



When it comes to experiencing new cultural environments, there is often a big gap between knowing *about* cultural differences and being *comfortable* with them or being able to *adapt* to them. Robbin Crabtree and David Sapp (2004) give us a good illustration of this gap in their case study on international education.

Crabtree is a Jewish-American professor at a U.S. university who teaches a master-level course in intercultural communication offered to Brazilian English teachers at a satellite campus in Brazil. Along with her students, she analyzes her own teaching style and practices, identifying in real-time what works and what does not, and adjusts based on this feedback. While Crabtree holds graduate degrees in international, intercultural, and developmental communication, the article demonstrates that there is a big difference between knowing intercultural communication theory and applying this knowledge to a new context.

The central issue the professor comes face-to-face with is that her understanding of teaching has been formed within a U.S. context with concepts centered on U.S. definitions. For example, she previously learned the importance of instructor immediacy, meaning that students tend to learn more effectively when their instructors demonstrate engagement and care both verbally and nonverbally. Examples of immediacy include an instructor using eye contact when addressing students, standing close to students, gesturing while talking, and using students' names. However, one of Crabtree's biggest insights is that immediacy within Brazil takes on an entirely different meaning and practice. In fact, Crabtree already had the head knowledge that, in comparison to U.S. instructors, Brazilian instructors tend to ask personal questions of their students, stand and sit very close to them, touch them frequently throughout conversation, and spend time with them socially outside of class. But she feels very uncomfortable engaging in those immediacy behaviors because they are not what she had always known as "good teaching." In negotiating these immediacy behaviors, Crabtree realizes many of her cultural practices are not received in positive ways by her students. While Crabtree works to demonstrate immediacy behaviors and care for her students from a U.S. perspective, the Brazilian students perceive her actions as cold and distant because she isn't using immediacy behaviors that meet Brazilian expectations. Through this reflective realization, she eventually works through her own bodily and emotional discomfort and adjusts her teaching style to reach her students and demonstrate her care for them.

Another issue that arises for the instructor and her class is Crabtree's unexamined assumptions about when class should start and end and how class time should be utilized. Crabtree soon realizes that she and her students have very different expectations and orientations around time. The Brazilian students come from a polychronic culture in which relationships dictate the needs of the moment and time is centered around personal connections. Crabtree comes from a monochronic culture in which time is seen as a nonrenewable resource. She comes to find that the Brazilian students value personal connection more highly and work to invest time in getting to know one another through coffee breaks before, during, and after class. Building relationships is an important goal within the classroom setting for the Brazilian students, an aspect, in fact, that is seen as facilitating the learning process. For Crabtree, time in the classroom is something to be utilized effectively and efficiently, and as such, she works to ensure that as much material is

covered as possible within the allotted time. Building relationships is considered a secondary goal to content coverage. However, after engaging her students in her research, Crabtree learns that her focus on time maximization through content coverage in the classroom is highly stressful and perceived as impractical to her students. With two different time orientations to negotiate, Crabtree works to integrate a more polychronic perspective by visualizing the coffee breaks as educational spaces while investing in her students' personal lives and sharing about her own during them.

The main question posed in this study is how a U.S. professor, responsible for guiding students toward fulfilling the requirements of a course, originally created in the U.S., should conceptualize and behave within the Brazilian classroom. In other words, at any one time, the classroom can be negotiated as: 1) A Brazilian space. 2) A U.S. space. 3) Both. 4) Neither. Crabtree experiences an internal conflict throughout the course of the study, recognizing that her extensive study of intercultural communication did not fully prepare her for what a challenging cross-cultural setting draws out and demands of her as an instructor. However, by engaging her students in the feedback process, she is able in many ways to bridge across differences and implement important learnings along the way.