

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

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Culture Bump Scenario Cards:

Card 1 — The Silence After Sharing Valentina, from Venezuela, shares in a class discussion that she left her family behind to come to the U.S. and that she cries every night. The class goes completely silent. A student from China looks down. A student from Russia looks uncomfortable and changes the subject. Valentina looks mortified. *What's the bump? What's happening for each person in the room? What does the instructor do next?*

Card 2 — The Respectful Nod Jin-ho, from Korea, nods and says "yes, yes" through your entire explanation of the assignment. He turns in something completely different. When you meet with him, he seems confused about why there's a problem. *What's the bump?*

Card 3 — The Student Who Won't Speak in Class Lucía, from Nicaragua, participates actively and confidently in breakout rooms with other Spanish speakers. In whole-class discussion, she goes completely silent — even when you call on her directly. She answers correctly when she does speak. *What's the bump?*

Card 4 — The Borrowed Text Wei, from China, submits an essay with several paragraphs copied from the course textbook, without quotation marks. When you address it, she seems genuinely confused about why this is an issue. She says, "But it was written perfectly. Why would I change it?" *What's the bump?*

Card 5 — The Personal Relationship Andrés, from Colombia, texts you on Sunday evenings to check in, shares personal news unrelated to class, and frequently stays after to talk. He's warm, engaged, and his attendance is perfect. He also just missed a major deadline. *What's the bump?*

Card 6 — The Direct Challenger Irina, from Russia, challenges your explanation of a grammar rule in front of the class. Her tone is confident and direct. Other students look uncomfortable. She's actually correct. *What's the bump?*