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CETL Presentation
"What Faculty Teaching Writing Intensive Courses Need to Know about Multilingual Learners"

Some Facts about Multilingual Learners (MLL)

- MLL also referred to as ESL (English as Second Language);ELLs (English Language Learners); and NNES (Non-Native English Speaking).
- Almost two out of five first time freshmen at CUNY (38.2%) identify as non-native speakers of English.
- These students have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs.
- English may be a second, third, or fourth language.
- Not always obvious if someone is NNES student. Some may have grown up in the U.S. and speak English well but still have problems with writing and grammar.
- NNES students fall into three categories: foreign students, recent immigrants, and long-term resident English Language Learners (Generation 1.5 students).
- Acquiring academic English can take between 5 and 10 years, depending on educational background of the student and his or her level of first language literacy.

Tips for Teaching MLL Students from John Jay College and Queensborough Community College

Many NNES (Non-Native English Speaking) students use rhetorical strategies valued in their own cultures. While English writing favors a linear structure in which the essay starts with a central idea, continues with supporting evidence and ends with a summarizing conclusion, in other cultures the English style may be considered incorrect. For example, writers trained in the Japanese style prefer to supply examples and details in the beginning and middle sections of an essay and to wait until the last paragraph to introduce the central idea. Likewise, French writers are taught that explicitly stating the main idea undervalues readers' comprehension, and readers are expected to be able to read between lines. To communicate awareness of these rhetorical differences:

- Involve your students in a discussion about rhetorical strategies early in the semester. You will become more aware of the writing patterns your NNES students were trained to use, and students will learn how the English style compares or contrasts with their native one.
- Ask students to hand in an outline before they start writing their paper to make sure that they follow your instructions and to clarify any misunderstandings.
- Give explicit instructions regarding what rhetorical style you expect your students to follow.

Making grammatical and sentence structure errors is part of the learning process. NNES students make two types of grammar errors: global errors and local errors. Global errors are errors that can impede comprehension, such as incorrect word choices or word order. Such errors should be addressed first since they make the students' writing difficult to comprehend. Local errors are surface errors such as missing endings or incorrect prepositions that do not seriously prevent comprehension and tend to stay with NNES students for a longer time. To deal with students' grammar errors in a constructive way:

- Try to give feedback on content before grammar. It is important for NNES students to know that you are interested in their ideas as much as in grammatical correctness.
- Prioritize comments on grammar errors. First focus your feedback on the global errors that create the greatest potential for miscommunication and then point out only a few frequently occurring local errors.
- Try to limit your corrections to the most salient errors and correct only one example of each error. Once you model the correction, ask the student to do the same for similar errors. A paper full of red markings can be overwhelming and discouraging.
- Encourage NNES students to keep a grammar log and to create an editing checklist based on the log.
- Hand out self-instructional grammar material if possible. You can also refer students to a tutoring center for English Language Learners or a writing center at your college where they can receive individualized assistance.

Source: John Jay College and Queensborough Community College Faculty Resources for Teaching Non-Native Speakers ay CUNY: http://resources.jjay.cuny.edu/erc/faculty/understanding.php.

In addition, Vivian Zamel argues that good writing pedagogy for MLL students is good writing pedagogy for all students in the classroom. Adopting best practices for writing instruction including revision, peer review, and scaffolded assignments helps not only MLL students, but native speakers in the classroom as well.

Source: Zamel, Vivian. "Strangers in Academia: The Experiences of Faculty and ESL Students Across the Curriculum." *College Composition and Communication* 46.4 (1995): 506-52.

Online Faculty Resources

- **John Jay College and Queensborough Community College Faculty Resources for Teaching Non-Native Speakers ay CUNY**:
  http://resources.jjay.cuny.edu/erc/faculty/understanding.php
- **Tips on Teaching ESOL Students from University of North Carolina**:
  http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/esl/esl_student_tips.html
- **Faculty Resource Kit for Teaching Non-Native Speakers from Simmons College**:
  http://my.simmons.edu/academics/asc/pdf/resource-kit.pdf
- **Working with Non-Native Speakers in the Classroom from Emory University**:
  http://www.portals.emory.edu/instructors/non.native.speakers.html
- **Working with Non-Native English Speakers from Boise State University**:
  http://www.boisestate.edu/wcenter/ww116.htm

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