

Supporting Multilingual Students Across the Curriculum

Some Core Principles

1. Difference, not deficit – try to see a student’s first language as a “resource” not a drawback.
2. Don’t confuse developing language skills or lack of academic experience with intelligence or potential.
3. Academic English is no one’s native language and academic culture is no one’s native culture. We all had to learn it.
4. IMPORTANT QUOTE: “All faculty **can** and should assist multilingual students in improving their academic English proficiency and their knowledge of ‘how to’ be a scholar” (Hafernik & Wiant 4).
5. Inclusive classroom strategies and practices help ALL students.

Helping Students Adjust to Academic Culture

“Whose responsibility is it to help students understand the workings of the academy, adjust to it, and become full participating members? **The answer is ‘Everyone’s.’** Each of us can ease the transition for students by simply making what we take for granted explicit for students” (Wiant & Hafernik 37).

College/University Culture
Disciplinary Culture
Classroom Culture

There is no one universal academic culture or literacy- they are always embedded in specific contexts.

Suggestions for Supporting Students’ Transition into U.S. Academic Culture
From Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education

- Establish a community of learners from day one
- Be explicit about expectations
- Encourage participation
- Consider use of cultural references
- Be a cultural informant and an academic mentor

(Shapiro, Farrelly & Tomas 17-27)

Help students make connections/comparisons between what they already know and what they're trying to learn:

- Organizational differences in essay writing
- Grammar in first language and grammar in English
- Everyday vs. academic

Acquisition versus Learning

What's the difference?

Teachers ("experts") may need to "learn" (or re-learn) what they've already acquired through extensive experience such as grammar rules, genre conventions, disciplinary ways of thinking/knowing in order to help students.

Some Helpful Insights from Second Language Acquisition

Everyday language and academic language are very different.

- BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) – everyday language
- CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) – academic language

Multilingual students do not become "native" English speakers. A few courses will not perfect students' English.

- "Throughout their academic careers, multilingual students, like native English speakers, continue to improve their academic language proficiency and academic skills. We, as faculty, can help them in this process but can't assume that students will become native English speakers" (Hafernik & Wiant 31).
- Myth of Transience (Mike Rose) – Skills that students learn in one context will not automatically transfer over to all contexts.

Three Important Classroom Practices that Promote Academic Language/Literacy **Acquisition** (and Learning) according to Shapiro, Farrelly & Tomas:

Scaffolding
Interaction
Noticing

Some Ways I Support Multilingual Students in my Writing Classes through Scaffolding

- Provide models of product and analyze them*
- Model the process*
- Provide templates*
- Create clear (written) criteria and expectations*
- Break a complex/difficult assignment up into stages or parts*
- Develop an assignment using Backward Design*

*These strategies help all students!

Helpful Strategies for Building Scaffolding as well as Encouraging Interaction and Noticing from Shawna Shapiro, et al.

Ways to Build Scaffolding

Lectures:

- Establish a routine.
- Activate students' background knowledge before the lecture.
- Repeat important information.
- Provide graphic organizers
- Conduct frequent comprehension checks
- Provide visual support

Class Discussions:

- Provide students with tips on how to participate in discussions.
- Assume the role of facilitator.
- Create a task for students to do during or after discussion.

Course Readings:

- Make your expectations for reading explicit – “read for a purpose”
- Activate students' background knowledge.
- Provide additional resources with relevant background knowledge.
- Provide students with an assignment to complete as they read

Ways to Encourage Interaction

Lectures:

- Review Questions
- Think-Pair-Share
- Group Problem Solving

- Peer-to-Peer Instruction

Class Discussions:

- Construct groups purposefully and monitor group dynamics
- Assign roles during small group discussion
- Invite students to manage whole-group discussions
- Do Around the World (where everyone has to respond to a question or prompt)

Course Readings

- Jigsaw readings
- Prepare interactive activities based on the readings
- Create opportunities to practice critical response or application of concepts

Ways to Encourage Noticing

Lectures:

- Highlight and reinforce key vocabulary/terms
- Utilize key phrases (verbal signposts) to focus student attention

Class Discussions:

- Highlight possibilities for elaboration and clarification
- Encourage self-reflection/self-assessment

Course Readings:

- Model pre-reading skills
- Model effective strategies to use while reading the text
- Create metacognitive activities to do/discuss
- Help students see connections between reading and other parts of the course

Works Cited

Hafernik, Johnnie Johnson and Fredel M. Wiant. *Integrating Multilingual Students into College Classrooms- Practical Advice for Faculty*. Channel View Publications, 2012.

Shapiro, Shawna, Raichle Farrelly and Zuzana Tomas. *Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education*. TESOL Press, 2014.