

Psychological Supports for ESL Learners

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The Newcomer

In the following case study you are encouraged to formulate your own basic concepts and use them to come up with interventions if needed. Later in this booklet, you will learn more about mental health and its relationship to ESL (English as a Second Language) students. Comparing your own ideas and theories with the ones presented later in this booklet both enhances your learning and increases your understanding of the topic. In addition, your memory for the information presented in this booklet will be strengthened.

Case Study:

Eight year old Noriko is a new student at your school. She is the daughter of a Japanese businessman who just received a job promotion and subsequently relocated his family to the United States. Neither Noriko or her parents can speak much English or have experience living outside of Japan.

While Noriko seems to be very polite, she also does not seem to initiate peer interaction. Other teachers mention not to worry; Noriko's shyness will fade with time and as her English improves.

Good Luck!

References

- (1) Clemente, R., & Collison, B. (2000). The relationships among counselors, ESL teachers, and students. *Professional School Counseling, 3*(5), 339.
- (2) Garcia, E.M., Beatriz Arias, N.J., Murri H, N.J., & Serna, C., (2010). Developing responsive teacher: a challenge for a demographic reality. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1-2), 132-142. doi: 10.1177/0022487109347878
- (3) Garrett, J.E., Holcomb, S. (2005). Meeting the needs of immigrant students with limited English ability. *International Education, 35*(1), 49-62.
- (4) Oppedal, B., Roysamb, E., & Sam D., (2004). The effect of acculturation and social support on change in mental health among young immigrants. *International Journal of Behavioral Development. 28*(6), 481-494.

Given Noriko's situation, would you be worried about her? Are Japanese children just quieter and more respectful? Do you suspect a problem with Noriko? If so, what would YOU do?



STOP!!!!!!!!!!!!

Come up with some answers BEFORE turning to the next page.

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Further Reading

Newport News Public Schools Webpage:

<http://sbo.nn.k12.va.us/esl/misconceptions.html>

Also, see list of References on page 16.

Glossary of Terms

Acculturation– when a person adapts to the norms and “rules” of a culture.

Assimilation– Completely adopting the ways of the new culture and eliminating those of a prior one.

Cultural competence- the degree of acceptance of the parts that make up a culture.

Host culture– The culture of a place where someone raised in a different culture resides.

Ethnic culture– Any culture contained in a region that is not the main culture.

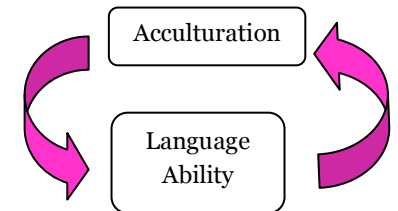
The Framework

What are psychological supports? They are support networks that have a positive outcome on an ESL child’s **mental health**. These psychological supports are part of a network, comprised of three key components listed below.

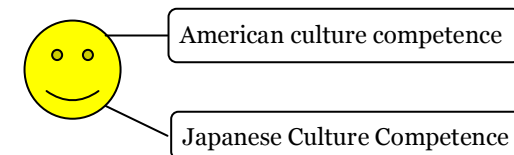
The key ideas and their basic function:

Acculturation: Increased acculturation leads to increased language ability. Increased language ability leads to increased acculturation. Acculturation has three main components: (4)

- **host culture** competence
- **ethnic culture** competence
- ethnic identity crisis



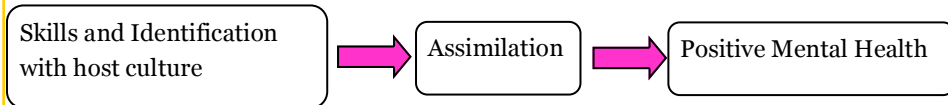
Cultural competence: A person can possess multiple cultural competencies. Possessing just one cultural competence has a positive effect on mental health. (4)



Support networks: The social networks that mediate negative effects, such as ethnic identity crisis, on mental health in ESL students. (4) THESE ARE YOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORTS.

Misconceptions

A common but INNCORRECT assumption is that ESL students should strive for **assimilation**. The skills possessed by the student in the host or ethnic culture either support or hinder assimilation; the degree of assimilation affects mental health. (4)



Instead of assimilation, an ESL student faces acculturation, which is comprised of three main components: host and ethnic culture competence, and ethnic identity crisis (did you remember these?). Mitigating each of these main components are support networks in both the host and ethnic culture, as listed below: (4)

Host Culture Support Networks

- Teacher Support
- Class Support
- Discrimination* (this is a detrimental part of this support network)

Ethnic Culture Support Networks

- Family support
- Friend Support

Using the basic strategies learned earlier, how can we implement them in a classroom setting?

