

Bridging Worlds: Cross-Cultural Communication & Academic Belonging in the Adult ESOL Classroom

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Community Cultural Wealth: Yosso's Six Capitals

Purpose: Build a shared, asset-based lens for seeing students; directly connect each capital to classroom application and to the workshop's two strategies.

Why this framework matters:

One of our goals today is to leave with strategies for teaching academic culture to students with survival needs. Yosso gives us the most important reframe for that work: your students are not arriving empty. They are arriving loaded — with knowledge, skills, and forms of intelligence that academic culture often doesn't recognize, reward, or even see.

If we start from deficit, 'what do my students lack?', we build one kind of classroom. If we start from wealth, 'what do my students already know?', we build a completely different one. Today we're building the second kind.

The Six Forms of Capital

1. Linguistic Capital The intellectual and social skills developed through communicating in more than one language or style.

Classroom connection: Ask students to explain a concept first in their home language, then in English. The process of translation is analysis. It surfaces what they actually understand.

2. Familial Capital The cultural knowledge nurtured among family that carries community memory, history, and cultural intuition.

Classroom connection: Narrative writing assignments that begin with family or community story before moving to academic argument. The personal is the scaffold, not the distraction.

3. Social Capital The networks of people and community resources that provide support and information.

Classroom connection: Cooperative learning structures that make social intelligence visible and valued; not just individual performance.

4. Navigational Capital The ability to move through institutions that were not designed for you.

Classroom connection: Explicitly name when an academic task requires navigational skill. "What you just did - - figured out the library database with no instructions; that's navigational capital. That's what researchers do."

5. Resistant Capital The knowledge and skills developed through challenging inequality and keeping dignity intact.

Classroom connection: Assign counter-narratives. Ask students to find the version of a story that's missing from the textbook. Resistant capital becomes critical thinking.

6. Aspirational Capital The ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future despite real barriers — and to pass that orientation to the next generation.

Classroom connection: First-week activity — "Why are you here?" Not as an icebreaker. As a real question, answered in writing, referenced throughout the semester when things get hard.

Suggested Resources

- **Tara Yosso:** "Whose Culture Has Capital?" (2005)
- **Carol Archer:** Culture Bump Approach: culturebump.org
- **Zaretta Hammond:** *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain*; the neuroscience of safety and belonging
- **Jeff Zwiers & Marie Crawford:** *Academic Conversations*: practical discussion tools for academic language learners
- **bell hooks:** *Teaching to Transgress*; on building classrooms of radical inclusion
- **Milton Bennett:** DMIS overview; developmental framework for intercultural sensitivity