

Supporting Multilingual Learners in All our Classrooms

Ellen Rosenfield and the 14-15 ESOL Focused Inquiry Group

Some Ways to Support Multilingual Learners (and other students too!)

1. Don't always allow the most vocal students in class to respond first. Increase wait times by a few seconds before calling on anyone.
2. When possible, ask a question, then give all students a chance to discuss with a partner or two, (anywhere from 15 seconds to a few minutes, depending on how open-ended the question) then call on non-volunteers first.
3. Use classroom assessment techniques such as the Minute Paper, the Muddiest Point, or questions on index cards to get feedback from all students, not just the quickest to respond.
4. Provide visual support whenever possible – give handouts or an outline, write key words on the board, put the book or handout you're referencing under the viewer, etc.
5. Be aware that idioms and slang expressions may hinder comprehension. Some students lack general knowledge about the US. Fine to use them, but rephrase or define immediately after if possible.
6. Write an agenda on the board or however you prefer, and put homework instructions in writing rather than relying on verbal instruction at the end of class.
7. Make assignment instructions as explicit as possible, and provide models of good student work to demonstrate exactly what you want them to do (e.g. a good short-essay answer, a good moodle forum contribution, a good lab report section).
8. Post materials on your moodle site so students can review at their own pace. Encourage students to snap a photo of the board/screen with their phones if it helps them.
9. If possible, be available to answer questions at the end of class.
10. If a multilingual student asks a question in class, and because of the student's pronunciation or vocabulary, you're not sure you understood the question, please ask for clarification, and write the word in question on the board if necessary (e.g. barrier vs. Bay Area).

MORE RESOURCES

Please visit the Teaching and Learning Center website to find more resources for your multilingual (and all) students. You can find links to glossaries in other languages, interactive websites, and more. It's under the heading **Tools and Strategies for Engagement and Equity**.

You can also use this quick link to go straight to the resources:

<http://tinyurl.com/ESOLstudentresources>

Misinterpreting Student Behavior

It is easy to misinterpret student behavior, especially if students have only been in the US for a short time. Below is a list of some common student behaviors that might be misunderstood.

Student Behavior	Students may assume/think	Teacher may assume
When students don't ask questions during class...	(Cultural) What the teacher says is more important. The teacher has a lot of material to cover and I don't want to waste the teacher's time. Students should only ask questions at the end of class. (Linguistic) It's difficult to form a question quickly and publicly.	The student is not interested or unmotivated. The student understands everything.
When students avoid direct eye contact...	It's impolite to make eye contact.	It's impolite <u>not</u> to look at the speaker. The student is uninterested.
When students speak in a soft voice when addressed...	It's impolite to speak loudly.	It's impolite <u>not</u> to adapt voice level when speaking to a group.
When students show no facial expression...	It's not common and feels strange to move your face a lot. It can also mean a lack of comprehension.	The student understands everything and might be bored with the topic.
When students copy from written sources...	The student is relying on an expert. The student is ashamed of his/her limited writing proficiency in English.	The student is cheating.

Language Proficiency Problems and Solutions

The language proficiency problems students experience will depend on factors such as their first language, educational background, length of time in the US, amount of time spent with native speakers, etc. Here are some possible areas of difficulty and things that can help:

Area of Difficulty	Possible Help
Difficulty handling weekly volume of reading and writing; relying on word-by-word translation to further comprehension (if listening/speaking skills higher than reading/writing skills)	Outlines, summaries, glossaries Giving a specific task to be completed with reading (summarize, respond, answer questions, write questions, complete a guide, find evidence for X), rather than just assigning reading as the task Any student-student interaction
Difficulty writing using a range of academic writing techniques such as short essay answers	Explicit assignments, rubrics, models, non-models
Difficulty grasping new material orally, relying on reading (if reading/writing skills higher than listening/speaking skills)	Outlines, notes posted to moodle, writing/pointing out key words, showing text/visuals on viewer
Difficulty participating with ease or giving quick on-the-spot answers; is reluctant to give superficial answers; relying on prepared written answers prior to speaking in class.	Chance to write for a minute or talk to partner(s) before being cold-called
Difficulty giving formal oral presentations	Chance to practice; explicit assignments, rubrics, models, non-models
Difficulty paraphrasing/citing because of unfamiliarity with US academic conventions	Explicit instructions for citation style required for discipline; links to online rules and citation help

Teaching Multilingual and International Students: Strategies, Resources, and Advice for Faculty

October 8, 2014

UNDERSTANDING OUR STUDENTS— AREN'T ALL MULTILINGUAL WRITERS THE SAME?

