

Language and Literacy: **Language and Literacy in the Context of Cultural Communities**

Strands:	<i>Listening & Speaking</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>
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GETTING READY

Instructional Component(s): Motivator and/or Connection to Experience; Information Delivery; In-Class Activity; Out-of-Class Activity; Assessment

Strands: This activity can be used to deepen understanding of all strands, especially the *Listening and Speaking* strand.

Focus: Students will explore the cultural context in which children develop their language skills and, by extension, their literacy skills. Students then explore the possible influences of those contexts on children's learning.

AFTER PARTICIPATING IN THIS ACTIVITY

Students will demonstrate **knowledge** and **skills** that are consistent with an increased understanding and application of the concepts addressed in this activity.

Students will demonstrate an understanding of:

- The ways context and culture, including experiences within home, family, and community, may influence language and literacy development (*Standards 1 & 2*)*
- How children develop language and gain literacy skills by building on prior experiences with their family and community (*Standards 1, 2, & 4*)*
- Different communication strategies (*Standard 1*)*
- How communication styles may impact children's behavior, teacher perceptions, and communication between classroom staff and families (*Standards 1 & 2*)*

Students will be able to:

- Consider and discuss how different communication styles may impact children's experiences and participation in the classroom, teacher perceptions, and communication between classroom staff and families (*Standards 1 & 2*)*
- Discuss ways to increase understanding of the cultural influences of children's language and literacy development (*Standards 1, 2, & 6*)*

* See Appendix A

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Before you start

Just as it is important for students to consider children's home and family experiences in their development of language and literacy, students also need to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural community in which the child and family live.

Getting it started



Slide 2

Review with students and develop a common understanding of the following components of communication:

- Physical proximity and contact
- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Gestures
- Body language
- High context/low context

Next ask students to individually write an example of appropriate or acceptable behavior for each component.

Keeping it going

Then have students form groups of three or four and share their responses. It might be helpful to have the students act out their examples. Have them note similarities and differences in their examples. Ask them to also share where or from whom they learned or observed those behaviors and if they can identify a cultural context for them.

Putting it together



Slides 3-4

Conclude the discussion by having students, in small groups or as a whole class, respond to the following questions:

- What words or phrases from your group discussions stand out for you?
- What ideas or concepts are particularly applicable to your understanding of the language and literacy foundations?
- Why is it important to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural communities of the children and families in your work?
- What can you do to increase your knowledge and understanding of the cultural aspects of children's language and literacy development?

**Taking it
further**

Slide 5

Ask students to describe other kinds of cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that affect children's learning and development. What additional influences might be considered (e.g., length of time the family has been in the United States, families' economic status, parents' educational experiences)? What should students keep in mind when gathering this information about children and families?

**Taking it
out of class**

Ask students to find a research-based article or Web site about cultural competence and early childhood education. Have students write a one-page description of the article or Web site that includes the following information:

- Intended audience
- Summary of the key points of the article or key elements of the Web site
- Usefulness of the article or strengths and limitations of the Web site

Compile the students' papers into a resource folder for the class or have students post their papers online.

Assessment

Slide 6

Ask students to write a one- to two-page reflection paper on how different examples of appropriate or acceptable behavior for the same component of communication could impact the following:

- Children's comfort and confidence in communicating with adults and other children in the classroom
- Teacher's perceptions of children's behavior and skills
- Communication between the classroom staff and families