culturally responsive, antiracist, or anti-oppressive? How language matters for school change efforts. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 52(4), 485-501. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1691959

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (Eds.). (2017). *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Smith, T., Avraamidou, L. & Adams, J. D. (2022). Culturally relevant/responsive and sustaining pedagogies in science education: Theoretical perspectives and curriculum implications. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 17, 637-660.

Would you like to learn more?

Contact us at Teaching Commons for additional resources, handouts, applications, courses, workshops, examples, advice, assistance, one-on-one consulting, and everything else related to teaching and learning. We are happy and eager to assist you!

Teaching Commons	Yelin Su	Robert D. Winkler
TC Homepage	BOLD Going Remote	BOLD Institute Open Session

1050 Victor Phillip Dahdaleh (formerly TEL) Building, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3

416.736.2100 ext. 55754

Created by Katharina Pabst & Andrew Molas & Robert D. Winkler