

Being Culturally Responsive in Working with English Learners Spring 2018

Presenters: Matt Bolin, Wendy Alejandra Juárez García, Maryam Afsharghotoli



On your post-it notes, please take a minute to write a word that comes to mind when you think of English learners as college students. Write one word per post-it, and then put it on the board.

The Diversity of ESL Students

“The internal variation of this group is so great that perhaps the only characteristic linking them is the fact that they can function to a greater or lesser degree in a language other than English. An ESL student may be 18 or 60 years old, may have lived a life of wealth and privilege or of relative poverty and limitation, may have traveled widely internationally or be experiencing a first venture from a rural village to a foreign country, may have little experience in writing or may be a published author, may come from a country whose population and/or leaders consider the united an ally or an enemy.”

Who are ESL Students?

	Adult Immigrants	International Students	Generation 1.5 Students
Educational Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immigrated (typically as refugees) from a country where English is not the dominant language may or may not have studied English in home country usually “ear” learners of English in the US may have dropped out of school in home country at young age or have advanced degrees may or may not be literate in first language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> temporarily in the US to get a college degree and are from a country where English is not the dominant language studied English (usually only grammar) in home country strong academic study skills, “eye” learners, strong grammar knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immigrated from a country where English is not the dominant language graduated from a US high school (acquired English from hearing it, didn’t learn it from rules) may only speak first language, but can’t read/write in it (which affects literacy in 2nd language) lack academic study skills
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strong communication skills (ear learners) usually have a strong support system in the US strong willingness to learn and succeed usually have US culture knowledge strong sense of identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reading skills grammatical knowledge literate in first language overall strong academic skills strong academic motivation and usually clear academic/career goals usually higher socio-economic status, have financial resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sound like native speakers of English more experience with US culture strong communication skills (ear learners) strong support system of family + friends in the US
Challenges and Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fossilized usually need to “unlearn” incorrect fossilized forms weak writing/reading/grammar skills in English work and family interferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not “ear” learners, so lack cultural and idiomatic appropriateness speaking and listening problems problems asking for help usually lack support system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> weak writing skills (not eye learners) usually need to “unlearn” incorrect fossilized forms sense of ‘between-ness’ of two cultures may not have permission to be in the US

Common Cultural Challenges

- culture shock!
- having one “foot” in the US and the other in their native country
- housing and money issues
- feeling of having start from zero
- lack of familiarity with the higher education system in the US

Common Academic Challenges

1. concerns about being “wrong” in class
2. writing, grammar, vocabulary difficulties
3. lack of skills in first language affects 2nd language
4. difficulty with American writing patterns
5. trying not to THINK with an accent (even if you speak with an accent)
6. concern over taking ESL placement test and getting placed incorrectly

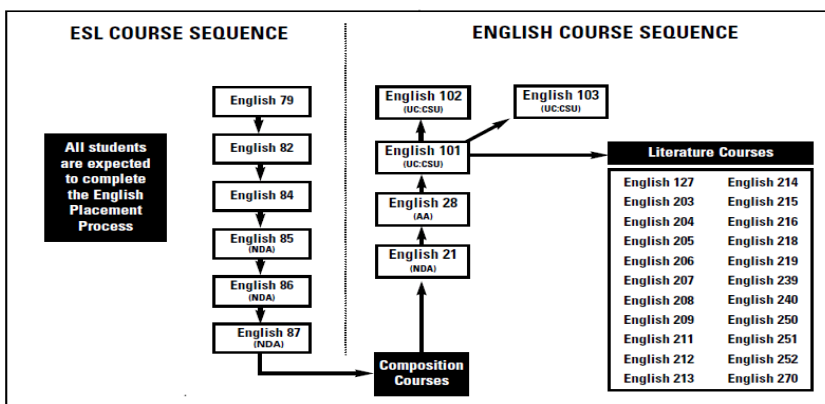
How to Address These Challenges:

- Have compassion.
- Don’t let your biases interfere.
- Don’t speak louder if they ask you to repeat. Rephrase.
- Decrease stress.
- Cursive – no!
- Provide appropriate negative feedback.
- Comprehension Checks (Information Qs, not Yes/No Qs)
- Explain what’s foreign:
 - group work
 - office hours
 - Tutoring
 - emailing and questioning teachers
 - plagiarism

Types of ESL Programs in the US

- College, Credit-Bearing ESL
 - Academic focus
- IEPs (Intensive English Programs)
 - Academic focus
- Non-Credit ESL + Adult Education
 - Life skills focus

Pierce College ESL Course Sequence



What We Know about How Adults Learn Second/Subsequent Languages

-Some ESL SLA (second language acquisition) theories

- Critical Period
- Acquisition VS. Learning
- Comprehensible Input (i + 1)
- Contrastive Analysis
- Social psychology of acculturation (assimilation, adaptation, preservation)
- Affective Filter
- Negative Feedback- Focused feedback leads to uptake

How to Address the Challenges

- Have compassion
- Don't treat them like children
- Don't let your biases interfere
- Always remember they have linguistic difficulties-they are not learning disabled
- Don't speak louder if they ask you to repeat
- Refer them to CAS ESL Support
 - MyEnglishLab grammar + listening programs
 - ESL workshops
 - Conversation Café
 - Pronunciation Software
 - ESL Book Clubs
 - ESL Books in library
- Lower their affective filters
- Use visuals: pictures, table of contents, footnotes
- Cursive- no!
- Comprehensible Input
- Comp. Checks
 - Do you understand? (They'll say "yes" most of the time.)
 - What is affirmative action? (requires answer)
- Explain what's foreign:
 - Pair work and Group work
 - Office hours
 - US college/university system
 - Tutoring
 - Emailing and questioning teachers
 - Plagiarism?