



Working with Second-Language Students in your Signature Course

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are interrelated language skills. To succeed in an American university, non-native speakers of English must learn to

- read English proficiently;
- process spoken English quickly enough to absorb lecture content;
- speak fluently enough to participate in discussion;
- write in the expected Western academic style, with minimal first-language interference.

Students can't make significant progress in any one skill if progress in the other skills lags.

Ways to Support Second-Language Students

- Provide handouts, Powerpoint slides, or other supporting materials to help students absorb lecture and discussion material.
- Allow them to record lectures, if feasible, so they can listen to them later and flesh out their notes. Listening with comprehension while writing down notes is often an overwhelming task for non-native speakers.
- Be accessible outside of class, and encourage students to visit you or their TA during office hours.
- Use informal writing activities to help them process reading material.
- Provide feedback on their writing during the draft stages.
- Discuss, and grade for, content as well as grammar (see below).
- Pair native speakers of English with second-language learners during group activities. This gives native speakers a chance to articulate what they know about spoken and written English.
- Encourage students to visit the Undergraduate Writing Center. UWC consultants receive special training in how to work with ESL writers.

Grading Second-Language Writing

- When assessing the writing of second-language learners, the general rule is to grade first for meaning, then for mechanical correctness. See the University of Hawaii-Manoa's excellent Web page [<http://www.mwp.hawaii.edu/resources/wm6.htm>] for a more detailed description of how to prioritize revision issues with second-language learners.
- Learn more about typical patterns of error. The Writing Center has a helpful chart outlining language transfer issues commonly seen in writing by non-native speakers. [<http://www.uwc.utexas.edu/node/116>]