- ⇒ We can build a strong, supportive, and accepting social environment for Noriko to gain American cultural competence. Such steps as lessons about Japan, or letting Noriko bring in some Japanese food to share with her classmates are great approaches. Building her American culture competence will help develop her language skills.
- ⇒ Make sure all the teachers in the school communicate with each other about Noriko's current and future performance and to share basic intervention strategies for her.
- ⇒ Integrate the home and school environment, give the parents a feel of belonging to the community. Invite Noriko's parents to explain a little about Japanese culture to teachers. Make the parents feel part of the school community through Noriko's involvement in extracurricular activities such as music or sports.

Strategies to Help Noriko

What are some basic frameworks that help frame Noriko's situation and what possible issues or problems should we be on the look for?

- ⇒ A person can have more than one cultural competency. Within each cultural group there are factors that mediate the negative effects of ethnic identity crisis and discrimination. Some examples are teacher and family support.

- ⇒ ESL Students generally show more social anxiety and lower social skills with their peers compared to other students.

- ⇒ Frustration with their inability to fully express themselves in English.

Problems for ESL Students

Almost all ESL learners are susceptible in varying degrees to the similar challenges. However, some general problems for ESL students are:

1. Difficulties with social and peer interactions (5)
2. Language difficulties
3. Anxiety (5)
4. Social withdrawal
5. Frustration over inability to fully express themselves in English.
6. Discrimination towards the ESL student.

Strategies that Help

1. Promote the development of strong Class Support. Helping to facilitate social and peer interactions *supports* the *development* of host culture competence and acculturation. This not only leads to positive mental health outcomes but also language growth. (4)
2. *Co-ordinate* school faculty and intervention approaches. This will streamline and enhance the effectiveness of any school based intervention. (1)
3. *Integrate* the host culture (ie. school) and ethnic culture (ie. the home) support networks. (3) This is a great way to increase the effectiveness of interventions. Such interventions could be as *simple* as weekly phone conversations between the child's parent and a teacher/counselor. Sports games also help parents feel involved in the community. (3)
4. Develop partnerships between local colleges and schools. Such programs should form a support network for the teachers. Teachers should receive ongoing training on the latest theory in cross-cultural education and how to *apply* it, thus forming a continuous feedback. (2)
5. Language training for school counselors and or teachers this is an effective way to enhance *communication* between the ESL students and their teacher. (1)
6. Alternate, *cross-culturally valid* tests to effectively evaluate ESL students in terms of academic progression and mental health.

Given new knowledge from this booklet...

1. What are some basic concepts that help frame Noriko's situation and what potential problems should we look for?
2. Using the basic strategies learned earlier, how can we implement these general ideas in a school setting?

Some example interventions will be given on page 12.

BUT FIRST...

THINK ABOUT IT!

Noriko's Case Re-Examined

In the following case study you are encouraged to apply the basic framework and interventions presented in the booklet. You may refer back to the models when necessary but do try and apply them from memory. As stated before, this process will both enhance your memory for the strategies and increase your subsequent learning.

Case Study:

Eight year-old Noriko is a new student at your school. She is the daughter of a Japanese businessman who just received a job promotion and subsequently relocated his family to the United States. Neither Noriko or her parents can speak much English or have experience living outside of Japan.

While Noriko seems to be very polite, she also does not seem to initiate peer interaction. Other teachers mention not to worry; Noriko's shyness will fade with time as her English improves.

Common Barriers

1. **Resources:** Parents and educators must *both* make an effort to get on the same page in terms of schedules. Parents work schedules may not allow them time to come to school. Teacher training requires *time* and *money*. Teachers may have to pay out of pocket for instruction if school districts are unwilling to pay. They may also lack the money or time to take such classes.
2. **Discrimination:** This may also be a problem between certain ethnic groups. *Political and economic* trouble exacerbates discrimination and many parents may not be willing to put aside their biases to help form a more accepting community.
3. **Motivation:** Teachers and faculty must *want* to improve their instruction, and be willing to change their perceptions. Students must also *desire* to do better. Parents, as well, must be *willing* to coordinate with the school and teachers on behalf of their child.
4. **Environment:** Such issues as school setting or socioeconomic status (SES) may exert a strong influence on the implementation of strategies in terms of money, family problems, visa and parent's employment status.