Jordan Ruyle (ruyle@berkeley.edu)

Dana Ferris (*Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing*, 2nd edition, 2011) describes three subgroups we may see represented in our student population. The descriptions that follow *are generalizations*. Complicating factors such as country of origin, first language, socio-economic background, and a host of other variables complicate these definitions, and should encourage instructors to evaluate each student based on their personal background as much as possible. However, the following distinctions are helpful in a discussion of corrective feedback because they can affect what type of feedback a student expects and what type of feedback is useful to a given student.

International Students

Have often learned English in a formal academic setting and are often comfortable discussing grammar in terms of *subject, verb, clause, tense, agreement, etc.* These students also often expect and welcome instructor feedback on their writing, seeing their educational experience in the US as a limited time to improve on their writing skills as much as possible.

Late Arriving Resident Immigrants

Although these students may have been in the US only a short time longer than most international students, they often have “interrupted [first language] schooling and haphazard or even nonexistent [second language] instruction” (Ferris). These students have often attended high school or even middle school in the US and, consequently, have usually developed a sense of what sounds right. This can help them produce writing that feels more natural, but may exhibit ‘fossilized’, or habitual, errors that are difficult for the student to identify and correct.

Early Arriving Resident Immigrants or Generation 1.5 Students

This group of students has the most exposure to English, having often lived in the US and attended English-language schools from a very young age. Their situation can be complicated by growing up in a native language community and/or spending large amounts of time in their parents’ home country, speaking their parents’ native language.

Results from a Pilot Survey: 35 Multilingual and/or International Students on Participating in UC Berkeley Classes

Teri Crisp (tericrisp@berkeley.edu) & Michelle Baptiste (michellebaptiste@berkeley.edu) (Responses categorized post-survey)

As a multilingual/bilingual and/or international student, what makes you able to participate fully in a class?	What makes it difficult for you to participate fully in class?
<p>Instructor’s Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor’s patience—encouraging us to be brave • Emphasis on our improvement vs. a single expectation of verbal participation for everyone • Emphasis on the process without penalties for being wrong • Interest and respect for our point of view • Encouragement to learn • Appreciation for class diversity • Being graded on participation <p>Class Environment and Collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration with peers relieves tension and stress • Group learning and discussion • Active participation by all group members • Teamwork & supportive colleagues • Friendly people who don’t care how we speak English • Comfort in the class environment • Smaller classes and smaller study groups • Introduction of international students the first week of class—a welcome by the instructor or a chance for everyone in the class to go around and introduce themselves • An accepting and equal environment where it is OK to be who you are <p>Student Motivation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in the topic • Having knowledge about a specific topic • Being able to ask questions, speak what is on our minds, make our voices heard, compare our own voices with others • Time to adapt 	<p>Language Factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of fluency and having to attend to every word • Not understanding expressions or words, including technical language • Quick speech • Accents of colleagues • Fear of not being understood • Not sure of the proper moment to say something • Not understanding the discussion or jokes <p>Knowledge/Interest Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural references that aren’t explained; allusions to American traditions • Lack of interest in the topic • Fear that response is incorrect <p>Approach of Instructor, Institutional Factors, & Peer Influence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large classes • Inexperience with American style of teaching; from countries where we aren’t encouraged to participate • Not used to getting feedback from instructors or meeting with them; doubt about own ability • Feeling that instructors or students don’t care about us • Fear of being judged by native English speakers • Lack of understanding by faculty member • When instructors don’t explain why we are doing something wrong or not understanding • Instructors using only PowerPoint rather than different ways to present the material • Not giving full explanations despite knowing that some of us come from other countries • When instructions are not written on board in case we miss words or the context • Bell curves that make people unwilling to collaborate because of competition

