What does it mean to provide cultural support for students?

What does culture have to do with language?

The Prism Model
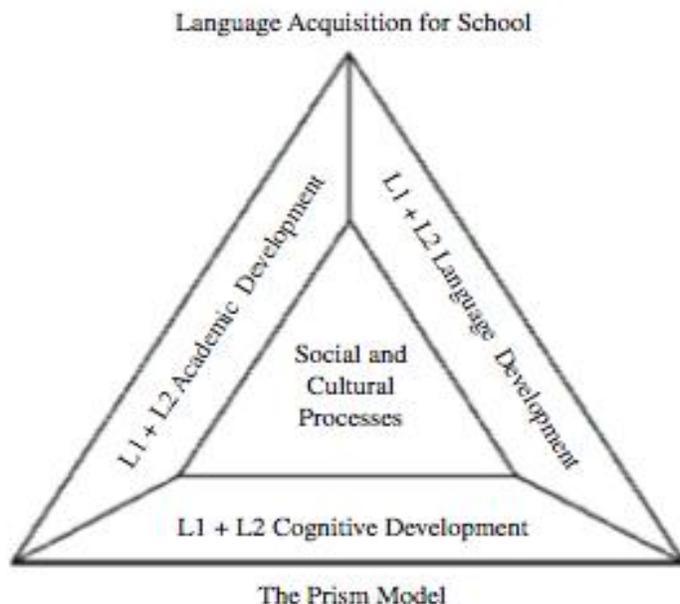
From Collier 1995

What is cultural scaffolding?

Scaffolding as commonly understood is rooted in Vygotsky with complex details involving the interaction of language and thought. Van De Pol et al, (2010) determined three common characteristics of scaffolding based on an extensive review of literature published from 1998 to 2009. While Van de Pol et al recognize that there is not a fixed understanding of what scaffolding means, they did narrow it down to three characteristics:

Contingency: Teachers support that is based on an assessment of where the students' current abilities lie. The support is offered a little above or at the student's current ability.
Fading: Removing the contingency support over time.
Transfer of responsibility: The student takes control of his or her own learning (pp. 274-275).

Cultural scaffolding is concisely understood as Gay explains (2002) "using their own cultures [the students] and experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievement." (p.109). Pawan, (2008) provides a more in depth explanation by situating cultural scaffolding among the concepts of primary and secondary discourses as presented by Gee (2002), funds of knowledge from Moll (1994), and culturally responsive teaching from Ladson Billings (1994). Pawan's discussion of Cultural scaffolding provides an in depth discussion of how these concepts developed drawing on three additional scholars:

1. Salomon and Perkins (1998) who define cultural scaffolding as involving the manipulation of "cultural tools" and artifacts which include different types of information sources and shared symbol systems. (1994)

2. Ladson Billings (1994) who states These tools and "Artifacts are themselves culturally and historically situated, carrying the wisdom and hidden assumptions that went into their design"(p.5). and that "Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge" (p. 20) in this quote, cultural referents provide for cultural scaffolding.

3. Gay (2002,) who defines culturally responsive teaching "as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diversity students as conduits for teaching them effectively" (p 106)

What does Cultural Scaffolding mean in our own words?

What does Cultural Scaffolding look like in literature? (these are not all examples from ESL classrooms)

Citation	Example
Pawan	Accessing "Students' prior knowledge Using Literature from students' culture Recognizing Students' learning styles L1 peer work colleagues for translation and instruction (p.1455)
Gay	"Using illustrations of ethnic architecture, fabric designs, foods recipes- using culturally relevant examples in teaching Using ethnic literature in teaching the following skills" genre, comprehension, making inferences, vocabulary building and translation" (p.113)
Smith	Using Anasazi observational methods to track the moon. Emulating what the Anasazi did at Chaco Canyon "At the same time, students interviewed their parents, relatives, and neighbors to collect stories and legends about the Moon. The students learned that people have various, often interesting, notions about the Moon and they recorded these stories to share later with students from other schools." p. 28
DeJong and Harper	Understanding classroom participatory structures that students are accustomed to. Understanding home practices of literacy.

What does it look like in our everyday teaching?

As ESL teachers, we are used to negotiating with diverse cultures. How did we learn this? What types of things do we do as ESL teachers that are different from teachers in other fields? How can we support our fellow teachers who also work with culturally diverse students, but don't have experience with ESL?

References:

Collier, V. P. (1995). Acquiring a Second Language for School. *Directions in language and education*, *1*(4), n4.

De Jong, E. J., & Harper, C. A. (2005). Preparing mainstream teachers for English-language learners: Is being a good teacher good enough?. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 101-124.

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education. 53(2), 106-116.*

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers : successful teachers of African American children / Gloria Ladson-Billings*. San Francisco : Jossey-Bass Publishers, c1994.

Pawan, F. (2008). Content-area teachers and scaffolded instruction for English language learners. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24(6), 1450-1462.*

Salomon, G., & Perkins, D. N. (1998). Individual and social aspects of learning.*Review of research in education*, 1-24.

Smith*, (2003) Meeting the moon from a global perspective. Science* scope, May 2003, 24-28