

FIGURE 2.3 Reflecting on My Cultural Beliefs and Expectations

For each of the topics listed in Figure 2.2, write down your beliefs or expectations for your students associated with the topic. When you are finished, compare your responses with the information in Figure 2.3, and answer the discussion questions. As we have already mentioned in this chapter, it is important to recognize that these ideas are generalizations and will not apply to all students from a particular culture.

Topic	Cultural Considerations
Punctuality	<p><i>Chronemics</i> refers to individuals' perceptions of time and whether the timing of things is seen as precise or more fluid. From culture to culture, the importance of punctuality can vary greatly (Steinberg, 2007). In the United States, arriving more than several minutes late to a function can be considered rude. However, in other cultures (e.g., African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American), arriving late is not considered impolite.</p>
Role of teacher in class	<p>The role of the teacher may vary between collectivist and individualist cultures. Collectivist cultures are those in which group goals and needs are generally placed above individual needs. In contrast, individualist cultures tend to value individual goals, individual rights, and independence. Students from collectivist cultures (e.g., Mexican, Korean, and Somali) may have been taught that they should show respect for teachers at all times by carefully listening to their teacher and not asking questions or disagreeing (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008). Group harmony is considered most important. In contrast, students from individualist cultures (e.g., Australian, German, or U.S.) recognize that they will be valued for sharing their unique ideas and opinions. They also tend to expect a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning.</p>
Student participation in discussions	<p>Whether ELs are from high-context cultures or low-context cultures may impact how they participate in discussions. In high-context cultures (e.g., Afghanistani, El Salvadoran, or Thai), it is expected that individuals will gain meaning from the context or situation, and some ideas may be assumed rather than stated. In contrast, members of low-context cultures (e.g., Swiss, Israeli, or U.S.) are less likely to rely on the situation and other contextual elements (e.g., body language or tone of voice) and tend to communicate information more directly. As a result, students from high-context cultures may participate in discussions differently than students from low-context cultures. For example, both students and teachers from a high-context culture tend to be more indirect—that is to say, more implicit and vague—when asked a question or discussing a particular issue in the classroom (Al-Issa, 2005; Hall, 1976). On the other hand, students and teachers from low-context cultures are more straightforward and explicit in their communication style.</p> <p>In addition, students from a collectivist culture may believe that the survival and success of the group ensures the well-being of the individual, so that by considering the needs and feelings of others, one protects oneself. Harmony and interdependence of group members are stressed and valued. These values may make it difficult for a student from a collectivist culture to disagree with another student (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008).</p>
Student nonverbal communication (including gestures, distance when speaking to someone, and eye contact)	<p>Nonverbal communication patterns can vary greatly from culture to culture, and the rules regarding these behaviors are often unspoken (Steinberg, 2007). ELs may need explicit guidance in cultural expectations in this area. For example, the personal distance that two speakers are expected to maintain when speaking may vary between cultures. In the United States, it is considered strange to stand extremely close to someone you are conversing with. Eye contact is another example. Some ELs may come from cultures where it is considered impolite to look an adult in the eye, or direct eye contact may be a perceived challenge (e.g., Asian, African, and Latino cultures). Eye contact between opposite sexes is often seen as inappropriate in Middle Eastern cultures.</p>

Topic	Cultural Considerations
Student interactions with teacher (e.g., how to address teacher, asking questions, or disagreeing)	In some cultures, there is greater <i>power distance</i> between leaders and followers than in other cultures. Power distance refers to how people from a specific culture view power relationships. For example, in high-power-distance cultures (e.g., Guatemalan, Malaysian, and Saudi Arabian), the relationship between a teacher and a student would be very formal and respectful. In these cultures, there tends to be more focus on titles, formality, and authority. Students from these cultures may not feel comfortable talking to teachers, and parents may take the teacher's word without question (Hofstede, 2003). In contrast, in cultures where there is less power distance (e.g., Dutch, Norwegian, or U.S.), relationships are usually more informal. Parents may work together with teachers for the student's best interest, and the teacher may provide a more student-centered classroom, giving choice and autonomy to students.
Independent versus collaborative learning	Students from collectivist cultures (e.g., Japanese, Brazilian, and Indian) may value working together interdependently rather than working alone independently. Contributing to a group's well-being is valued more than one's individual achievement (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008). In contrast, students from individualist cultures (e.g., Greek, New Zealand, or U.S.) may see greater value in working independently towards individual goals and achievement.
Plagiarism	The concept of plagiarism is built on the understanding that ideas can be owned and that individuals have rights to intellectual property (Pennycook, 1996). These ideas may seem strange to students who have different cultural views about the nature of information and public discourse (Adiningrum & Kutieleh, 2011). Plagiarism tends to be culturally conditioned and may be understood differently in various cultures (Pennycook, 1996; Sowden, 2005). For example, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, students are permitted to quote or paraphrase political and religious authorities without citing them specifically because it is understood that the reader will know the original source of the information (Howard, 1999). Additionally, ELs with lower levels of English proficiency may struggle to paraphrase challenging texts and will need significant support to do so.

Source: Adapted from Hiatt, J. E., Jones-Vo, S., Staehr Fenner, D., & Snyder, S. (2017). Understanding how culture impacts your expectations for your students' handout.